

# **The History of English Literature**

**B.A. (English) – Second Year**

**Paper – VI**

**Paper Code: BAEG 1921**



**PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY**

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## **B.A. ENGLISH –SYLLABUS**

**Second Year**

**Paper code: BAEG 1921**

### **PAPER VI**

#### **HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**Objective:** To facilitate an appreciation of literature by providing a brief survey of British literature through ages and to introduce students to the best works of each age

**Unit. 1:** Elizabethan Age.

**Unit. 2:** Augustan Age.

**Unit.3:** Romantic Age.

**Unit. 4:** Victorian Age.

**Unit.5:** Modern Age.

**Reference:** 1. History of English Literature by E.Albert  
2. History of English Literatureby Hudson.



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**Structure**

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Literary Features of the Age
- 1.4 Edmund Spenser (1552 – 1599)
- 1.5 John Donne (1573 – 1631)
- 1.6 Metaphysical Poets
- 1.7 The University Wits
- 1.8 Elizabethan Drama – William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)
- 1.9 Ben Johnson (1573 – 1637)
- 1.10 Francis Beaumont (1584 – 1616) and John Fletcher (1579 – 1625)
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- 1.13 Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626)
- 1.14 Summing up
- 1.15 Self Assessment Questions

**1.1 Learning Objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader shall be able to know

- The progress of poetry since Spenser
- The origin, growth, and development of British Drama from Shakespeare to Webster.
- The prose style of Bacon and other writers.
- Metaphysical School of Poets
- Donne's use of wit, conceit, and farfetched images.
- The University Wits
- Elizabethan theatre and plays.
- John Webster's plays
- Tragedies, comedies, tragic-comedies, Roman plays of Shakespeare
- Shakespearean sonnets

- Christopher Marlowe's plays
- The growth of English prose

## 1.2 Introduction:

The Elizabethan era is a notable epoch in English history due to its advancements in commerce, naval dominance, and nationalist sentiment, exemplified by the successful defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1558. Moreover, this era witnessed a remarkable period for English Literature, namely in play and poetry. The predominant motif within Elizabethan literature is an enduring struggle between pursuing individualism and the prevailing notion of a predetermined moral framework. The Elizabethan drama draws vigour from sources beyond humanism. In theatre, words and idioms, both widely recognised and intellectually sophisticated, have acquired enhanced and more precise connotations.

Drama flourished from poets who remained closely connected with famous speeches and popular traditions. The theatre is the point of closest contact between humanism and popular taste. Literary playwrights borrowed freely from popular sources, sermons, and street ballads. Shakespeare, too, borrowed heavily from *Plutarch's Lives*, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, and other classical translations. Chronicles are records of historical, political, and cultural events arranged chronologically. They are mere facts given without comments, whereas history implies an interpretation of facts. During the Elizabethan age, the most popular chronicles were those written by Raphael Holinshed, and dramatists used them as sources for their plays. Shakespeare borrowed these materials from Holinshed's chronicles for his historical plays *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Cymbeline*. Despite being written by multiple authors, *The Chronicles* presents a uniformity of design and character. The most important feature of the Chronicles is its spirit of nationalism. All chronicles, as a rule, glorify England. *Holinshed's Chronicles*, too, look back with pride on England's legendary history and the exploits of its kings and warriors. Not only Shakespeare, the Elizabethan dramatist, also borrowed stories and anecdotes from his work. Spencer confessed, "Master Holinshed hath much furthered and advantaged me."



The Elizabethan literary language appealed to a heterogeneous public, trained in listening rather than reading and more accustomed to public life than private. Elizabethan writing lacked the intimate conversation and psychology of the modern novel but is supreme in expressing sensations and the outward demonstrative aspects of feeling. This factor explains why drama becomes the chief form of Elizabethan art. It brought about radical changes in the composition of society as the spirit of competition became the focal point of the social hierarchy. The age introduced the extraordinary writers of prose, drama, epic, and narrative poetry, such as Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Ben Johnson, and the University Wits. In this period, much focus was given to the literature of Greek and Latin.

### 1.3 Literary Features of the Age

The themes, concept of the literary works, style, and narrative techniques were borrowed from Greek and Latin Languages. A new passion for classical learning was developed, inspiring the writers to create exceptional works. They tempered and polished the earlier version of English Literature. The political and historical background of the Elizabethan era encouraged the writers to produce timeless literary works. Pamphlets and treatises were popular during this time, and the drama genre peaked with the contribution of great dramatists like Marlowe, Ben Johnson, and Shakespeare.

### 1.4 Edmund Spenser (1552 – 1599)

Edmund Spenser was one of the most distinguished poets of the Elizabethan Age. He was born in London in 1552. Under the guidance of Sir Philip Sydney, Spenser gained the encouragement and goodwill of Queen Elizabeth. Spenser wrote his first work, *The Shepheardes Calendar*, in 1579. It is a pastoral poem which consists of a series of twelve eclogues. The poem exhibited Spenser's mastery of the English language with a new style. It portrays his love for his wife, Rosalind, and looks at several issues from a protestant point of view. He also wrote a volume of miscellaneous poems such as *The River of Triad*, *The Tears of the Muses*, *Mother Hubbard's Tale* and *Rituals of Rome*. In 1595, he published his *Epithalamion*, which describes the significance of marriage and love.

In 1596, he published his *Four Hymns and Prothalamion*. Spencer's masterpiece, an epic poem consisting of 12 books, *The Faerie Queene*, was published in 1589. It talks about twelve of the Queen's knights to undertake some adventure at her annual feast. Twelve Knights participate in tournaments, combats, love sequences, and duels throughout the adventure journey. Spencer's passion for adventurous quests is exhibited through the twelve Knights' adventures.

Spencer immensely contributed to the English Poetry. Charles Lamb called him the 'poet's poet'. He was a poet-painter, and his immense sense of beauty is his most incredible poetic quality. The characters in his poem move harmoniously to exquisite music. Undoubtedly, Spencer became the child of the 'Renaissance'. His most significant contribution to English verse is the 'Spencerian Stanza'. It consists of 8 lines rhyming ab, ab, bc, bc, followed by an alexandrine (a line consisting of 12 syllables). He also experimented with the sonnet form. The Spencerian sonnet consists of four quatrains (4 lines) followed by a couplet (a stanza of two lines). The rhyme scheme of Spencerian sonnet is abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee. He loved to experiment with language. To conclude, English poetry reached its peak and glory during the period of Spencer.

### 1.5 John Donne (1573 – 1631)

John Donne was a renowned Elizabethan poet associated with the metaphysical school of poetry. His poetry is remarkable for its passion, intellectual agility, and dramatic power. He was a religious preacher and secretary to the Lord Keeper. He had immense knowledge of philosophy, theology, science, literature, geography, and astronomy. His poetic themes were universal, and he used imagery, similes, and symbols with a modern appeal. He wrote songs, sonnets, stories, elegies, and marriage poems known for their genuine poetic feeling, profundity of thought, passion, imagery, and dissimilar comparisons. His poetry can be divided into three groups – love poems, religious poems, and miscellaneous poems. His love poems are a fine combination of sensuality. "The Sun Rising," "The Dream," and "The Good Marrow" are well-known love poems remarkable for their range, variety of themes, and passion. His "The Flea," "A Valediction: Forbidden Mourning," and "The Anniversary" are poems of

love fulfilment and affirmation of constancy in love. Poems like “Aire and Angels,” “A Valediction of Weeping,” and “Extasie” portray Donne’s emotional disposition and exceptional skill in using imagery. His sonnets are highly religious, metaphysical, and satirical.

Donne’s poetry may be termed metaphysical only as far as the technique is concerned. It is heavily loaded with conceit, over-elaborated similes and metaphors, and wit, exhibiting independence of thought. His most exciting works are edited as “Songs and Sonnets” and the “Divine Poems”. The Songs and Sonnets are remarkable for their vigour and harshness of rhythm, together with fantastic outbursts of unexpected imagery, emotional depth, and poetic expressiveness. His poem “The Canonization” deals primarily with his emotions and experiences. There is a consistent unification of sensibilities in the poem. Donne is one of the well-known poets in the school of ‘Metaphysical Poems.’

### 1.6 Metaphysical Poets

The term ‘metaphysical poets’ was first used by Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Cowley* to refer to a group of writers that appeared at the beginning of 17th-century England. Johnson used the term to identify the unconventional characteristics of these poems, among which John Donne’s poems garnered attention. Metaphysical poetry was a popular style of poetry towards the end of the Elizabethan era, characterised by concise expression and profundity in thought. The poets of this school introduced the use of wit, roughness in versification as conceit, and complexity of thought.

The poets who referred to themselves as “metaphysical poets” during the early 17th century included figures such as John Donne, George Herbert, Thomas Carew, William Devenant, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan. Among these individuals, John Donne stood out as the most esteemed. His love poetry and religious poetry exhibit metaphysical qualities like the use of conceits, dissimilar comparisons, strange imagery, and psychological depth.

**Abraham Cowley** (1616–67) is often known as a metaphysical rather than a cavalier poet. Abraham Cowley, a prominent figure from

1616 to 1667, is commonly recognised as a poet belonging to the philosophical tradition rather than the cavalier tradition. Although he was held in great esteem during his era, his level of popularity gradually waned. The poet's work exhibits a solid intellectual foundation; however, the intricate employment of imagery and obtuse ideas may deter a reader of average comprehension. The individual's attempt at imitating Donne's style, but lacking an authentic understanding of his essence, had a detrimental impact on his reputation. His famous works are "The Mistress," "The Picaresque Ode," and "Davidei's," which are still popular among many readers.

**Andrew Marvel** (1621–78) was not a great poetic originator like Donne and lacked the technical smartness of Herbert, yet his handling of the verse is masterly. His important poems like "To His Coy Mistress" and "Definition of Love" show imagination, grace, and delicacy. He mingles levity and seriousness and achieves different levels of experience. His feeling for natural beauty is seen in "Garden" and "Upon Appleton House." His works successfully amalgamated two significant poetic influences of the early 17th century. It combines the passionate and intense probing of the intellect. His precise use of words and balanced sense of human feelings are the features of the success of his poetry.

A set of religious poets brought very high literary standards to sacred verse. The chief among them was George Herbert (1593-1633). He was ordained a priest, and though his range of poetry is limited, their quality, both in technique and content, is exceptional. He wrote powerful devotional poems in the conversational tone of magnificent intimacy. His greatness also lies in the fact that he has used several metrical forms. His poetry had much trailing, particularly in his creation of verbal icons. His chief collection includes *The Temple*, *Sacred Poems* and *Private Ejaculations*.

**Richard Crashaw** (1612–49) was excited by a religious fervour compared to Herbert. Though his works are related to the Metaphysical tradition, they deviated considerably from it as a direct consequence of Italian influence. He abandoned the Anglican faith for Roman Catholicism and is now known for his religious thoughts in *The Temple* and *Sacred Poems*.

The other interesting religious poet is Henry Vaughan (1622-95). Herbert influenced Vaughan in themes, titles, metrical forms, and phrases. However, anything he borrowed, he made them his own. He permitted much fancy in his writings, but his handling was much more soothing than that of Crashaw. His volume, *Silex Scintillans*, contains most of his outstanding poems. Metaphysical poetry is known for its concentration and the idea of argument. The poets used conceit, wit, and dissimilar comparison to break the conventional method of writing poems.

### 1.7 The University Wits

A group of seven Elizabethan playwrights gained popularity before Shakespeare and influenced him in style and dramatisation called 'University Wits.' They were all of outstanding academic excellence and classical scholarship, well-acquainted with the new learning inspired by the Renaissance. The University Wits were John Lyly (1554 – 1606), Thomas Kyd (1557 – 1625), George Peele (1558 – 1697), Thomas Lodge (1558 – 1625), Robert Greene (1560 – 1692), Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1693), and Thomas Nash (1567 -1601). All the University Wits were graduates from either Oxford or Cambridge University.

The Seven playwrights shared common characteristics of heroic themes and lengthy speeches in their plays. They believed comedy was inferior to tragedy and mainly chose tragic themes for their plays. They gave merits like blank verse, romance, prose style, inner struggle, and conflict to British drama. John Lyly introduced the "Masque" dramatic technique in his Romantic Comedies. His well-known plays are *Campaspe*, *Endymion*, *Women in Moon*, and *Love's Metamorphosis*. His prose was highly artistic, refined, and well-suited for the audience. He borrowed his dramatic themes from mythology or history. All his plays are notable for their classicism and their charming songs.

George Peele (1558 – 1598) also wrote courtly plays like *Arraignment of Paris*. Robert Greene's best-known play is *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay*. The comedy is a fusion of the most diverse elements and marks a stage in the development of English Drama. Thomas Kyd is a more recognised playwright. He was also a University scholar and

a law student. *The Spanish Tragedy* is the well-known work of Kyd. Seneca greatly influenced him. He introduced a new type of tragedy called the 'Revenge Tragedy', which was used by Shakespeare in his *Hamlet*. Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nash also wrote some plays during the Elizabethan Era.

Finally, Christopher Marlowe was the most renowned writer among the University Wits and the most significant contemporary of Shakespeare. Marlowe used blank verse in his drama. His best plays are *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II*. His tragedies are all one-person tragedies where the tragic heroes dominate the rest of the characters. Each play revolves around the central character, who is a victim of lust for power, beauty, knowledge and superstitious power. Marlowe has not only chosen kings or princes as his tragic hero but also a poor scholar like Dr. Faustus. His tragic heroes are consumed by the passion for reaching beyond ordinary aspiration until they meet their fate or death. Inner conflicts, small struggles and falling prey to evil spirits become the themes of his plays. Marlowe had a strong faith in the fate of human beings, which brings him fall or triumph. The play *Doctor Faustus* is fascinating in its theme and treatment. Dr. Faustus longs for infinite power and unbound ambition, which brings him death at the climax. All of Marlowe's protagonists are larger than life and reach out for greatness in their own passionate, imaginative and individual ways. The school of drama of the University of Wits reached its fame by using dramatic blank verse. They experimented with new dramatic techniques to make their plays a successful one.

### **1.8 Elizabethan Drama – William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)**

William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the foremost English dramatist and is often called the father of English Drama. He was born in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, England, and was the son of a tradesperson. He lacked a formal university education. He enrolled in the nearby Grammar School, where he acquired Latin, Greek, and Arithmetic knowledge. At nineteen, he entered into matrimony with a woman who was eight years his senior. Following a dissatisfactory marital union, Shakespeare departed from his birth town and relocated to London for financial sustenance. He encountered financial challenges and engaged in



multiple employments, ultimately achieving acclaim as a playwright. Additionally, he engaged in acting and established the renowned 'Globe Theatre' in London. The extensive period of almost two decades residing in London has facilitated his attainment of financial prosperity and garnered considerable recognition for his literary proficiency. The individual ultimately arrived back at his native place in 1612 and subsequently passed away in 1616.

Some historians say that Shakespeare was an ignorant youth driven from his careless rustic existence to a very different career in London. Robert Greene remarked that Shakespeare began his career by rewriting the plays of others, particularly the plays from *Holinshed's Chronicle*. This transformation from a rustic of Stratford to a literary figure of London has been left unexplained. Shakespeare probably arrived in London in 1584, and in ten years, by 1594, he had to his credit a quantum of work that could only have been possible through a considerable number of years. In 1593, his first work, *Venus and Adonis*, was published, and after this, his reputation and success were established on the stage.

Shakespeare's work was too profound and complex to fit a particular group. Critics grouped his plays as tragic comedies and comic tragedies. Shakespeare's literary career can be classified into four phases. The first phase makes the time of Shakespeare's apprenticeship – 1588 to 1593. He wrote *Henry VI* in three parts, *Titus Andronicus*, and the early comedies such as *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and the fantasy play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He also wrote one tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the historical play *Richard III*. All these plays prove Shakespeare's mastery over the portrayal of characters, artistic ability, and profundity of thought. However, still, he was undergoing the process of improvement. In *Love's Labour Lost*, Shakespeare displayed his penchant for drama. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *the Comedy of Errors* represent no noteworthy advance in dramatic power. Shakespeare's dramatic talent is marked in *Romeo and Juliet*, his earlier tragedy, and *Merchant of Venice*. He mastered his craft in these plays, and at no stage did he permit his poetic faculty to dominate his drama. After this phase, Shakespeare turned his attention to English history, deriving his material mainly from *Holinshed's Chronicles*. He took his subjects in a

moral order, beginning with the weakest and worst kings and ending with his ideal of kinship in *Henry V*, written in 1599.

Shakespeare burst with buoyancy and self-belief in the second period, 1594 to 1600. His characters were more intensely established regarding psychological insight, humour, and romance. He contributed to the histories of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard II*, and *King John*. Then he wrote the comedies *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Before he turned to Roman history after abandoning the English, Shakespeare gave three masterpieces in comedy. Towards the end of the period, he wrote romantic comedies *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Readers can see Shakespeare's understanding of the world, of human nature and his evaluation of literary and cultural life. He had the largest and the most comprehensive soul to understand the world around him. The critic David Daiches says, "He had the true objectivity of the artist, the supreme craftsmanship of the man of the theatre, a human curiosity about man and his nature, an extraordinary ability to conceive and create a character and an unrivalled mastery of the English Language."

As a well-reputed dramatist, Shakespeare's mastermind attained its radiance in the third period, 1601- 1608. The period was dominated by the four great tragedies – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. The tragedies are undoubtedly Shakespeare's greatest plays. *Hamlet* excels in the intellectual character of the hero and the modern nature of his problems. *Macbeth* is an antithesis of *Hamlet*, the tragedy evolving from the hero's all-encompassing ambition. *Othello* grips the heart and holds it due to the marvellous plot-web. Jealousy and suspicion, the tragic flaw of the protagonist, Othello, leads him to fall from a higher status and his ultimate demise. *King Lear* is the tragedy of a barbaric age and filial emotional displacement. Shakespeare perhaps was at the height of his dramatic ability in *King Lear*, blending his language and meter to heighten the dramatic effect, of which the meeting of Lear and Cordelia may serve as an illustration. A suffering or saddened spirit could not write Shakespearean tragedies. They are too royally designed, masterfully controlled, guided, rounded, and finished even remotely to label their author as sad or melancholic.



In the early seventeenth century, he wrote some romances, including *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. These plays are "Dark" or "Bitter" Comedies. With *Julius Caesar* in 1601, followed by *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare turned to Roman history, borrowing his source from Plutarch. His Roman play, *Julius Caesar*, is known for its majestically historical and solemn in its dignity. Shakespeare's dramaturgy is the plot, structure, characterisation, climax, and justification of moral value at the end of the plays. The tragic flaw or weakness of the character, fate, chance, and hamartia, and the dramatic skills of Shakespeare make his plays grandeur. His use of human psychology and a negative capability are seen in all their magnificence and variety. The last phase, from 1608 to 1612, shows remarkable information in Shakespeare's drama. Life's endless suffering, tribulations, and vexatious nature are overcome by love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and grace in his plays during this time. Shakespeare attained mental maturity, calm, serene, and soothing ripeness in the last period of his life. He wrote four plays with a profound knowledge of life – *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Pericles*. These plays have scenes of pardon and reconciliation. These plays show Shakespeare's calmer and serener outlook on life and an extension of Shakespeare's magic.

The worldwide attraction of Shakespeare is well acknowledged. The author's characters possess a timeless quality, as they accurately depict enduring qualities of the human experience rather than being confined to the context of their civilisation. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare was a product of his era. Nevertheless, he has effectively demonstrated his enduring presence within the realm of theatre. Shakespeare drew inspiration from the mythologies of Latin and Greek mythology, subsequently incorporating them into his distinctive dramatic style. In addition, he authored a total of 154 sonnets. No writer can match the breadth of his artistic abilities, as he possesses a remarkable amalgamation of skills as both a playwright and a poet. He exhibited a wealth of human feelings, such as solid passion, love, hate, hope, despair, agony, bliss, sensuality, and sublimity. He took a broad view of life, enabling him to express himself in human and universal terms. Shakespeare's plays are also known for their excellent use of language and high-sounding vocabulary. Shakespearean plays depict the yearning for

scientific learning and human philosophy in its myriad and intense forms. His unquestioned genius made him appealing to the era of flux in which he wrote and makes him relevant even today after significant scientific advancement. He filled his plays with various characters, scenes, situations, events, and emotions; undoubtedly, Shakespeare became a literary giant.

### 1.9 Ben Jonson (1573 – 1637)

Ben Jonson was born in London and educated at Westminster Grammar School. After a long struggle with his life, he found good fortune in 1590. In 1592, Jonson became an actor and started his career as a dramatist with the satiric comedy *Every Man in His Humour*. He wrote plays for the public stage and masques for the court. His plays can be divided into comedies and tragedies. In his comedies, he aimed to return to the satirical and realistic comedy of the classical dramatists. He introduced the concept of the “Comedy of Humours” and portrayed individuals by one marked characteristic.

His early comedies, *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), *Cynthia's Revels*, and *Poetaster*, establish his mastery over plot contribution, wit, hearty humour, and fun. He attained fame with comedies such as *The Alchemist*, *Volpone*, *Epicene*, or *The Silent Woman*. He portrayed realistic contemporary London with its manners, foibles, and affection. His realism was guided by moral insights derived from his vast world experience. He chose Latin as his model for characterisation and enormously liked the medieval theory of humour, representing air, water, fire, and earth as Sanguine, Choler, Phlegm, and Melancholy. To him, the proper mixture of the four humours completes a person. Under the influence of the dominating humour, a person may become greedy, jealous, cowardly, or melancholy. He comprehensively explained the concept of humour in his play *Every Man Out of His Humour*. Jonson's versatility, grace, wit, insight into contemporary life, and manners made his comedies very popular, earning him the nickname “Rare Ben Jonson” for the originality of his art.

### 1.10 Francis Beaumont (1584 – 1616) and John Fletcher (1579 – 1625)

Beaumont and Fletcher demonstrated exceptional proficiency in the collaborative creation of numerous comedies. Both Shakespeare and Jonson significantly influenced the theatrical landscape; nonetheless, it might be argued that their plays possess only a surface quality. They wrote tragic comedies with imaginative plots, witty dialogue, and simple style. *A King and No King* (1611), *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1601), *The Scornful Lady* (1613), and *The Maid's Tragedy* (1610) are among their remarkable tragedies.

### 1.11 Thomas Middleton (1570 – 1627)

Thomas Middleton was born in London. His most potent play is *The Changeling* (1624). His other plays include *The Witch*, *Women Beware Women*, and *The Spanish Gypsy*. He was a keen observer and critic of the life of his time and reached great heights in his career.

### 1.12 John Webster (1580 – 1625)

John Webster was born as the son of a London tailor. He acquired classical knowledge with the help of several friends who assisted in his learning. In 1624, Webster wrote four plays – *The White Devil* (1608), *Appius and Virginia* (1609), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), and *The Devil's Law Case* (1623). Webster's dramatic strength lies in his insight into character, motives, and poetic imagination. The murder scene in *The Duchess of Malfi* and the trial scene in *The White Devil* are supreme examples of Elizabethan drama for their exquisite dramatic style and creative characterisations. The revenge tragedy was Webster's favoured theme, and he worked with themes of pity and terror, employing ghosts, dumb shows, and murder to create an atmosphere of horror. He saw life as futile and showed no mercy to his characters. He was a literary artist of elusive and subtle charm. Swinburne described him as having "delicate fluency and distilled refinement of expression" and called Webster a "limb of Shakespeare."

### 1.13 Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626)

Francis Bacon is admirably called the “Father of the English Essay.” Though many prose writers existed before Bacon, he claimed the name for a composition of moderate length, characterised by brevity, freedom, informality, and a personal element. All his essays are widely read. His essays bear the merit of vast learning, varied experiences, and accurate observation of people and matters. He was clear-headed in his aim, sagacious in his thoughts, and prudent in his actions.

Bacon was a pioneer in several fields of thought. In his work, *Advancement of Learning*, he sought to consolidate and unify knowledge. In his *New Atlantis*, he encouraged the scientific temper of readers. He wrote 58 essays on all subjects, dealing with political, moral, domestic, scientific, moral, and religious subjects. In all his writings, Bacon consistently maintained the position of a severe teacher and advisor. His essays offer advice to the readers, keeping the reader at a respectable distance.

Bacon started writing his essay with the influence of the French philosopher – cum – Writer Montaigne. Bacon borrowed the form of the essays from the French master and modified it to suit his high seriousness and stable manner. He does not possess the lively humour or charming informality of Montaigne. Bacon calls his essay ‘Counsels Civil and Moral’ for their emphasis on nature and moral values.

The initial compilation of Bacon's essays, published in 1597, consisted of just ten. The writings published in 1612 and 1625 demonstrate an apparent enhancement in Bacon's understanding of the essay genre. The writings are evaluated based on their sophisticated writing style and coherent argumentation. Concepts are elucidated through the utilisation of analysis and illustration.

Bacon's essays are a compendium of worldly wisdom. His essays deal with day-to-day affairs, so he claimed they ‘come home to men's business and bosoms.’ Through his essays, Bacon is a teacher, not a companion. He titled his essays with “Of,” and some of his essay titles, such as “Of Travel,” “Of Marriage and Single Life,” and “Of Friendship,” deal with eternal human passions. Bacon appears in his essays as a moral

philosopher, political thinker, votary of science, critic of irrational religious practices and a thoroughly practical man of the world.

*Notes*

Bacon's greatness as an essayist mainly depends on his simple style, clear arguments, and adequate flexibility in dealing with profound and ordinary concepts. He often uses apologies, similes, metaphors, and similar devices. He employs quotations and allusions to illustrate his viewpoint with clarity. His words are always precise, economical, and accurate for the situation. It is true that, undoubtedly, "Bacon is the Father of the English Essay."

### **1.14 Summing Up**

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, she found attached to the court not only musicians and minstrels but also eight players of interludes. The early part of Elizabeth's reign saw the triumph of the professional actor over the amateur and the supplanting of the old players of interludes by better-equipped companies. These companies were formed by nobles, anxious to please their sovereign. Drama transitioned from church services into famous miracle plays in the early period. During the Elizabethan period, professionalism emerged, and professional performers began to act. Initially, the child actors from the royal chapels and public schools played an essential role in the drama. Children could be trained to do almost anything, and their manner in performance was encouraging. Shakespeare entered the Elizabethan theatre as a child actor. He enthusiastically learned the skills, techniques, and dramatisation for over ten years. The universal dramatist, Shakespeare, was moulded in the amateur theatre. Shakespeare was not merely famed by the Elizabethan theatre; instead, the Elizabethan theatre was made famous by the vernacular plays of Shakespeare. Following Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Webster, the University Wits, and other minor dramatists emerged due to the theatre's popularity. Shakespeare formulated the principles for writing plays with characteristics such as stage design, plot, character, action, the three unities, and dramatic techniques. Spencer is called 'the poet's poet, who introduced 'the Spencerian Stanza 'to the world of poetry. Spencer was endowed with a rich, ornate imagination, and his descriptions of nature are sensuous and picturesque.

Apart from plays, the Elizabethan Era is also known for prose and essays by Francis Bacon. His essays are a compendium of worldly wisdom. Bacon introduced the formula for writing thought-provoking essays. That is why Bacon has been called 'the Father of English Essay.' During the era's close, a school of poets with new styles and thoughts emerged as 'Metaphysical Poets.' John Donne, Herbert, Marvell, and Henry Vaughan contributed their love, sacred, and religious poems to developing British literature. Thus, the Elizabethan Age significantly contributed to the genres of drama, sonnets, and essays.

### 1.15 Model Questions

1. What are the literary features of the Elizabethan Age?
2. Who were the University Wits?
3. How does Spenser celebrate love and marriage in his *Prothalamion*?
4. Write on Spenserian sonnet and stanza.
5. Discuss John Donne as a Metaphysical poet.
6. Write on the poetic techniques used by Donne.
7. Why is Bacon called a pioneer in several fields of thought?
8. Bacon's essays are a compendium of worldly wisdom-Discuss.
9. Why is Marlowe a successful dramatist among the University Wits?
10. Write on Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*.
11. What are the literary features of the Elizabethan Age?
12. What are Shakespeare's historical plays?
13. Write on the romantic comedies of Shakespeare.
14. What are the four major tragedies of Shakespeare?
15. How does Shakespeare express his love, intense passion, and sublimity in his sonnets?
16. Shakespeare is one of the greatest dramatists of the Elizabethan Age – Discuss.
17. Comment on Ben Johnson's *The Comedy of Humours*.
18. Webster's *The White Devil* and *Duchess of Malfi* are revenge tragedies-discuss.
19. Write on Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware of Women*.
20. Bacon is the 'father of English Essays – 'Discuss.
21. What are the unique features of Metaphysical Poetry?
22. Who were the sacred poets of the 17th century?

23. What is conceit?
24. To His Coy Mistress is a love poem of Marvell-Comment.
25. George Herbert as a religious poet – Discuss.
26. Write an essay on the great tragedies of Shakespeare.
27. Name the Roman plays of Shakespeare.
28. What are the dark comedies of Shakespeare?
29. Comment on the Elizabethan theatre.
30. Discuss John Donne's 'Canonization' as a religious poem.





**Structure:**

- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744)
- 2.4 Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745)
- 2.5 Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719) & Richard Steele (1672 – 1729)
- 2.6 Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731)
- 2.7 John Dryden (1631 – 1700)
- 2.8 John Bunyan (1628-1688)
- 2.9 Samuel Butler (1612-80)
- 2.10 Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)
- 2.11 Edward Gibbon (1737-94)
- 2.12 Henry Fielding (1707-1754)
- 2.13 Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)
- 2.14 Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)
- 2.15 Edmund Burke (1729-1797)
- 2.16 Summing up
- 2.17 Self Assessment Questions

**2.1 Learning Objectives:**

After completing this unit, the reader shall be able to know

- The features of the Augustan Age.
- Admire the versification of the Pope.
- Know Swift's Satire.
- Addison and Steele's versatile style in prose.
- Admire the realistic fiction of Daniel Defoe.
- The style of periodical essays.
- Dryden – the Father of English Criticism.
- Dryden's satirical works.
- John Bunyan – the Father of the English Novel.
- The allegorical works of John Bunyan.
- Samuel Butler, a classical writer.
- Dr. Johnson's versatility in composing the English Dictionary.
- Essays of Samuel Johnson.

- Samuel Richardson's Epistolary novels.
- Henry Fielding's satire and parody.

## 2.2 Introduction

The original Augustan Age was the brilliant literary period of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid under the Roman Emperor Augustan (27 B.C. – 14 A.D). However, the name has also been applied to the period in England from 1660 – 1745 based on the remarkable writer of this period. The writers Pope, Swift, Addison and Steele, Dryden, Bunyan, Dr. Johnson, and Daniel Defoe were primarily prose writers of the period.

The years 1660 – 1745 have been called by several names, but the chief among them are the Augustan Age, the New Classical Age, the Age of Pope, and Johnson. Thus, the Age of the Pope is more precisely identified as the Augustan age, covering the first half of the Eighteenth Century. The term Augustan Age was first used by Goldsmith, equating it with the reign of King Augustus in Italy. It was considered the Golden Age of Latin Literature. The Augustan Poets' focus was on courtly life. The poetry was didactic and satiric. The Augustan poets held the superiority of the couplet form, and the poetry became tedious, superficial, and overly pompous. As a form of writing, the novel developed in the Augustan age. The word "novel" means new. It came into being during the 18th century. However, this form of literature was not born suddenly. The novel became famous not only because there were practitioners of this form but also because a need was felt for a new form of expressing creative thought in writing. The novel, as a form, became as popular as its previous genre, the essay, because of the coming of a new readership in the form of the middle class. The birth of the novel also signalled a break from the traditional rules of classicism. Other genres, like drama and poetry, could not easily overcome the traditional rules.

The novel had its origins in prose fiction. Prose fiction started to be written during the Elizabethan Age. The writers of Romance, John Lyly, Thomas Nash, Thomas Lodge, and Robert Greene, wrote *Euphuistic Romances*, which are in an affected and artificial style. John Bunyan used the form of the novel as an allegory when he wrote his universal novel *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's attempt was also an attempt to use the term biography properly. Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, which had

elements of biography in it, but his novels had so many elements of the picaresque that they can only be regarded as romances. Although Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which came nearly ten years later, took the form of the novel. Novels of the 18th century accurately represented contemporary society and included all the features we see in the novel today.

### 2.3 Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744)

Pope was the most influential writer of his time. His poetry is stimulating with pulsating vigour, the individual words holding very vibrant and instructive meanings. When Pope begins, Dryden stops writing. Pope had a singular devotion to the art and craft of poetry. He read the classics, and most of his knowledge was acquired through self-study. Pope was a prominent figure of the classical school of poetry and the foremost man of letters. He was the spokesman of his age of poetry.

Pope's initial work was a set of pastorals fashioned on Virgil and published in 1709. His "Essay on Criticism" (1711) brought him fame. He expressed his ideas in the poem, much inspired by Horace. He achieved this through constant polishing, purity, and refining his dictum. His poetry needs the Wordsworthian beauty of nature, Shelley's, for his harmonious melodies. Pope's poetry is town poetry, strictly limited to London's fashionable and artificial society.

Pope's masterpiece, "The Rape of the Lock", was published in 1712. The poem has didactic and satiric implications. It is based on real-life events, and the poem tells of the ensuing commotion over the cutting of a lock of hair from the head of a young lass. It is a mock-heroic poem, where Pope gave a ridiculous theme an outwardly heroic form and treatment. Pope's lyrical poem is "Ode for Music on St. Cecilia's Day" (1713), but it was unsuccessful. 1715, he issued the first volume of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* translation. These translations brought considerable fortune to the Pope. Pope is an architect and a craftsman with a delicate and crunchy touch.

Pope's most outstanding achievement rests in his satiric and epistle-type poetry. His principal work is "Satiric and Epistle of Horace

Imitated,” which included the famous *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. Pope’s study of Addison as Atticus and Lord Harvey as Sporus in this poem has become a famous satirical work. He published a satiric on dullness, “Dunciad,” in 1728. “The Essay on Man” (1733) established the superb craftsmanship of Pope. A poem in four epistles is purported to be a defence of the moral order of the universe and an explanation of evil. “The New Dunciad” was published in 1742.

Pope was an excellent craftsman and wit and contributed to the perfection of the heroic couplet in poetry. His poetic style is epigrammatic, neat, and compact. The perfection of manners, unique style, expression of powerful irony, and satire made his poetry supreme. However, Dr. Johnson defended Pope by asking, “If there is no poetry in Pope, where else poetry is to be found?”

## 2.4 Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745)

Swift was born in Dublin. He had his formal education at Kilkenny School at Trinity College, Dublin. Swift began his career as the secretary to Sir William Temple and, in 1699, became the vicar of Laracor in Ireland. In 1714, he became the Dean of St. Patrick in Dublin. As he faced an unhappy situation in his personal life, he became pessimistic in temperament. Swift was one of the greatest British prose writers. His prose satires are well-known. *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* are full-length prose satires published in 1704. Swift adopts a mock-heroic tone in *The Battle of Books*. In *A Tale of a Tub*, he exposed the corruption in contemporary Christianity, which was written as an allegorical story. Swift’s furious sarcasm and theory make us think he had great contempt for the average human. His most famous work is *Gulliver’s Travels*, published in 1726. It appeals to both children and adults. It is a travel story of a surgeon, Lemuel Gulliver, in four parts. It is a fascinating tale of travels in wonderlands, exposing the degradation of man. The book reveals Swift as a master satirist. Swift used a simple, direct, colloquial narration style and avoided rhetorical style. He wrote on all manner of subjects. He has humour in his narration and achieves perfect clarity of expression and passion. There is a satirical force and an ingenuity of fancy unparalleled among his rivals in this field.

## 2.5 Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719) & Richard Steele (1672 – 1729)

Notes

Joseph Addison went to Oxford, where he became a Fellow of Magdalen College. He was a serious and accomplished scholar and became a Secretary of State. He was a master of the art of gentle living. He was a man of extreme refinement and simplicity. His first poem, “The Campaign”, written in 1704, gave him a reputation as one of the major poets of the age. It was written in a heroic couplet with the theme of a sedentary civilian’s feeling for the glory of war. His school and college friend Richard Steele published a periodical, *The Tattler*, in 1709. Addison offered his services as a contributor to it. He contributed 42 essays, and Steele’s share was about 188. Then both started *The Spectator* in 1712, which obtained wide popularity and greatly influenced the reading public of the period. In *The Spectator*, Addison rapidly became the dominating spirit, contributing 274 essays out of 555. Steele wrote 236 essays. In 1713, Addison assisted Steele with *The Guardian*, which was only a moderate success, and Addison contributed 51.

Addison’s writing shows variety, decency, delicacy and insight into human character. His sense of humor is evident in all his essays. Addison is also a master of satire and irony. He adopted a new kind of English prose style. He brought English prose down to earth from pomp and artificially. He made English prose an instrument for the expression of social thought. Dr. Johnson said, “Addison’s style is familiar but not coarse and elegant but not ostentatious”.

Apart from prose, Steele also wrote some prose comedies like *The Funeral* (1705), *The Lying Lover* (1703) and *The Tender Husband* (1705). They were often called the Restoration Comedies. He also contributed short-lined periodicals such as *The Englishman* (1713), *The Reader* (1714) and *The Plebeian* (1719).

The essays of Addison and Steele were written with a social and moral purpose. They give the best pictures of the new social life of England. The essays portrayed a group of characters that became immortal. Steele called Addison’s essays “Advices and Reflection”. They aimed to “observe upon the manners of the pleasurable assumed the role

of the Spectator of public life and declared that his aim was to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain”.

Both Addison and Steele wrote on several subjects – politics, religion, morals, manners, sports, arts, literature and abnormalities of men. Their essays conclude with moral sentiment. The character in the Spectator club, Sir Roger de Coverley, was an ideal country squire: good, jovial and inoffensive. Coverley papers reveal the moral purpose of the writers, a concern for harmony, simplicity, rationalism and taste in public and private life. Reforming society was the sole motto of Addison and Steele through their essays. They were smiling at the world in an atmosphere of friendship. They made English prose an instrument for the expression of social thought. To conclude, Addison and Steele infused their writing with a severe moral purpose, the purpose of civilizing man and society.

## 2.6 Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731)

Daniel Defoe was born in London. His father, Thomas Foe, was a butcher. He spent five years in a training academy with the hope of becoming a minister. Defoe then travelled through Europe as a hosiery salesman and became a successful merchant. He changed his jobs several times before he discovered his real vocation as a writer with the publication of his famous *Robinson Crusoe*.

Defoe turned to writing to make money. His poem “The True-born Englishman” (1701) was the most famous one among his poems. He also wrote political pamphlets. *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* was a satire on persecutes of the Presbyterian dissenters. He underwent several imprisonments for his political pamphlets. He knew the taste of the reading public. At heart, he was a Puritan, so his writing had a didactic strain in them. He wrote several short biographies with accuracy. He also worked as a spy, assuming a lot of false names and disguises. This theme of changeable identity is reflected in his work, *Robinson Crusoe*. It was based on the story of a shipwrecked seaman, Alexander Selkirk. Defoe focused on the actual condition of everyday life and survival and adapted it into a story. Defoe tells in detail how Crusoe built himself a house, domesticated goats, made a boat and lived a meagre life. He rescues a poor savage, Friday, from cannibals. Friday becomes Crusoe’s loyal friend and

servant. In the novel's second part, Defoe narrates Crusoe's visits to the island and the death of Friday. This adventurous novel made Defoe a revolutionary in English Literature and helped in defining the new genre of the novel.

With this success, Defoe then wrote *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1721), *Colonel Jack* (1721) and *Roxana* (1724). *Moll Flanders* is the story of a tough-street – wise heroine, and it includes dark prison scenes drawn from Defoe's own prison experience in Newgate. His novels have a resemblance to truth. They are noted for their minute realism and detailed description. Defoe presents his made-up stories as true stories, and his colloquial and homely style makes them credible. Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) becomes a genuine record of an eyewitness to the Plague.

Defoe was more interested in contemporary life and events than imaginary. He believed that none is pure. Through his novels, he portrayed his characters as public pickpockets, vagabonds and women of easy virtue, balancing it with occasional moralising. Defoe was a prolific writer and produced over 500 books and pamphlets during his lifetime.

Defoe is known to most readers as a pioneer novelist of adventure and low life. His biographies regarded him as a great novelist and as a martyr to liberal principles and homely piety. He is the first typical Non-conformist or Dissenter in English Literature. His journalistic originality appears in his abandonment of the dialogue form and violent partisanship. He was also a perfect journalist. He cultivated moderation. His first non-fiction was the *An Essay Upon Projects* (1697), a surprising display of versatility and modern ideas.

His final years were mysterious, and his last book, *The Complete English Gentleman*, was not published until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are no flashes of revelation in his work. His works always have an element of ordinariness that gives an almost unbearable illusion of truth. As a writer and as a figure in public affairs, Defoe is second only to Swift. No man has been adversely affected by the sheer quality of his work. Defoe has occupied a permanent place in the minds of readers as an incalculable lover of liberty, which is the real mark of a tribute to the people.

## 2.7 John Dryden (1631 – 1700)

Dryden was one of those rare poets who linked up the Renaissance with the Neo-Classical Age. He was a very versatile man of letters. He had a classical passion for structural clarity, symmetry, obedience to rules, reasoning, and architectural instinct. He was acknowledged to be the “Father of English Criticism.” He made his mark in all spheres of writing as a dramatist, a critic, a prose writer and a poet.

In 1658, he wrote the “Heroic Stanzas” on the death of Cromwell. He was appointed poet Laureate in 1668. Dryden’s satirical poem *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is the most admired and celebrated of Dryden’s satires. The subject is the succession to the English throne and the machinations involved. His satire *Mac Flecknoe* (1678) was a scathing attack on Shadwell. His two poems, “Religio Laice” (1682) and “The Hind and the Panther” (1687), reveal Dryden’s ability for prolonged poetic statements for their outspokenness, but they eventually landed him in trouble. Dryden’s poetry is a combination of masculine command, effortlessness of presentation and refined charm.

As a dramatist, Dryden published his first play, *The Wild Gallantin*, in 1663. *The Rival Ladies* (1664) and *The Indian Emperor* (1667) are two plays where Dryden could establish his reputation as a playwright. He wrote 14 plays, of these, the most important are *The Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr* (1669), *The Conquest of Granada* (1670) and *Amboyna* (1672). *Aurangzeb* (1676) is a rhymed tragedy and *Spanish Friar* (1681) is a comedy.

Dryden’s *All for Love* (1678), the best play, is a retelling of the story of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra. Dryden combined the classical theory of drama with the romantic approach of the Elizabethans. The play cannot be equalised with the original play of Shakespeare. His famous critical insistence on the three unities and strictness of form are remarkable. His *Preface to Fables* appeared in 1699 and proved his poetic skills. Dryden was the best satirist of the period.

## 2.8 John Bunyan (1628-1688)



John Bunyan, the son of a brazier, was born in Bedfordshire. He was educated at the village school, and at the age of sixteen, he got service in the Civil War. He wrote the authorised version of the Bible, which made him famous in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His literary career began in 1656 with two pamphlets on the gospels. He had the literary contribution of sixty books to his credit. He was a preacher, mystic and puritan full of righteousness. He was arrested for the unlawful action of being an unlicensed preacher. During the imprisonment, he wrote *The Pilgrims Progress* (1678), *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682).

Bunyan's major works are allegorical. His readers enjoy his narrative of double meaning without an effort. *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is noted for its autobiographical elements revealing the author's spiritual struggle. *The Holy War* is another allegory. His language is free from the style of common Renaissance scholars. Bunyan can be considered the "Father of the English Novel" because *The Pilgrim's Progress* satisfies all the requirements of a novel. Bunyan's style is unique in prose. Thus, Bunyan is one of the pioneers of the English novel as he possessed an insight into character, humor, pathos and imagination.

## 2.9 Samuel Butler (1612–1680)

Samuel Butler was born in Worcestershire as a son of a farmer. He was a clerk to Sir Samuel Luke, in whose service he obtained the experience of the Puritans. In 1663, he published *Hudibras*. It is a severe satire on the Puritans, who were the reverse of popular when the king returned. It is modelled upon the adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the heroes of the Spanish adventure. They are respective parallels to Sir Hudibras and his squire Ralpho. Hudibras becomes a Puritan knight who undergoes many absurd adventures with Ralpho. It is wholly satirical, but the poem is composed artfully. The adventures of Hudibras cause humor and the greatest ridicule of the maladroit hero. The meter of *Hudibras* is in a jiggling octosyllabic couplet. Each couplet is clenched with an ingenious rhyme scheme.

## 2.10 Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire. He could not get a proper education and moved to London to be trained as a printer. He remained a printer throughout his life, finally becoming the printer of the journal of the House of Commons and Law printer to the king. He was a rigid moralist, a loyal abstainer and a vegetarian. Once, he was assigned to prepare a series of model letters for the three young girls. And also he wrote letters for those who could not write letters for themselves. These experiences gave him an insight into the art of letter writing. This experience motivated him to write novels in a series of letters. This technique is called 'Epistolary novel'.

Richardson had become an established printer by the time he published his first novel, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*, in 1740. It was the first epistolary novel in English and marked the beginning of sentimental fiction. He also had a good understanding of the behavior of women. The novel tells the story of a woman named Pamela Andrews. Pamela serves as a servant in the house of a lady who has died recently. The deceased lady's son makes advances to her. Pamela does not yield to the pressure that he puts on her. He learns from her diary that he has to propose to her if he would like to marry her. Pamela gets married to the young man, but he does not change his loose ways and still chases women. Pamela succeeds in changing the wayward behavior of her husband. Thus, her virtue is rewarded in the end.

The novel not only became popular in England but also in Europe. The popularity was due to the fact that Richardson wrote realistic, sentimental prose. He also wanted to promote virtue throughout the novel and assumed a moral and didactic tone in the novel. Richardson followed this novel with two more epistolary novels, *Clarissa, Or The History of a Young Lady* in 1748 and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753. In *Clarissa*, he presented the feminine point of view, which later inspired novelists like Jane Austen. It gave him a European reputation. The novel is about Clarissa, a young lady from a reputed family wooed by Lovelace, an attractive but unscrupulous man of fashion. In both Pamela and Clarissa Harlowe, Richardson gave the picture of a girl's struggle against adverse fate, and this melodramatic character made the novel popular.

Richardson consistently portrays the characters who belong to the humble middle class and their sentiments. His narration and

characterisation are beautifully presented through the skill of writing sentimental dialogues. He was the first novelist of character in English. His novels can be read for literary style, wit and pleasantries. Though his novels are long and vast descriptions of unimportant events, they are remarkable for their sentiments and pathos. The feminine quality and family sentiments influenced Fanny Burney and Jane Austen later. Thus, Samuel Richardson was a remarkable novelist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.11 Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)**

Edward Gibbon was the greatest historian of his age. He became a Roman Catholic while staying at Oxford, though eventually, he returned to Protestantism. He was a friend of Dr. Johnson and cultivated the intellectual habits of those who belonged to the great Master's circle. During the five years he was abroad, Gibbon travelled widely, and the idea of writing the famous history of Rome came to him while he was in that great city. In 1774, Gibbon became a Member of Parliament.

Gibbon's most important work is *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. This work, in six volumes, was published between 1776 and 1778. The theme of the work was the disintegration of the ancient world and the establishment of modern civilization. It is the history of Rome from the second century to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Gibbon's history is regarded as the greatest historical work in English. Critics point out that the work suffers from certain defects arising from Gibbon's hostility towards Christianity and his lack of faith in human progress. In 1779, Gibbon replied to his critics in *A Vindication of Some Passages in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters*.

As a stylist, Gibbon is among the best in English. His contribution to literature is that he brought history and literature together and showed that the rhythm and movement of history are best narrated in prose, having similar qualities.

### **2.12 Henry Fielding (1707-1754)**

Henry Fielding was born at Sharpham Park in Somerset. His father was a general under the Duke of Marlborough. He was a law student at Leyden. He went to London and began his literary career, where he began writing for theatre. He criticised the Government of Robert Walpole through the plays. The Theatre Licensing Act of 1737 was brought in to curb playwrights like him. *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, the Great was one of his plays that is worth mentioning. He wrote comedies and farces parodying other playwrights.

Fielding took the law and simultaneously started writing novels. His first novel was *Shamela* (1741), a parody of Richardson's novel *Pamela*. However, this novel never attained popularity. Fielding then wrote *Joseph Andrews* in 1742, which deals with the story of Joseph, the brother of Pamela. This novel was also intended as a parody of *Pamela*. Joseph was a young man who was tempted by his mistress. Fielding keeps up the satire and parody till the tenth chapter of the novel and discards the design, and then it becomes an epic. In the novel, Fielding's motive is satire. Fielding thus ensured himself a place among the serious novelists of his day.

Fielding's other work, *The Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great* (1743), is not a novel but a piece of ironic portraiture of a highwayman. His greatest work is *The History of Tom Jones*, published in 1749. It is a novel written in the picaresque style and is considered Fielding's masterpiece. Tom Jones tells the story of a foundling who has a lot of adventure before finding his fortune. The hero Tom Jones is a tramp who goes to London in quest of fortune. The world presented in the novel is vast and crowded with figures. The first part discusses the countrymen and their lifestyle; the second is devoted to city men and their manners. The novel presents a rich and realistic picture of English life in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Fielding thus displays a deeper understanding of human beings and gives us a more wholesome view of the society of his day.

*Amelia* (1751) is his next work, which tells the story of a courageous and patient woman matched with a weak-willed husband. Fielding considered the novel as a form of art like the epic. He maintained a sense of unity and balance in the construction of the novel. He was a satirist but not a moralist. The most striking feature of novels is the essential humanity of the characters. He exposed hypocrisy and affectation

and stood against the cloying sentimentality of his time. Richardson excelled in portraying feminine qualities, but Fielding excelled in drawing a variety of men. As a novelist of contemporary manners, Fielding is unequalled by any of his contemporaries.

### 2.13 Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Dr. Johnson was the greatest man of letters in the eighteenth century. His reputation owes much to the art of James Boswell, whose biography *Life of Samuel Johnson* appeared in 1791. Boswell's work is written in such a realistic manner that it is accepted as the greatest book of that kind in English literature.

Dr. Johnson came to London in 1737 with his famous pupil David Garrick. He began by contributing essays, reviews and parliamentary letters to the Gentleman's magazine. In 1738, he published his first important poetic work *London*. In 1744, Johnson published the life of his friend Richard Savage, and in 1748, two of his well-known works, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a poem and *Irene*, a play, were published. From 1747 to 1756, Johnson was engaged in the task of preparing *A Dictionary of the English Language*, which laid the foundations of English lexicography. He undertook to define every word and illustrate the definitions with quotations taken from the whole range of English Literature. None before him had undertaken such a tremendous task of describing English words. Johnson's work was the first systematic attempt at lexicography, though it was not perfect at its first publication.

In 1762, Johnson contributed two periodicals, *The Rambler* and *The Tatler*. His *Dictionary of the English Language* had made him independent and famous. His edition of Shakespeare with the famous preface appeared in 1765. His other outstanding work is *The Lives of the Poets* (1778), where he accounts for English poetry from Cowley to Gray. It contains some admirable critical appreciation despite Johnson's harsh treatment of Gray and Milton. His last important work, *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, was published in 1775. It was written on his tour of the Hebrides with Boswell.

Dr. Johnson was a classicist and a moralist in literature. As a prose writer, his style was forceful, clear, courageous, and elegant. For

him, literature was not an end in itself but a means to participate in the life around him.

### **2.14 Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)**

Goldsmith was the son of an Irish protestant clergyman. In his early life, he gained a reputation for wilderness and stupidity. Though he was not interested in learning, he managed to take a degree from Trinity College, Dublin and then continued his studies at Edinburgh University on the pretext of studying medicine. In 1775, he undertook a tour of Europe and returned to London in 1756. Between 1764 and 1773, Goldsmith wrote all his important works- two poems, a novel and two plays. His prime contribution to English prose is the group of essays entitled *The Citizen of the World*.

His essays are as personal as the essays of Charles Lamb. The peculiar charm of these is the strong personal element that Goldsmith has introduced in them. The essays are in the form of imaginary letters written by a Chinese named Lien Chi Altangi from London to his friend in China. They are full of shrewd comments on English life and character, and the most distinguishing feature of these essays is their humor and satire. Goldsmith introduced several characters like Man in Black and Beau Tibbs, and Altangi's interaction with them produces many occasions for laughter. The essays are interspersed with stories and anecdotes and quaint observations on humanity in general and the English people in particular.

Goldsmith's fame as an essayist rests on his tenderness of character and insight into human nature. He was a genuine master of sentiment and conservative in style. Goldsmith was informal in his essays and made them free from coarseness and rhetoric.

### **2.15 Edmund Burke (1729-1797)**

Edmund Burke was born in Dublin, Ireland. In 1748, he left his native city and came to London to study law. He soon joined the literary circle of Dr. Johnson and began to concentrate on studying history and philosophy. His first publication, *A Vindication of Natural History* (1756), was anonymous. His subsequent work, *An Enquiry into the Origin of Our*

*Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), attracted much attention from scholars and is regarded as the first important English treatise on aesthetics.

Burke left the field of literature in 1761 and became involved in politics. He became a member of parliament in 1765. The first of his political pamphlets, *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, was published in 1770. The most important element in Burke's political philosophy was a sense of historical continuity. He supported the American colonies in two of his famous speeches, *On American Taxation* (1774) and *On Conciliation with America* (1775). He opposed the French Revolution in his *Reflection on the French Revolution* (1790). The other important works of Burke's are *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796) and *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1795).

One of the most important performances of Burke as an orator was his impeachment of Warrant Hastings in 1788. Two issues that claimed his attention were Catholic Emancipation and the abolition of the slave trade. As Arnold observes, "Burke is so great because almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics; he saturates politics with thought". Burke's style is remarkable for its vigor and originality. He was not a poet, but his prose was poetical in the general vividness of his fancy and richness of invention.

## 2.16 Summing up

Augustan Age witnessed many prominent figures in literature like Pope, Swift, Steele and Addison, Defoe, Dryden, Bunyan, Dr. Johnson, Butler, Richardson, Fielding and Oliver Goldsmith. Literary techniques like satire, irony, parody, and epistolary novels have come into existence during this period in the famous works of the writers. *An Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, *The Dunciad* and *An Essay on Man* are some of the most famous works of Alexander Pope. He is well appreciated for his diction and craftsmanship. In his works, John Dryden had a classical passion for form, clarity, symmetry, obedience to logic, reasoning and architectural instinct. His satirical poems are *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal* and *Mac Flecknoe*. The novel as a literary genre came into existence. The novel had its origin in prose fiction. Daniel Defoe, a major contributor to the genre, wrote a popular picaresque novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. Richardson wrote realistic,

sentimental prose, tried to promote morality through the novels and gave an excellent analysis of women characters. Henry Fielding also experimented with the picaresque mode and gave a wholesome view of the society of his day. Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* are exemplified novels of the age. Steele and Addison's periodical essays expose the real life of British society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.17 Model Questions

1. What is satire?
2. What are the features of Neo-Classical poetry?
3. Define the term 'allegory'.
4. What is the central theme of the poem 'Rape of Lock'?
5. Pope was a prominent figure of the classical school of poetry – Discuss.
6. Why is 'Gulliver's Travels' popular even today?
7. Swift is a great prose satirist – Comment.
8. Discuss the origin and characteristics of the 'Periodical Essay'.
9. Consider Addison and Steele as social critics.
10. Write an essay on Dr. Johnson's contribution to English literature.
11. Examine Dryden's merits as a great prose writer.
12. How do you consider Addison and Steele as pioneers in the field of journalism?
13. Dr. Johnson's 'A Dictionary of the English Language' – Give a brief account.
14. What is the theme of 'The Battle of Books'?
15. What did Defoe focus on in 'Robinson Crusoe'?
16. What are the chief features of Defoe's novels?
17. Who were the prominent writers of the Augustan age?
18. Comment on Dryden's 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy'.



19. 'Absalam and Achitophel' is the most celebrated work of Dryden's satires – substantiate.
20. Bunyan's 'The Pilgrims Progress' is an allegory – Discuss.
21. Write a short note on Bunyan's 'Authorized Version of the Bible.'
22. Give an account of Samuel Butler's 'The Adventures of Hudibras'.
23. What is an ode?
24. Write on the structure of 'Heroic Couplet'.
25. Discuss Oliver Goldsmith as an essayist.
26. Comment on the prose works of Edmund Burke.
27. Write on 'epistolary novel'.
28. How did Richardson perfect in the epistolary style?
29. Why did it become popular?
30. Write an essay on the literary contributions of Samuel Richardson.
31. Write on Fielding's *Tom Jones*.
32. How does the story of *Tom Jones* progress?
33. Comment on Fielding's contribution to the novel, with reference to the form.
34. Find out the role that periodicals played in the development of the English novel.
35. A novel can be considered as a work of art – comment with reference to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century novels.



**Structure:**

- 3.1 Learning objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 The Birth Romantic Age
- 3.4 The Pre- Romantic Poets
  - 3.4.1 Thomas Gray (1716-1771)
  - 3.4.2 William Blake (1757-1827)
  - 3.4.3 Robert Burns (1759 – 1796)
- 3.5 The Romantic Poets
  - 3.5.1 William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)
  - 3.5.2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
  - 3.5.3 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
  - 3.5.4 John Keats (1795-1821)
  - 3.5.6 George Gordon Lord Byron (1785-1824)
- 3.6 The Prose Writers of Romantic Age
  - 3.6.1 Charles Lamb (1775-1834)
  - 3.6.2 William Hazlit (1778-1830)
  - 3.6.3 Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)
- 3.7 Summing up
- 3.8 Self Assessment Questions

**3.1 Learning objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader shall be able to know

- The Historical Background
- The social conditions and influences

- The relationship of the Romantic Poets with nature.
- Tabulate the specific characteristics of the Pre-Romantic and Romantic Poetry.
- The poetry for the rural and rustic atmosphere
- The treatment of nature in poems
- The glorification of nature, in various forms, in the poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron and others.
- The personal essays of Charles Lamb
- Literary Criticism of Hazlitt
- Autobiographical works of De Quincey

### **3.2 Introduction**

The third unit discusses the origin, growth and development of the Romantic Movement or The Age of Return to Nature, with its prominent poets from Wordsworth to Charles Lamb.

### **3.3 The Birth of the Romantic Age**

The French Revolution began with the fall of the prison of Bastille on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1789. It shook the very fabric of European feudalistic society and heralded the dawn of a new era, the era of Democracy. Everyone felt like they were living in the twilight of a new dawn in human history. The whole atmosphere was changed for the Romantics due to the events of 1789. For them, it was like the golden age of humankind. The sun, the moon, stars, the sky, nature, man and humanity assumed a new perspective as the bells of Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality tolled from Hotel De Ville in Paris. All divisions, classes and differences of birth, rank, wealth or power are considered irrational and completely swept aside as unjustified. Another idea of the Revolution was that of liberty. The movement aimed to return to nature and develop new feelings for nature. The School of Romanticism emphasised the preference of nature over art and the primitive over the sophisticated. Classic art is limited, but Romantic art is infinite. Rene Wellek argued that “on the whole, there was really no misunderstanding about the meaning of romanticism as a new

designation for poetry, as opposed to the poetry of neoclassicism and drawing its inspiration and models from the Middle Age and the Renaissance”.

English Romantic Poetry has certain qualities: subjective rather than objective, fragmentary rather than complete, organic rather than preconceived in form, interest in nature, the supernatural and freedom of expression. Nature is portrayed, worshipped and glorified. The need for the individual to assert his identity against such pressures and intuitively turn to nature are the two fundamental impulses behind Romantic Poetry.

English poetry of the Romantic Period is dominated by six great poets - Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Byron and Scott. Each was conscious of the work of the others and sometimes influenced by one or other of them. Each of them celebrated their specific understanding of the world and their place in it, their insights into self and its relation to others, their reaction to the social and political realities of the time, and their awareness of the natural world around them.

### **3.4 The Pre- Romantic Poets**

#### **3.4.1 Thomas Gray (1716-1771)**

Thomas Gray was born in London. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He was a central figure in that drift away from the dominant School of Classicism towards the rising School of Romanticism. Romanticism began with the publication of Thomson's *The Seasons* in 1730 and reached its culmination with the publication of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. His first publication was the “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College” (1747). Gray published his two poems, “Ode to Spring”, and “On the Death of a Favourite Cat”, in 1748. Gray's famous *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* marked a transition from the classicism to the Romanticism. The *Elegy* is romantic in its true humanitarian hate and its feeling for nature. In its subjective tone, in its vague aspiration, fondness for solitude and gloomy meditation, it is quite different from poems of the Augustan School. The two Pindaric odes, “The Progress of Poesy” and “The Bard”, show Gray's attachment to Romanticism.

William Collins, Gray's contemporary, has also aided the burgeoning romantic spirit through poems like "Ode to Simplicity" and "Ode to Evening". These Poems are addressed as the Romantic Precursors. Gray was accurate in nature descriptions and had a scholarly imagination of nature. His poems are known for the touch of philosophical melancholy in tone.

### 3.4.2 William Blake (1757-1827)

Blake was born in London. He did not attend any regular school but went to a drawing school and learnt the art of engraving and drawing. He was the first to introduce romantic note of mysticism in English poetry. He was a transitional poet, even more romantic than the romantics themselves. He was the most disciplined and lonely of all poets who lived in his world, people by phantom specters whom he regarded as more real than the humdrum realities of the physical world.

Blake is well known for his three volumes of poetry, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *Songs of Experiences* (1794), which contain some of the most passionate poems of English Lyricism. His passion for freedom influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. In his Poems, Blake speaks with the voice of a child. He was a visionary and prophet. His poetry showed the love of life in the country, childhood and home. In his *Songs of Experience*, he is a mystic who liberated the human spirit from slavery to matter. Compton Ricketts says, "It is like the singing of a happy child expressed with the happy art of man".

Blake's most famous poem is "The Tyger" (1794), in which Blake unites his state of innocence and experience. "The Tyger", with its burning eyes and frightening appearance, becomes a powerful symbol of the fierce forces in the human soul. The two states of the human soul are symbolised as "The Tyger" and "The Lamb". His poems are based on Christian faith. His poems end with philosophical note to the readers.

### 3.4.3 Robert Burns (1759 – 1796)

Robert Burns was born at Alloway in Scotland. He learnt Latin and French a little. He immigrated to Jamaica to earn his livelihood. He

had written several poems there, like “The Cottar’s Saturday Night”, “To a Mouse” and “The Jolly Beggers”. By publishing these poems, Burns attained immediate fame, and he was honoured as the most popular Scottish peasant-poet. He also wrote some satirical poems like “Death and Dr. Hornbook” and “Address to the Devil”. His “A Red, Red Rose” is a famous poem.

Burns was a self-taught genius but by no means untutored. He used the Spenserian stanza to write “The Cottar’s Saturday Night”. He excelled in the lyric poem. He was influenced by the great poetic tradition of Scotland and the songs of the Scottish folk. His poems showed the spiritual tradition of linking past and present. He revolted against the religious hypocrisy of his age. He was a true democrat and had the revolutionary spirit. He was the poet of rustic life and wrote on the virtues and frailties of his class with great compassion and insight. Burns is remembered as the most popular among the Scottish poets. Thomas Carlyle says, “rarest excellence of Burns’ is his indisputable air of truth”.

### **3.5 The Romantic Poets**

#### **3.5.1 William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)**

Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland. He is the first and foremost of the English Romantic Poets. He was much influenced by the events of the French Revolution in his youth, and he deliberately broke away from the artificial diction of the Augustan and Neo-classical writing tradition of the 18th century. He sought to write in the language of ordinary men and women, of ordinary thoughts, sights and sounds of nature.

His early poetry represents this fresh approach to his art. He spent most of his adult life in the Lake District, which became the source of his poetic inspiration. He is the chief representative of the critical principles in the Romantic movements. He becomes the profoundest writer who prefers nature in all his poems. His feeling for Nature has two aspects. He is keenly sensitive to nature's eternal beauty and glory, mainly the inanimate nature of mountains, woods, fields, streams and flowers in all their infinitely varied aspects.

In Wordsworth's case, a love of nature did not result in a hatred of society. For him, nature offered a refuge from a cruel world. The presence of nature inevitably reminded him of joys and sorrows. He felt that the same spirit animated both. His understanding of human nature widened and deepened in proportion to his increasing love of nature. Hearing humanity's still, sad music many times, he learned that one bond unites all things in the world. Wordsworth differed from other poets in his attitude to nature. Most poets have regarded nature only as a background for human actors. While for Wordsworth, nature is not the stage on which men and women act the drama of their lives. His stage is bare of scenery and holds nothing but actors. Each flower, stream and hill had a peculiar character for him. Wordsworth was a pantheist who believed in a universal soul that animates all nature. In his *Lines Written Few Miles above the Tintern Abbey* (1798), several places in the *The Prelude* (1850), and numerous other poems, Wordsworth speaks of this spirit as knitting together everything in the world in one splendid harmony.

A wonderfully joyous and intimate sympathy with them is one of his controlling impulses. For him, nature is a direct manifestation of the divine power, which he sees as everywhere immanent; he communes with her, the communion he enters as he walks and meditates among the mountains and moons. Nature is to him commune with God. To Wordsworth, nature is man's one of the greatest teachers.

Poetry, according to Wordsworth, is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recalled in tranquility". The language used to express the feeling should be simple and lucid. *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* is the noblest poem, where nature is worshiped as God. It explains the limitations of his poetic genius. Nature is treated absolutely "all in all" in his poems.

Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge began in 1796. He published the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 with the collaboration of Coleridge. It was a turning point in the history of English Poetry. *Lyrical Ballads* discusses the nature and meaning of Poetry. The preface to the work laid down a new theory of the Romanticism.

His early poetry represents this fresh approach to his art "The Thorn", and "The Idiot Boy" were condemned as being trivial and childish



in style. His autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (1850) describes the development of his love of nature from childhood to maturity. Wordsworth shares his personal experiences with a fullness, closeness and labourious anxiety that are unique in literature.

His collection of poems, *The Excursion*, was composed and published in 1814. The Poems, “The Solitary Reaper”, “The Daffodils”, “The Green Linnet”, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, “Ode on the Intimation of Immortality”, “Resolution and Independence”, and “Ode to Duty” took Wordsworth to the height of his poetic power. He always preferred simple and common incidents as the themes of poetry. The group of poems called *Lucy* is instinctive with pathos and delicate romanticism. He wrote sonnets like “The World Is Too Much with Us”, “Interpreter”, “Nature”, and “Bridge”, which show the philosophic mind of the poet. As an interpreter, his place is Supreme. Wordsworth is the greatest poet of the country and natural life. His attitude to nature is something essentially new. He wanted to probe deep into her mystic meaning and explain to the world all her lessons. It must be agreed that he has achieved remarkable success in this task.

### 3.5.2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Coleridge was born at Otter St. Mary in Devonshire. His father was a country parson. He was educated at Christ Hospital and Cambridge. He was a dreamy, highly imaginative and sensitive person. Like Wordsworth, he was ignited with the revolutionary zeal. His first volume of *Poems on Various Subjects* was published in 1796. He was active during the French Revolution as a dissenting pamphleteer and critic. He inspired a brilliant generation of writers and attracted the patronage of raising middle-class people.

Coleridge started his literary career with his first poems in a newspaper, *The Watchman* (1796). In collaboration with Wordsworth, he produced the famous *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which contains 19 Poems by Wordsworth and four by Coleridge. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is the most noteworthy poem in *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem is about the voyage through the polar ice, the death of that albatross, the amazing scene during the calm and the storm and the return home of the sailors. Coleridge portrays the marvelous series of disenchanting pictures and

fusion of with nature. Coleridge touches on the lucid scenery of life at sea, the freezing of the Arctic region, and the horrors of the becalmed voyage.

While composing the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the two poets had two different yet complementary ideas. Wordsworth wrote poems on the simple objects of Nature and imparted to them the colour of imagination. Coleridge, on the other hand, introduced the world of supernaturalism, mystery and magic in poetry. "It was left to Coleridge to make the supernatural look like natural. So he aimed at representing perfectly that side of the romantic imagination which seeks to lose itself in dream and marvel". In his efforts to treat the supernatural, Coleridge often went to the Middle Ages for subject matter and a suitable atmosphere for the theme. But Wordsworth was always concerned with the life and things that he saw around him only.

In 1797, he wrote the first part of *Christabel*, but the poem remained unfinished. It is the tale of a witch, taking the shape of a lovely lady, who wins the confidence of the heroine, Christabel. Christabel goes into the woods to pray under the giant oak tree, where she meets Geraldine, who tells her that she has been abducted from her home by men on horseback. Christabel pities her and takes her home with her. Supernatural signs of a dog barking and a mysterious flame on a dead fire indicate that she is an ill-omened woman. The poem evokes fear of supernatural beliefs.

His other poem, "Kubla Khan", is a remarkable visionary poem of the Romantic period. Coleridge describes 'Xanadu' as the palace of Kubla Khan, a Mongolian emperor and the grandson of Genghis Khan. Kubla Khan describes his palace as 'a pleasure dome' and a river that runs across the land. He also tells us about the fertile land, streams, sweet-smelling trees and beautiful forests. The poem becomes more personal and mysterious as the speaker describes past visions he has witnessed.

Coleridge also composed some minor poems such as "Frost and Midnight France" and "Ode on Dejection" in 1804. The most capturing feature of his poems is their intense imaginative power and his unerring artistic sense. The power of true imagination can compel us to believe it all. Coleridge calls it "willing suspension of disbelief." He sees nature with

a penetrating and revealing glance. He is fine in his description of the sky, the sea and the wider and more remote aspect of things.

Coleridge's poetry represents the culmination of romanticism in its purest form. Historically, he belongs to the medieval revival; but he is far too original to be classed merely as part of the movement; and the distinctive qualities of his work are all his own. In pictorial power, felicity of phrasing and word music, he is one of the great masters. In his subtly suggestive treatment of the supernatural, he stands almost alone. He also gives it a psychological foundation. This is particularly apparent in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", the backbone of which is provided not by the narrative's marvels but by the hero's spiritual history.

He published his most valuable prose work, *Biographia Literaria*, in 1817. It discusses the poetical theory of his friend Wordsworth and the remarkable demonstration of his critical powers. He analyses the Wordsworthian theory in a masterly fashion. *Biographia Literaria* establishes Coleridge as the most significant English critic. He delivered lectures on Shakespeare and the poets. As a true romantic, Coleridge revolts against the Augustan conception of poetry as an art to instruct. For him, the aim of poetry is to provide pleasure - pleasure through the medium of beauty. Charles Lamb called him, "an archangel - slightly damaged". No doubt, S.T. Coleridge was the richly imaginative poet of the Romantic Period.

### 3.5.3 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Shelley was born in Sussex as the son of a conventional country squire. His early life was unhappy. He finds the ultimate joy in Nature like Wordsworth. His love of Nature was as sensual as that of Keats. As a poet, Shelly embellished his pictures of Nature with bright and dazzling colours. He found pleasure in the glow of Nature, the vaster world, desolate rocks and caves, the fury of the storm, lightning, and thunder, the dancing waves and the unfamiliar and mysterious in Nature.

After getting his initial education at Eton, he proceeded to Oxford University, where he was expelled for writing a controversial religious pamphlet, "*The Necessity of Atheism*". His ill-timed wedding brought in further woes. He decided to leave England and settle in Italy to live in

exile. Shelley is renowned for his lyrical poetry. He first wrote his major Poem, *Alastor*, in 1816. The poem deals with the theme of isolation viewed with complacency. His early poems *Queen Mob* and *The Revolt of Islam* show his revolutionary idealism.

On the death of Keats, Shelley wrote the splendid elegy *Adonais* in 1821. The rare blend of flow of thought and passion for reform is well expressed in poems like *To a Skylark*, *The Cloud* and *Ode to the West Wind*. *A Lament*, *Epipsychidion* and *The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* reveal Shelley's ecstasy of feeling, lightness of grace and command over verbal imagery.

The fascination of Shelley's poetry is unique. It has both atmosphere and melody and captivates the readers' senses in a rush of energetic music. The music of poetry has nothing weak and languorous about it. Often, it has a dreamy quality but breathless power and strength throughout. This mingling of power and melody is perhaps the most outstanding trait of Shelley's poetry. Music came as naturally to him as to his skylark. From the earliest years, he had a violent passion for reforming the world. He was as wild as his west wind to sweep all irregularities in the society. Liberty and love are the prime inspirations of his poetry. To him, love was the greatest unifying force.

Shelley is a visionary poet. This quality is reflected in his poem *Ode to the West Wind*. The west wind is the breath of the autumn season. It carries the seeds to their wintry bed and preserves them in the soil. The seeds begin to blossom in the spring. There is a slight melancholic touch in most of his poems. Though primarily a lyric poet, his achievement in other spheres is also considerable. His *Cenci* is a drama as powerful as any Shakespearean play. In *Prometheus Unbound*, the spirit of liberty and revolt finds powerful expression.

Shelley felt himself in congenial company only in the presence of mountains and stars. He was perfectly at home with them and could confide in them his innermost secrets. Shelley found beauty in all movements of Nature. He advocated for Pantheism - the theory of universal spirit. Shelley sometimes views this spirit as the spirit of beauty and delight but more commonly as the spirit of love. The spirit of love

"spreads undivided, operates unspent through all of nature". In Shelley's own words, "poets are the unacknowledged legislator of the World!"

### 3.5.4 John Keats (1795-1821)

Keats was born in London. He tried his hand at medicine in his early adulthood but left it eventually. He read Spenser and Elizabethan literature, which honed his writing skills. He was introduced to Classical Greek Literature through Chapman. Homer, Spenser and Shakespeare fascinated him. Keats was a self-taught genius, and his acquaintance with literary men like Leigh Hunt, Lamb and Wordsworth sharpened his innate literary taste. Regardless of all these influences, his only interest was in beauty. To him, Nature is much simpler, more direct and personal. He neither spiritualises it nor does he seek moral lessons from her. He does not hear in her voice a prophecy for the future of humanity. He goes to her for her physical and sensual aspects. He derives childlike pleasure from her external beauty. He uses Nature to give expression to its innate beauty. The most significant feature of Keats's poetry is his sensitivity to beauty.

Keats's first great poem, *Endymion*, opens with his philosophy of beauty and art- "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." In 1820, Keats published *Lamia*, *Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Isabella*, exhibiting his ability to present stories in verse. As a poet, Keats detached from philosophical and social problems. Keats deals with sensations rather than ideas, and he was the most sensuous of poets because he responded to all the five senses of colour, smell, taste and super sensitivity.

There are three major qualities in Keats' poetry. Keats escaped into the land of the remote past symbolised by Greek and medieval mythologies. Second, Keats was the most sensual among the romantics. Third, Keats, through several experiments, perfected the art of sonnet and odes. He utilised his odes as vehicles for the expression of his concept of beauty and detached joy. *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, *Bright Star* and *Grasshopper and Cricket* are among the most enduring sonnets in English.

The Ballad "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*" is one of the perfect poems of Keats in which the poet seeks an imaginative escape from his cold prosaic world. In his famous odes, Keats reveals himself as a supreme

artist. The six odes *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode on Melancholy*, *Ode on Indolence*, *Ode to Autumn* and *Ode to Psyche* are considered landmarks in English Poetry. A tone of sadness pervades all his writings, even when they deal with different themes.

In all these odes, Keats's pursuit is the discovery of permanence in a world of change. The idea of permanence in art is contrasted with the temporariness of life. He never attempts to mingle any consideration of theology, humanity or metaphysics with Nature. This leads to the incarnation of beauty, which, in the magical hands of Keats, gets transformed into "Joy forever." The readers can see Keats' concept of negative capability in all his major poems. Meditation on sensuous beauty was the central experience of his life. Keats's life came to a sudden, cruel end when he died of consumption.

### 3.5.5 George Gordon Lord Byron (1785-1824)

Byron was born in London. He was educated at Harrow and Cambridge and obtained an M.A. degree. His early life made him a rebel. His unhappy marriage forced him to undertake a tour of the continent for two years. During this period, he composed *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, which brought him fame as a poet. He published the first two cantos soon after his return. The third and fourth cantos of *Child Harold* appeared in the years 1816 and 1818, respectively. His later poems are serious in tone and born out of the bitter experiences in the intervening years.

Byron wrote lyrics, satires, narrative poems, dramatic poems, and tragedies. He was a revolutionary in thought and a conservative in art. He achieved greatness through his writings like "*The Bride Abydos*", "*The Siege of Corinth*", "*The Prisoner of Chillon*", "*The Island*", and "*The Vision of Judgment*". He published his long satirical masterpiece *Don Juan* in 1824. After the publications of these works, Byron's fame grew, and Europe accepted him as the poetic mouthpiece of his age. There is perverse humour, ease and worldly wisdom in it. He shared his personal experiences in his work. "*The Dream*", "*Beppo*" and "*The Lament of Tasso*" are some of his minor poems. He wrote a few dramas like *Manfred* and *Cain*, which are not remarkable. Byron's poems also show his love of Nature, expressing a sense of wonder and delight. His poems are subjective expressions of his passion and violent temperament.

Byron was more admired and appreciated outside England than inside. He cared less for the older generation of the Romantics and preferred the Augustans, particularly Pope. Gloom and rhetoric filled his poetry and made the style of 'Byronism.' His love of Nature is unique, and he preferred her in the wildest of her moods. His writing also exhibits a strong individuality and an inflated ego, which came to be known as 'Byronism'. His passion and violent temperament are often expressed through a bombastic style. He brought out the social hypocrisies of his time in his poetry. The perfect combination of wit, humour and passion makes Byron the most interesting personality in English Literature.

### 3.6 The Prose Writers of the Romantic Age

#### 3.6.1 Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

Charles Lamb, famous under his pseudonym of Elia, was born in London in February 1775. His father, John Lamb, was a clerk and servant-companion to a Member of Parliament. Lamb had learned Greek, Latin, mathematics and general knowledge enough for his career as an accountant. He spent his early years with his mother's family in Hertfordshire, and these years gave Lamb many memories, which are beautifully related in his writings. His essays are primarily personal and melancholy in tone. This melancholy was an inherited trait. His sister Mary was insane and sent to a mental asylum. Lamb spent many sleepless days and nights with his sister in the mental asylum. All his personal sorrows and unforgettable incidents are reflected in his personal essays titled "Essays of Elia."

His early happy life has vividly been described in several of his essays, such as *"Old Benches of the Inner Temple"*, *"My Relation"* and *"Mackerey End in Hertfordshire"*. His friendship with Coleridge at Christ's Hospital as a schoolboy encouraged him to share his school memories in his two essays - *"Recollections of Christ's Hospital"* and *"Christ Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago"*. In the 1800s, he and his sister Mary wrote together *"Tales from Shakespeare"*, *"Mrs. Leicrter's School"* and *"Poetry for Children"*. They also wrote children's books in the same period – *The King and Queen of Hearts* and *The Adventures of Ulysses*.

The manner and tone of Lamb's essays vary according to the occasion and topic. He saw English prose as an instrument flexible enough for various purposes. His essays cover a wide range of so far as their themes are concerned. Most of Lamb's essays are deeply personal and autobiographical. He uses his essays as a vehicle of self-revelation. His essays acquaint us with Lamb's likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions, tastes and temperament, Nature and disposition, and reaction to persons, events, and things. Lamb speaks of himself often, so he uses the personal pronoun 'I' in his essays. His genius lies in his power for visualising memories - a vanished face, a calm voice, recollected gesture, familiar faces and the memory of some treasured joy.

Lamb published his essays in 'The London Magazine' as periodicals under the pseudonym 'Elia'. Most of these contributions were gathered in *The Essays of Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*. He is known as the prince of English essayists because he ignored all the conventional essay-writing methods and often maintained the mode of self-expression. *Oxford in the Vacation*, *New Year's Eve*, *All Fool's Day*, *My Relations*, *Dream Children*, *The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers*, *A Dissertation - Upon Roast Pig* and *The Superannuated Man* are some interesting essays by Lamb.

Pathos is another important ingredient in the essays of Lamb. Pathos and humour are closely allied. The sadness and heart-touching pathos are visible in the essays *The South-Sea House*, *The Old Benches in the Inner Temple*, *Dream Children*, *Poor Relations* and *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers*.

The style of Lamb's essays is one of their most significant merits. The influence of earlier prose writers such as Fuller, Browne and Burton, polished his prose style. The style of all his essays is gentle, old-fashioned and irresistibly attractive. His essays breathe the two essential qualities of sympathy and humour. He is always the same Lamb, full of humour, pathos and love in whatever he wrote. Wordsworth once said of Lamb - "Oh, he was good, if ever a good man lived."



### 3.6.2 William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

Notes

Hazlitt was a profound literary critic of the Romantic Age. He was a friend of Charles Lamb. As an enthusiastic youth, he was interested in his day's social and political problems. Burke and Coleridge influenced him much. He started writing on political subjects. In 1812, he became a parliamentary reporter and wrote for Journals like 'Chronicle and Examiner.' He wrote many critical essays like *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1818), *English Comic Writers* (1819) and *Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1824).

Hazlitt is a liberal-minded critic ready to overlook small blemishes despite his keen critical sense. Humour and aphoristic power are the two important features of Hazlitt's style. His *The Spirit of the Age* is a masterpiece in literary criticism. Hazlitt was a Puritan in his approach to critical writings.

His prose style is known for clarity of thought and beauty of impression. The autobiographical element is another important feature of Hazlitt's essays. He once said: "Every essay is a fragment of autobiography and every sentence a confession." His essays *My First Acquaintance with Poets* and *On the Conversation of Authors* are full of minute personal observations of wit and fancy. Considering all his merits and contributions, Saintsbury calls him 'the Critic's Critic.' As a whole, Hazlitt is a great critic of his period.

### 3.6.3 Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)

De Quincey was the son of a Manchester merchant. He lived in a dream world of his own from his childhood. He achieved mastery over the Greek language at the Grammar School. He had his higher education at Worcester College and Oxford University. He visited the hillside in Wales and made friends with Wordsworth and his sister. He began writing in Journals to achieve greatness.

De Quincey was a dreamer, and his great work *The Confessions of an Opium-Eater* (1828) was on his early experiences. As an opium-eater, he shared his physical sufferings and his addiction. His famous work *On Murder as One of the Fine Arts* shows his genius for fantasy. His other

important works are *Autobiographical Sketches* (1843), *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow* and *The Revolt of the Tartars*.

De Quincey incorporates autobiographical elements in his essays. He reveals his moods, his tastes, and temper in his works. His prose style is stately, clear and simple. There is a deliberate detachment because he uses his personal experiences not for confession but for truthful art. Despite his weaknesses, De Quincey was a versatile writer.

### 3.7 Summing up

Romanticism is the expression used to refer to the art of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feeling. Curiosity and the love of beauty are significant factors in Romanticism, which always generates a tendency to exaggerate the common life. Romanticism highlights the glories in the world of Nature. The social hierarchies, classes, hero worship, rank, social status etc., were completely swept aside, and Nature was glorified. The creative writers liberated themselves from the so-called 'conventional' mode of writing poems. They preferred Nature, humanity and aesthetic feelings over individual or social conventions. Romanticism is subjective, organic and interested in Nature and freedom of expression.

The Romantic age was dominated by the poets of Nature, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and Scott, who believed that Nature had a message to deliver to the world. Only in the presence of Nature could the greatest truths can be learnt. To them, Nature is God, Nature is a teacher, and Nature is the only source of inspiration. Together, the romantic poets introduced a new genre and style in their writings, bringing fresh air to the world of literature.

### 3.8 Model Questions

1. Comment on the literary features of the Romantic Age.
2. Define 'Pastoral elegy'
3. *The Elegy written in Country Churchyard* embodies a philosophical melancholy- Discuss.
4. Comment on Blake as a mystic Poet.

5. How does Blake reveal his childhood and simple life in *his Songs of Innocence*?
6. Define Romanticism.
7. Explain Keats's negative capability.
8. How does Wordsworth portray his humble and rustic life in *Lyrical Ballads*?
9. "*The Prelude*" is Wordsworth's autobiographical poem - Discuss.
10. Comment on the use of supernatural elements in Coleridge's poems.
11. Discuss Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* as a great critical work.
12. Discuss Shelley as a visionary poet with reference to his poems.
13. How does Shelley reveal his ecstasy of feeling in *To The Skylark*?
14. Comment on Keat's treatment of Nature in his Odes.
15. Why is Byron called a revolutionary poet?
16. Discuss Lamb as a personal essayist with reference to *his Essays of Elia*.
17. Wordsworth is The High Priest of Nature in English dramatic poetry - Discuss
18. Bring out the reason for Lamb's liking for *Old China*.
19. Describe Hazlitt's intensions in "On Familiar Style"
20. Thomas De Quincey shows his imagination and dreamy state *In the Confessions an Opium- Eater* - Discuss.
21. Write a short note on personal essay.
22. Blake's *Tiger* is a philosophical poem – comment.
23. What is a Ballad?
24. Analyse the treatment of Nature in Keats' poems?
25. How did Lamb share his childhood experiences in *Essays of Elia*?
26. Comment on Wordsworth's attitude toward Nature.
27. Why is Keats known as a poet of the Five Senses?

28. Write on the Odes and how Keats has treated them.
29. Write a short note on the dream poetry of Coleridge.
30. How does Charles Lamb amalgamate humour and pathos in the *Essays of Elia*?

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**Structure:**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning objectives
- 4.3 The Historical Background (1820-90)
- 4.4 The Victorian Poetry
  - 4.4.1 Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)
  - 4.4.2 Robert Browning (1812-1889)
  - 4.4.3 Elizabeth Barrette Browning (1806-1861)
  - 4.4.4 Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)
  - 4.4.5 Henry Wades worth Longfellow
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4.8.4 William Morris (1834-96)

4.9 Summing up

4.10 Self Assessment Questions

## **4.1 Learning objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader shall be able to know

- The social changes in England.
- Introduction of Reform Bills, Acts and Laws
- Invention of Transportation and Communication.
- Railways, Shipping, Telecommunication and Postal systems.
- Public School Education.
- Reflection of social influences in the works of the Great Victorian Writers.

## **4.2 Introduction**

In this unit, the readers shall study the Victorian Age and the effects of social changes, revolution and influences in literature. This age is also known as the age of reform bills, social transformation and industrial revolution.

## **4.3 The Historical Background (1820-90)**

The Victorian era of the United Kingdom marked the height of the British Industrial Revolution and the apex of the British Empire. The period of Queen Victoria's rule between 1837 and 1901 was commonly referred to as the Victorian Age. This age was widely called the age of reformation because the Reform Act was introduced in 1832. There was a revolution in commercial enterprises, education, railways, postal departments and industries. In factories, eight hours of labour was implemented, and child labour was abolished. There were marked

improvements in trade and investment. British industry began to make qualitative improvements in the production of goods. The banking system was nationalised. The age was marked by the revolution in science and technology, such as the invention of steam engines, printing technology, postal systems, railways and modern machinery to meet the needs and demands of the increasing population. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* ignited a revolution in scientific thought.

The Victorian Age literature was wonderfully rich, varied, and reflected the spirit of Victorian England. It also mirrored the social reforms, the Industrial Revolution and the rules and regulations of labour unions. The prominence of the spirit of enquiry and criticism, religious uncertainty, spiritual struggle and unrest marked the Victorian Age. The Victorian society influenced the writings of its prominent writers.

The Victorian Poets can be distinguished into two groups. One group identified itself with the contemporary movement, intellectual and critical thought, stressing the need for objectivity and aiming at a standard of balance based upon the quality of precision in each idea. The Other group formed the idealistic reaction with its desire for emotion, its cult of beauty and its dreamy tendency, weaving the main themes of vision around the subtle blending of imagination and sensibility. This period's leading figures are Tennyson, Browning, Charles Dickens, Thackeray, Carlyle, Macaulay, Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Eliot and the Bronte sisters.

## **4.4 The Victorian Poetry**

### **4.4.1 Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)**

Tennyson was regarded as one of the greatest poets of the Victorian Era, and this period in literature was also called the 'Age of Tennyson.' Tennyson was the most conscientious and accomplished poetic artist in English Literature. He is noteworthy for the perfection of his style, his wonderful mystery of language, and the simple, ornate, exquisite and varied music of his verse. Tennyson was profoundly interested in common people and everyday things. He imbued his work with the essential religious spirit, the spirit of faith, hope, love and reference. Tennyson's religion was, in his own words, "a clinging faith beyond the forms of faith".

Tennyson is not a scientific agnostic, nor is he a poetical pantheist. He is a Christian theist, accentuating the truth and divine immanence.

When Tennyson was just seventeen, he wrote a collection of Poems- *Poems by two Brothers* (1827) in collaboration with his brother Charles. While studying at Trinity College, Cambridge, he got the chancellor's gold medal for the poem *Timbuctoo* (1829), which was chiefly a lyrical melody. As an undergraduate student, he wrote mainly lyrical poems. 'Isabel' and 'Madeline' were published around this time. The pictorial effect with rich imagery in his poems made him a famous poet.

In 1833, he wrote 'Volume of Poems', which contains *The Lotos Eaters*, *The Palace of Art*, and *The Lady of Shalott*. These Poems show the Tennysonian technique of maintaining perfection in art. After this, he wrote two more volumes of poems, which made him the greatest poet of his time. The second volume contains his most famous poems like *Ulysses*, *Morte de Arthur*, *Break, Break, Break* and *Tears*. These poems stand at the summit of his achievements.

His longer poem, *the Princess* (1847), is a comic-themed poem and an attempt to use the theme of "The New Woman". Though the humour in the poem is heavy, the poem is altogether as rich and wonderful as any other Tennysonian poem. His other poem, *In Memorium* (1850), is a very long with a series of meditations upon the death of his dear friend Arthur Henry Hallam, who died in Vienna in 1833. In this poem, Tennyson imposes numerous meditations on life and death. The poem is adorned with beautiful sketches of English scenery, and the metre -now called the In Memoriam metre- is rare and remarkable.

*Maud and Other Poems* (1855) is a series of melodramas. The poem reflects the love, hatred, hope, and despair of a lover who slays his mistress's brother and then flies to France. The tone of the whole work is forced and fevered, and it glorifies war and bloodshed.

In the 1860s, Tennyson wrote a collection of poems titled *The Idylls of the King*. It is an allegory of the soul of a man who searches for knowledge. His shorter poems *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886) and *Death of Oenone* were sad echoes of the last session of his life. His



technical delicacy, his descriptive power and his intense feelings of regret, failure and frustration are visible in these poems.

Tennyson, in his lifetime, wrote three historical plays- *Queen Mary*, *Harold and Beckett* in the late 1870s. Another play, *The Falcon*, is a common story based on Boccaccio. Tennyson's poems are remarkable for their lyrical style and legendary narrative. As a thinker, Tennyson needed to catch up in depth and originality, but he was satisfied with his feelings. He is also credited for his descriptive power and his intense feeling of regret of contemporary lives. Tennyson's lyrical and short poems like *Ulysses*, *The Lotos Eaters*, *Tears*, *Break, Break, Break* and *The Palace of Art* are known for his beautiful description of Nature. Arthur Lyall Credited Tennyson by stating that "he uses words like a painter uses his brush". He expressed his passion and rapture in a language noted for its beauty in phrasing the words. He was very particular in using well-adjusted vowels and consonants. His use of dramatic monologues shows his in-depth knowledge of human psychology. He deals with basic human feelings of love, joy, sorrow and duty and in most of them is a touch of pensiveness. Tennyson deals with a variety of subjects and situations.

#### 4.4.2 Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Robert Browning was a major poet of the Victorian Age noted for his mastery of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. He was highly optimistic, and his love poems are calm and beautiful. As his father was a man of high intellectual calibre, Browning inherited his intellectual qualities from his father and his interest in music and arts from his mother.

His greatest achievement was to break away from the Keatsian handling of sensory images and to restore to the English language's colloquial vigour. He began his career in Shelley's vein but soon developed a style of his own.

When he was only twenty, Browning started his career as a poet with the poem ' *Pauline*' in 1832. His following poem, *Paracelsus* (1835), deals with the theme of a soul thirsting for knowledge. *Sordello*, a poem of Italian background and pen pictures, was published in 1840.

Browning's genius was dramatic. His dramatic bent of mind is seen in his characterisation and theme. He also considered drama as the highest form of expression. He, therefore, took to writing plays for the public stage and produced eight plays in eight years. His first play *Strafford* was produced in 1837, and his last play, *In a Balcony*, in 1844.

As a poet, Browning was interested in writing dramas for the stage; he naturally turned to the techniques of "Dramatic Monologue". In a dramatic monologue, Browning takes a striking individual at a critical point in his spiritual conflict and allows him to reveal his innermost secrets and intentions through tense utterances.

Browning used dramatic monologue to reveal his psychological insight, analytical ability and power of dramatic interpretation. His well-known poems with dramatic monologue techniques are *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Abt Vogler*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Andrea del Sarto* and *My Last Duchess*. These dramatic monologues show Browning's lyrical abilities, concern with the human soul and its conflicts, moral and ethical preoccupations, and sympathy for the spiritually tortured soul.

Arthur Compton-Rickett analyses three aspects of Browning's poetry: "There are three Brownings: 1. Browning the Passionate singer of love and youth and the world. 2. Browning the Curious investigator of the devious ways of human experience; 3. Browning the intrepid fighter and valiant believer in the imperishable greatness of the soul of man.

As a poet of love, Browning expresses mystic passion in poems like *Evelyn Hop*, *Two in the Campagna*, *Love in Life*, and *Life in Love*. Some of his other love poems are *Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli*, *Natural Magic*, *A Lover's Quarrel in a Gondola*, *The Last Ride Together*, *Too Late My Star*, *The Flower's Name*, *Women and Roses*, *James Lee's Wife* and *By the Fireside*.

In 1846, Browning married Elizabeth Barrett and spent the next fifteen years in Italy. Browning published his well-known poems in collections such as *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day* (1850), *Men and Women* (1855), *Dramatic Personal* (1864) and *The Ring and the Book* (1869).

As an optimistic Poet, Browning challenges the evil of the world. He saw life as a starting point for the soul to achieve greater glory. His optimism was borne out of enjoyment of life and love. He is a poet of human joy. He is more than an optimist; a man of happiness. He strongly believed in the universe's divineness and the individuality of man. The poem *A Grammarian's Funeral* is an optimistic affirmation of life, and the philosophy of the Rabbi is based on faith in life. Browning believed that man is hurled from change to change, but his soul is never furled. This made him a great optimist among the usually pensive poets of his age. Browning was a prolific writer.

#### 4.4.2 Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning began to write poems at the age of eight. Her first published work was *An Essay on Mind: With Other Poems* (1826). She was a woman of acute sensibilities and was fervid in supporting many good causes, one of which was the attainment of Italian Independence. *Prometheus Bound*, *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, *Casa Guidi windows*, *Aurora Leigh*, *The Cry of the Children* and *A Musical Instrument* are some of her remarkable works.

#### 4.4.3 Matthew Arnold (1822-1888).

Matthew Arnold's father was Dr Thomas Arnold's, who worked as the headmaster of the famous Rugby School. Arnold was educated at his father's school in Winchester and graduated from Oxford with honours in classical studies. He had served as a government inspector of schools and as a foreign commissioner of education. He surveyed the European school system and wrote reports of immense value to the Government. He made customary tours to America for five years and delivered a series of lectures later published as *Discourses in America* (1885).

A Poet and philosopher, Arnold wanted his work to be moulded after a strong tradition. His Poetry shows the cold temper of a deliberate impulse to write. His works are slightly artificial, sometimes ornate, and they try to reach the sublimity and grand style of classicism. The proper note of his temperament is sadness - a pensive melancholy. It is the

conflict of a soul torn between meditation and strong self-possession. A feeling of loss and emptiness in his inner self is seen in his poetry.

Arnold is an elegist of deep tenderness and solemnity, a stoic poet of high seriousness with a temperament more European than English. We can find all these characteristics in his poems like *Dover Beach*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Thyrsis*, *Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse* and *Rugby Chapel*. In *Dover Beach*, Arnold expresses his personal experience of sadness and moves on to the eternal sadness of humanity. Love is the only solution for eternal human suffering. His *Scholar Gipsy*, is a poor and unfortunate Oxford scholar in search of truth. *Rugby Chapel* is a sad, meditative poem on the death and life occasioned by the memory of the poet's father, Dr. Arnold. Arnold's personal sadness over the futile modern life and its follies is reflected explicitly in his poems *The Forsaken Merman* and *The Buried Life*.

To Arnold, poetry is a serious affair. It becomes the record of the poet's struggle to overcome pains, moral questionings and moods of despair. He once said, "Poetry is the transmutation of human suffering". He uses gentle irony and sober expression in his poems. He also published several volumes of critical essays, including the famous *Essays in Criticism*. His prose writings are an amalgamation of literature, culture, art and life, and his writings exhibit great ethical zeal. Arnold's style is lucid, clear and cold. He wrote some of the most quotable lines in English Literature. His poems reflect more faithfully the intellectual and spiritual distress of the age.

#### 4.4.4 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Longfellow was a careful and diligent poet, ranging over a great variety of subjects. His narrative power is quite considerable. Some of the important of his works are *Outré- Mer*, *"A Pilgrimage beyond the Sear*, *Voices of the Night* *Evangel the Song of Hiawatha*, *The Courtship by Miles Standish* and *Tales of a Wayside Inn*.

## 4.5 Victorian Prose

Notes

### 4.5.1 John Ruskin (1819-1900)

John Ruskin was the son of a wine merchant and had a Scottish background. As he belonged to a wealthy family, Ruskin enjoyed all the comforts of his wealth. He had his graduation at Oxford. He had acquired great mastery over the Bible and developed a skill for combining his genuine artistic feelings, a refined sense of observation and a scientific spirit. Ruskin was a great art critic, philosopher, prophet and man of letters. The most important of Ruskin's literary qualities is his tendency to take an ethical view of art and assert the oneness of truth, beauty and goodness in art and life. Ruskin's greatness depends primarily on his art - the art of language.

His *Modern Painters* exhibits a masterly perception of the principles of art and a boundless gift of literary expression. In 1860, he published *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, two memorable works which enhanced the author's fame. He also delivered and published lectures on art, religion, war, etc. The two lectures, *Of King's Treasuries* and *Of Queen's Gardens*, are among the most popular and representative lectures of Ruskin and are found in his book titled *Sesame and Lilies*. He discusses the value of books and wisdom as costly golden jewels. *Queen's Gardens* exposes women's place and power in society of his time.

In Ruskin's view, woman had distinct qualities and powers and was made to be the helpmate of man. His book *Unto This Last* (1861) discusses his political economic theory. *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866) has four lectures dealing with war, the future of England, work and the false ideal of wealth. *Praeterita* was his autobiography, published in 1889. Ruskin taught the moral principles of a pure, righteous and happy life. He emphasised the need for constant and direct involvement with Nature. He taught his generation to appreciate the beauty and sanctity of Nature.

His social theories were born out of his theory of art and beauty. He pointed out the fallacies in the education system of the day. To him, education is not only for accumulating information but also for formulating character. Although they use familiar phrases, Ruskin's style is elegant. He had a gift of expression and description. His spirit is sincere,

noble and beautiful. Hence, Ruskin was an extraordinary writer of his time.

#### 4.5.2 Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

Carlyle was educated at Edinburgh University. At school, he preferred mathematics to religion. He became a schoolteacher for a time, and he did literary hackwork for a living. Carlyle's earliest work consisted of translations, essays and biographies. His first important work was *Life of Schiller*, published in 1825. His well-known work, *Sartor Resartus*, was published in 1834. Carlyle's major works are *The French Revolution* (1837), *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, *Life of John Sterling* (1851), and *Past and Present* (1843). The series of lectures which he delivered in 1837 was published as *On Heroes and Hero Worship and The Heroic in History* (1841).

Throughout his works, there are many moral and political affairs. His influence was rather personal and cannot be accurately gauged from his written work. He vividly brought the subject before the reader's eye through his imagination and succinct style. He was a literary figure and a historian. He used literature to convey moral truth and history to share the experiences of great personalities. For him, art should have a social and moral purpose. He criticised hypocrisy in society, politics, religion, and social manners. He portrayed the French Revolution with its realities. Carlyle's style is unique in English literature. He is known for the use of solid vocabulary and phrases. He was a great master of description and narration.

#### 4.6 Victorian Novel

As a new form of literary art, the novel was popular in the 18th Century. The novel is a loose form of art, enabling it to give a fuller and more varied representation of real life and character than any other form of literature. It combines narration, description, history, philosophy, fantasy, social criticism and actual incidents. The Victorian Era contributed to the development of the genre and Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Thackeray, Willkie Collins, The Bronte Sisters, George Eliot, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling are considered to be the most remarkable novelists of the Victorian Period.

#### 4.6.1 Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Notes

Charles Dickens was born at Landport in Hampshire. He was very fond of the theatre and education at an early age. Due to financial difficulties, Dickens could not continue his school studies. He had to go out and earn his livelihood in a blackening factory. The job at the factory instigated him to write about industry and the life problems of the workers.

Charles Dickens's literary career began in 1830 by publishing articles in several journals in serials *Pickwick Papers*. Later, it became a supreme comic novel in English. Soon, Dickens gave up his newspaper job and devoted himself to novel writing. He led a hectic life and gave a public reading of his works, excellently dramatising every part.

The few years of Dickens's literary contribution were amazing. The novels such as *Oliver Twist* (1831), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1828), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *A Christmas Carol* (1843) are considered as Dickens' output of the first period of his career. Dickens made a brief visit to the USA in 1842. After his return, he devoted himself to writing once again. During this period, he wrote *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842), *Dombey and Son* (1845) and *David Copperfield* (1549). Dickens achieved unity of plot in some important novels such as *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend* (1984). He left *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as an unfinished novel.

All the fifteen novels of Dickens were published as serials in magazines. As a social reformer, Dickens enjoyed life but hated its cruelties, artificiality, corruption and snobbery. Humour and pathos, unchallenging descriptive power and outstanding vitality of characterisation are the three remarkable qualities of Dickens' novels. He created unforgettable characters in readers' minds like Shakespeare.

Dickens's characters belong to the middle class. He combined the knowledge of his personal life with his powerful imagination and pathetic humour to formulate the memorable characters and situations in his novels. His novels are full of melodramatic situations. His irresistible humour and pathos, his unsurpassed descriptive power and his

outstanding vitality of characterisation are the three outstanding qualities of Dickens. He shared the religious creed, principles of Christianity and morality of the public. He always remembered to pinpoint social injustice and corrupt social system. He was a great social reformer and optimist in thought. They believed that the world was good despite its many defects. He attacked specific abuses in the social system. Dickens' approach to the society showed him as a democrat and a prophet. He ends his novels with a message to the society. Undoubtedly, Dickens remains the greatest novelist of British Literature.

#### 4.6.2 William Makepeace Thackeray (184-1863)

Thackeray was born in Calcutta, where his father was employed under the East India Company. He was educated in England, Germany and France. He contemplated an art career but finally drifted into journalism and literature. He published journals like 'The Constitutional Frazer's Magazine' and 'Punch'.

His first real success was *The Book of Snobs* (1847), originally serialised in 'Punch' magazine as *The Snobs of England*. He took up the theme of snobbery for the first time.

Even before *The Book of Snobs* was completed, his new novel *Vanity Fair* has adorning 'Punch' in serials. *Vanity Fair* made Thackeray a famous great contemporary of Dickens. This long and rambling book closely follows the lives and experiences of dissimilar girls, Rebecca Sharp and Amelia Sedley. *Vanity Fair*, borrowing its title from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, can be called a satire novel. It exposes the sham and hypocrisy of middle-class English life.

Some critics have felt that Thackeray's next important work, *Pendennis* (1850), was a better-executed work than *Vanity Fair*. *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852) was one of the greatest historical novels, and it recreated the atmosphere of 18th-century England for readers. Thackeray also excelled in portraying the characters of the hero and heroine. His other important works are *Christmas Books* (1857), *The Four Georges* (1860) and *The Roundabout Papers* (1862). He also wrote several poems, ballads, tales, parodies and burlesques.



Thackeray was no cynic and, certainly, not a sentimentalist. He was a satirist and realist. Irony is the tool he used to bring out the hypocrisy in the society. His world was that of the upper classes, the snobbish world of clubs and drawing rooms. He attacked the social infections of snobbery, affectation and humbug. He was the greatest depicter of cheats, sycophants, rogues, and fools. David Cecil observes, "Thackeray's view of human Nature is essentially not that of an idealist. Human beings to him were never so good as to render them wholly immune from a wise man's irony; their best actions arose from mixed motives, and were as likely as not mistaken in their objects arose from mixed motives, and were as likely as not mistaken in their objects and unfortunate in their results; it was impossible to divide men into sheep and goats". He was very much aware of the ludicrous element of ordinary life, as well as the pathos inherent in it.

Thackeray's style is racy, unconventional and conversational in tone. His narration sets up a close relationship between the writer and the reader. Thackeray was more interested in character than plot. His characterisation is penetrating and real. This intensely real picture makes his creations full of verve, vitality, and nervous energy. Thackeray remains an excellent painter of human manners in English novels.

#### 4.6.3 Anthony Trollope (1815-1882)

Trollope was born in London into a poor family. He was educated at Harrow school and Winchester College. He was a prolific writer and wrote thirty novels for magazines. His best novels are found in the Barsetshire series. *The Warden*, *Barchester Towers*, *Dr. Thorne*, *Framley Parsonage*, *The Small House at Allington* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* are Trollope's remarkable works. Readers can visualise Trollope's country, filled with provincial folk and the unique atmosphere of a cathedral town. His pictures are simple and stark, for he was inclined towards realistic and even photographic elements.

In his *Autobiography*, he speaks of novel writing as "constructing stories within himself". His novels deal with ordinary life, ranging from the lower middle class to the upper middle class. His favourite themes are society, hunting, and travel. His best stories presume the texture of experience; he discovers interest in commonplace affairs and depicts the fears, hopes and anxieties about political or clerical patronage. He never

brought spiritual aspects to his novels, but he insisted on happy endings. He had a unique style of his own. His language was correct to the purpose, lucid and vigorous.

Trollope was a good storyteller; he was a realist. His plots are unorganised with groups of incidents and a large number of characters. But he skillfully mingled characters, incidents, humour, satire and narration to retain the interest of the readers. Trollope can be compared with his predecessor, Jane Austen.

#### **4.6.4 Willkie Collins (1824-89)**

The genre of detective fiction made its debut on the European continent through Willkie Collins. He was certainly the finest among the early writers of such fiction. *The Dead Secret*, *The Woman in White*, and *The Moon Stone* are his greatest achievements. He was very careful about the construction of his plots. He was also a master of dramatic suggestion and adept at evoking an atmosphere of horror and suspense. Detective fiction's features such as mystery, suspense, love, death, murder, villainy and seething passion are found in his novels. *The Woman in White* is the first full-length story in English and is a classic. The story is told by multiple characters.

In 1866, Collins published *Armada*, a melodramatic novel with supernatural interest. Apart from detective novels, Collins also wrote a few traditional novels. They are *No Name* (1862), *Man and Wife* (1870), and *The New Magdalen* (1873). Some of his stories and novels were dramatised and performed in England. Collins made use of his knowledge of law, medicine, chemistry, drugs, hypnotism, and somnambulism in his novels to create a gothic effect. He had the gift of generating an atmosphere of horror, depression, guilt, and suspense. He kept the curiosity of the readers alive till the end of the novel, until all the puzzles were resolved. Apart from his own narration of the story, Collins included diaries, letters and other documents used by the characters in the novel. His works are distinguished by his skill in plot construction and by his remarkable power of dramatic suggestion. Thus, Collins became the pioneer of the genre of detective fiction.

#### 4.6.5 Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930)

Notes

Doyle was born in Edinburgh and educated at Stony Hurst and Edinburgh University. As a medical practitioner, he was interested in writing novels. *The White Company* was his first historical novel. Doyle is always remembered for his magnificent fictional character, Sherlock Holmes. *A Study in Scarlet* (1888) first introduced Holmes to the world. This imaginary character, with his extraordinary skill in criminal investigation, wit, and sharpness, was popular among lovers of detective fiction. With that fame, Doyle wrote many detective novels, such as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891), *The Hound of Baskervilles* (1902), and *The Memories of Sherlock Holmes*. Conan Doyle wrote a few novels, such as *The Refugees* (1891), *The Great Shadow* (1892), *Rodney Stone* (1896), and *Sir Nigel* (1906), where Sherlock Holmes does not appear.

There is none to match Conan Doyle for sheer suspense, hair-raising horror and thrills, and the masterly solution of the problem at hand. Sherlock Holmes is now part of the mythology of western civilization. Apart from detective fiction, Doyle was interested in national affairs, military matters and social reforms. He published the scholarly history, *The British Campaigns in France and Flanders*, in six volumes. His two publications, *The New Revelation* (1918) and *The Vital Message*, are on spiritualism. Conan Doyle is undoubtedly a multi-talented writer.

#### 4.6.6 Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Hardy was born in High Bockhampton, Dorset, and was raised in a rural environment characteristic of Wessex, which later became the setting for many of his novels. Consequently, he is often referred to as a Wessex novelist. He inherited his literary inclinations from his mother and excelled in both poetry and the novel.

Hardy's first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, shows his poetic sentiments and advice to Meredith. Hardy was able to write books at a fast pace, and it was amazing that most of them were uniformly well-written. He wrote fourteen novels; the most memorable are *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1893), *Far From Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the*

*D'Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and *The Well-beloved* (1897). After this, Hardy abandoned writing novels for poetry. He published several volumes of verse. During this period, he published the famous epic drama, *The Dynasts*.

Hardy's familiarity with architecture influenced his work. He had no faith in modern civilization, which destroys the enduring spirit, nobility and courage nature has bestowed on man. The fatalism of Hardy's vision was such that his human characters were doomed to failure and were unable to comprehend the forces they were pitted against. Hardy's heroes and heroines attain tragic dignity because they endure and continue the struggle.

As a novelist, Hardy used his familiar rural background of Wessex to portray human tragedies. He had a great gift for anecdotes and the power to invent lively incidents. The quintessential Hardy emerges when he invokes the elemental, primal aspects of nature. Nothing illustrates this better than the barren, open spaces of his own 'Wessex'. He did not romanticise nature, but he portrayed his dusky, thickly layered milieu, which has its own beauty and charm. Hardy projects human life as plodding, dreary, and despicable at times and doomed inevitably. His novels give the impression of a cruel fate working in men's lives, destroying the chances of happiness and inviting them to their tragedy. Man's isolated struggle with his fated life is the main theme of Hardy's novels.

The characters that Hardy excels at presenting to us in his novels are those who are simple, rustic, unsubtle, and anti-intellectual. He has created several unforgettable female characters. Hardy is a great storyteller and gives detailed touches to his story without losing the sense of harmony. His style is unbeatable, and his vivid portrayal of the earth, village, fields, peasants and roads of the county side are realistic and perfect. Hardy maintained the features of the Victorian novels, such as the plot, characterization of rural life, pathos and humour, and description of nature. Hardy is rightly called the last of the Victorians.

#### 4.6.7 George Eliot (1819-1980)

Notes

Mary Ann Evans was the real name of George Eliot, who was born in Warwickshire. Her father was a great influence on her life and was responsible for making her a great writer. Though she couldn't continue her school education, she received her best education from nature and the countryside. She was profoundly influenced by Sir Walter Scott. As she was influenced by Charles Bray, a communist, she lost faith in religion and even stopped attending church.

George Eliot met John Chapman, a young publisher, in 1850, and he persuaded her to become one of the editors of 'Westminster Review'. George Henry Lewes influenced and encouraged her to bring out the best in her writing. Her first story was *The Sad Fortunes of Rev. Amos Barton*. George Eliot's novels can be divided into two categories. The first category includes her early novels- *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. The setting and story of these novels provide her girlhood memories. The second group includes her later novels, such as *Ramola*, *Felix Holt*, and *Daniel Deronda* in which she turns to fresh fields and new themes. George Eliot was a woman interested as much in science as in morals. Philosophy and her later novels show more intellectual and critical analysis.

Her first great novel is *Adam Bede* and her greatest novel is *Middlemarch*. *The Mill on the Floss* is an autobiographical novel centered around the lives of a brother and sister. It is presented with great sensitivity and has a melodramatic ending. *Silas Marner* is the story of a gold-loving poor weaver who later realises that human love is a real treasure through experience. *Romola* is a historical novel set in Renaissance Florence. *Felix Holt* is a political novel about the radicalism of the Reform Bill period.

George Eliot's novels are concerned with philosophy and individual morality. Her works are realistic and about the simple livelihood of the peasants. Her vision was essentially tragic, but the tragedy was tempered with genuine, all-embracing sympathy. Her skepticism was only an offshoot of a probing religious temperament, and so her tragic novels are also serious statements of moral philosophy. Her novels show more interest in character than in incidents. Compton Rickett

rightly said, "She was the first novelist to lay stress wholly upon character rather than incident; to make her stories spiritual rather than physical dramas." Her endowed gifts are the power of characterization, rich and delicate humour, pathos, realism, and psychological insight. Her philosophical speculations are expressed in aphorisms. She sacrificed her life for art.

#### 4.7 The Bronte Sisters

The life history of Bronte Sisters is a very complex and fascinating one. The three sisters stamped their names with literary immortality. Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte were the daughters of Rev. Patrick Bronte, the parson of the little village of Haworth in Yorkshire. All three had prodigious talent, both in poetry and in prose fiction.

The eldest of the three sisters, Charlotte Bronte, was employed as a teacher and started writing poetry at an early age. Her first novel, *The Professor*, was written under the pseudonym 'Currer Bell'. The story is based on her experiences in Brussels. Charlotte has treated the theme with great realism and restrained passion.

Her most successful novel is *Jane Eyre* (1847). It is the story of a teacher in Lowood who becomes a governess at Thornfield Hall. Mr. Rochester, the owner, is attracted by Jane's wit and spirit, and they fall in love with each other. But their marriage is impossible because Rochester's first wife is alive and she is a lunatic. Finally, Jane marries him and restores him to health and happiness. Charlotte introduces mystery, horror and supernatural elements in the novel. Jane is a personification of Charlotte herself, and her sufferings and agonies are those of her creator.

Her next novel, *Shirley* (1849), is set in Yorkshire and deals with the difficulties of the mill owner, Robert Gerard Moore, and his workers. Charlotte's novels are known for their autobiographical touches, intimacy, passion and sense of revolt. She has also written about lonely, repressed womanhood with a passion unsurpassed in English fiction.

Emily Bronte attained fame in literature with her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, in 1847. The novel is about love, passion and diabolical revenge. Heathcliff, an orphan, was brought home from the streets of Liverpool by Mr. Earnshaw. Heathcliff was in love with

Catherine, Earnshaw's daughter. Catherine, even though she shared Heathcliff's passion, married Edgar Linton. Then the tale of horror and revenge pursues its course. The elements of suspense, horror and revenge are found in the novel.

Anne Bronte, the youngest of the three sisters, focused on sober feminine themes in her two novels, *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The novel is written in the form of a diary. The world of the Bronte sisters in their novel was a limited one. Autobiographical sketches can also be found in their novels. They created a landmark in the genre of fiction.

#### **4.8 The Pre-Raphaelite Movement**

The Victorian Age revolved around two topics: one was the rationalistic and scientific movement, and the other was Renaissance idealism. Social concepts, child labour, exploitation of industrial revolution and Darwin's Theory of Evolution were discussed in the novels of the prominent writers. At the same time, a group of poets who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelites gave importance to painting and art. They supported the idea of "art for art's sake".

In 1850, a group of young artists drawn together by similar aspirations made a common doctrine for themselves. They were very much inspired by the Italian painters before Raphael, who expressed his emotions through painting. A few men of letters and artists united to oppose the conventional approach to art. As an act of homage to Italian painters, they called themselves 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.'

They were enthralled by beauty and succeeded in making their poetry worthy of the original. They were very inspired by the primitive Italian painters, who painted only the ideas that came from the depths of their hearts. They also expressed their religious love for God. The well-known pre-Raphaelite poets are D. G. Rossetti, A. C. Swinburne, and William Morris.

#### 4.8.1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82)

D. G. Rossetti was both a painter and a poet. He came to be regarded as the leader of the revolt. His poetry is exotic. He was the mastermind of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, whose aim was to bring art back to the truth of nature.

He cared nothing for science, philosophy, history, or politics. He was concerned only with love and beauty. His worship of them did not leave him with Plato to contemplate or with Dante to the vision of divine love. Rossetti adopted a different style for the narrative poem. His poems, *A Last Confession* and *Jenny* are dramatic monologues. The poems have modern subjects. Jenny is unique in its expression of pity for a tragedy of real life. His other narrative poems are all medieval in tone or setting. His poems *Stratton Water*, *The White Ship*, and *The King's Tragedy* are in simple ballad diction. He indulged in picture painting in most of his poems, especially in *The Burden of Nineveh*, *The Blessed Damozel*, *World's Worth* and *Ave*.

#### 4.8.2 Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-94)

Christine Rossetti was the youngest of D. G. Rossetti's two sisters. Her Italian blood showed her capacity for passion. Her poetic style owed much to her brother, but it was her pious mother and her sister who moulded her character. She was devoted to the Anglican Communion. Her religious faith, her health, and the circumstances of her life would make her liaison with anyone impossible in her later life. Her sonnets are dominated by the prevalence of religious themes. A Pageant shows a fuller preoccupation with religious themes, and the last volume is entirely religious and devotional in character. *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* and *Verses* are entirely lyrical in quality. Christina's *New Poems*, another volume of poetry, was published after her death. Her poetry has a purer lyrical note of deep and sustained passion with a larger command of humour. On religious themes, she wrote with a transparent simplicity of tone and language and a great variety of metrical and melodic effects.



#### 4.8.3 A.C. Swinburne (1837-1909)

Notes

Swinburne was born in London and educated at Eton and Balliol College. He was good at French and Greek. He published his first work, *Two Plays* (1860), consisting of *The Queen-Mother: and Rosamond*, and *Atlanta in Calydon*, which was a lyrical drama of supreme literary qualities. It exposed him as a reputed writer. *Poems and Ballads* is a rich musical poetry collection by Swinburne. His two poems, *Song of Italy* (1867) and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871), reveal Swinburne's love of liberty and hatred of kings and priests. His last volume of poems, *A Channel Passage*, appeared in 1904.

Swinburne was a very cultured poet and his scholarship gave him an honourable position in the world of poets. His critical essays on Blake, Charles Dickens, Keats, Congreve, and Hugo are fine examples of informed literary criticism. His poems are recognised for their musical quality and alliteration. His poems are prey to the eyes and ears of the readers. Swinburne had an amazing mastery over the English language and an acute sense of words.

#### 4.8.4 William Morris (1834-96)

Morris produced a great amount of poetry and was one of the most conspicuous figures in the mid-Victorian age. He tried to bring about changes in the structure of society. He dedicated himself to a policy of extreme socialism and found himself many times in police custody. His works reflect the strong influence of socialist idealism. He had the artist's passion for beauty, which finds its best expression in his fine English landscapes and tapestried descriptions of his narrative poems.

Morris' poetry was written in the first half of his life. *The Defense of Guenevere and Other Poems*, *The Life and Death of Jason*, *The Earthly Paradise* and *Poems by the Way* are some good pieces of his work. The literary production of the second part of Morris's life consisted mainly of prose romances, lectures and articles. The best of his lectures are to be found in *Hopes and Fears for Art*, *Signs of Change*, *A Dream John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*.

Morris learned as much from Browning, Rossetti and others. The violence of emotion, the bitterness, the presentation of love as a forceful tyrant, the form—all these make poems quite Browningsque.

#### 4.9 Summing up

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and reigned for 63 years. In terms of literature, the Victorian Era comprises the first 50 years of her rule. It was a time of great change in which men had to adapt themselves to the new social conditions. The French Revolution had kindled the flame of liberty, fraternity and equality. The age was remarkable for its social interest and social consciousness. There was steady progress in scientific thought, education and industrial growth. The theory of evolution brought about spiritual unrest and doubt. In the literary sphere, the scientific temper had its impact. In poetry, as in fiction and history, there was great accuracy and detail on the social changes. The analytical and critical spirit of science led to the emergence of realism in literature.

In the world of Victorian poetry, Tennyson has always been regarded as the most representative poet. Tennyson's poems are known for their close description of natural beauty, lilting music in the metrics, and clarity and dignity of phraseology. Robert Browning's poetic genius is best expressed in his dramatic monologue form. Matthew Arnold's poems mirror the cultural and spiritual malaise that swept England at that time. For Arnold, poetry has been a 'criticism of life.'

The pre-Raphaelite Movement in English poetry is a reaction to the Victorian acceptance of social, political, and religious change. It concerns art alone, especially the close relationship between poetry, painting, and art. The eminent poets of the movement—Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris—were meticulous in their artistic details and their stamp of realism.

Victorian age gave the world a wonderful body of literature called 'Victorian Novel.' The Victorian novel was rooted in the reality of contemporary life. The novels exhibited an awareness of purpose and an awareness of change in social, political and moral upheavals. The Victorian novelists Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, Thackeray, Meredith, the

Brontes, Trollope, Hardy, and Rudyard Kipling responded by mirroring the ills of society and the numbing effects of industrialization. One of the major themes of the Victorian novels is social form and social progress. Almost all of the novelists of the Victorian era were deeply concerned about the increasing difficulty faced by men and women in retaining their humanity. The extensive changes in all aspects of life have been well depicted in the Victorian novels. The Victorians gave us a host of characters who are grotesque and even non-human.

#### 4.10 Model Questions

1. Comment on the Reform Bills passed in Victorian Age.
2. What are the characteristics of the Victorian Age?
3. Write briefly on the works of Charles Darwin.
4. Name some literary giants of the Victorian Age.
5. What was the major content of the Victorian novel?
6. Write a note on *Vanity Fair*.
7. What are the features of Thackeray's styles?
8. What is Dicken's outlook in his novels?
9. Name the major novels of George Eliot.
10. How was Charlotte Bronte a pioneer in women's fiction?
11. Comment on *Hard Times*.
12. What are the special features of Trollope's fiction?
13. Comment on Willkie Collins's detective fictions.
14. What made Conan Doyle famous?
15. Give an account of the major works of Thomas Hardy.
16. Comment on the pre-Raphaelite Movement?
17. Write on Rossetti's treatment of love in his poems
18. How does Hardy differ from George Eliot?
19. Write an essay on the Bronte Sisters' contribution to the world of literature.

20. Who were the important women novelists of the Nineteenth Century?
21. A review on 'The Essays of Elia'.
22. Bring out Arnold's views about the humanity of his times.
23. Discuss Arnold's philosophy of life as seen in 'Dover Beach'.
24. What are the major writings of Browning?
25. Write on the dramatic monologue used by Browning.
26. Write a note on Elizabeth Barret Browning.
27. Trace the origins of Pre-Raphaelite poetry.
28. What were the interests of the pre-Raphaelite school?
29. Comment on the pictorial quality of D. G. Rossetti's poetry.
30. What were the characteristics of Carlyle's prose?
31. With what quality did Ruskin infuse his work?
32. Compare and contrast the work of Thackeray and Dickens.
33. Who were the important novelists of the nineteenth century?
34. Why is time and place important in Hardy's novels?
35. Make a note of the social and cultural traits of Victorian England.

**Lesson 5.1: Modern Poetry or Twentieth Century poetry****Structure:**

- 5.1.1 Learning objectives
- 5.1.2 Introduction
- 5.1.3 Characteristics of Modern Poetry
- 5.1.4 Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)
- 5.1.5 Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)
- 5.1.6 William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)
- 5.1.7 Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973)
- 5.1.8 Stephen Spender C 1909 - ?)
- 5.1.9 Robert Bridges (1844-1930)
- 5.1.10 Walter de la Mare C1873-1956)
- 5.1.11 Ted Hughes (1930-?)

**5.1.1 Learning Objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader will be able to know

- The literature of social purpose.
- T.S. Eliot as a classicist in literature.
- Irish Movement of W.B Yeats
- Auden's religious poems
- Spender's lyrical poems
- Ted Hughes as an animal poet
- Stephen Spender as a Marxist poet
- The childhood memories of Walter De La Mare.

### 5.1.2 Introduction

The birth of modern literature saw the end of the long reign of Queen Victoria. Imperial expansion on other continents ensured social, cultural, and political problems. At the same time, the age paved the path to sweeping social reforms and unprecedented progress in health, education, industry and the happiness of citizens. There were marked improvements in trade and investment. British industry began to make qualitative improvements so that its goods were exported through water means. Educational opportunities were available to the poorest, from school to university, for anyone who had the ability to take advantage of them.

In literature, the effect was profound. The writers' interest in classics was shifted to science, history, romance, travel and other subjects. The spread of literacy was accompanied by the awakening of the national conscience to the reformation of social disorders. In literature, surprising developments took place in the genres of poetry, drama and novel. The novel is well suited to sociological studies to expose contemporary incidents with reality. Modern Age gave rebirth to drama after the Elizabethan period. Like the novelists, the prominent dramatists were also chiefly concerned with contemporary social issues.

Contemporary dramatists from all parts of the globe have continued to experiment so as to give appropriate expression to the modern spirit. New theatres like feminist theatre, Afro-American theatre, the theatre of 'Angry Young Men', the theatre of cruelty, and absurd theatre emerged to focus on social issues. The dramatists continued to evolve, searching and striving for perfection in their creative works. They utilised the art as a vehicle for their expression of their inner needs and feelings. The genre of criticism also emerged with its unbound force to judge works of art.

Modern Age introduced a number of important writers to the world of literature as poets, dramatists, critics and novelists.

### 5.1.3 Characteristics of Modern Poetry

Notes

Modern period is completely overshadowed by the two world wars—the aftermath effects of the First World War and the forebodings of the Second World War. The General Strike of 1926 was a major impact of the post-war period, which led to the social problems of depression, unemployment, great distress, and the working-class community's restless life under the domination of capitalists.

All these social influences are reflected in the modern poetry. It is written in simple language, the language of everyday speech, and even sometimes in dialect or jargon, like some poems of Rudyard Kipling. Modern poetry is mostly sophisticated as a result of the sophistication of the modern age, its unconventional way of life and a lack of faith in religion and moral values of life. These features are reflected in *The Waste Land*.

Alienation becomes the major focusing theme of modern poets. The poet is alienated from the reader as a result of the alienation of modern man. Modern poetry is written in fragmentation. The poet tries to recollect the poetic theme from his memory so that the images or poetic themes appear in a series of broken images. And it is also highly intellectual because it is written from the mind of the poet and addresses the mind of the reader too.

Modern poets are interested in the darker or ugly side of life and in taboo subjects like drug addiction, crime, prostitution and some other subjects which are expressed in the poems of Allen Ginsberg. Modern poetry is also pessimistic in tone and treatment of the subject matter as a result of the bad condition of man in many parts of the world. The poems as well as the novels of Thomas Hardy show the eternal struggle of man for his survival in the midst of distress.

Modern poetry is suggestive because a poem may suggest different meanings to different readers depending on their perspective. It is also cosmopolitan in nature. It appeals to men everywhere and at every time because it deals with the problems of man or humanity.

Experimentation is one of the important characteristics of modern poetry. The poets try to explore new grounds to find new forms, new styles, languages and new methods of expression, breaking away from the conventional method. Modern poems are mostly irregular in pattern, written without metre or rhyme scheme, and sometimes written in prose. The poets use 'verse-libere' as a method to find freedom in writing poems with controversial themes.

Modern poets show their interest in politics, the political problems of the age, psychology, autobiography, sexual problems and the state of the subconscious mind. Many poets wrote poems unconsciously under the influence of wine or drugs. Most modern poetry is ambiguous for many reasons. They show their interest in myth and epics, especially Greek mythology. They are much concerned with the survival problems of the average man, the working-class community, and the lower class of society.

#### **5.1.4 Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)**

Hopkins was born in Stratford, Essex. As the son of a cultured and deeply artistic family, Hopkins gained the highest academic distinction both at school and university. He became a Roman Catholic and a Jesuit priest for some time. He was deeply religious and a profound scholar. He also served as Professor of Greek at the University College, Dublin, for a period of time.

Hopkins is a unique figure in the history of English poetry because of his originality of thought and modernity of expression. He was identified as a spiritual explorer whose poems touched the deepest religious consciousness of his generation. His master piece, *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1875), expresses his deep-rooted religious experience of seven years of poetic silence and his autobiographical sketches. He introduced a new poetic style called 'Sprung-Rhythm' in this poem. The poem is a meditation on the death by drowning of five Franciscan nuns who were trying to escape religious persecution in Germany. The martyrdom of the nuns stirred the religious sentiments of the poet. The poem is the best example of Hopkins's deep religious faith. His writing was exclusively religious and focused on the ecstatic enjoyment of nature. Nature is a manifestation of the beauty of God.



A sensuous love of nature, spiritual fervour, and surrendering to the will of God are the poetic features of Hopkins. His great delight lay in the discovery of an inner pattern. His shorter poems, *Pied Beauty*, *The Windhover*, *God's Grandeur*, and *Felix Randall*, express the essence of his spiritual insight and contemplation. He used the terms 'instress' and 'inscape' to denote the aim in the treatment of subject matter. His imagery is appreciable for its richness. He uses metaphors, symbols and imagery to express the effective sensuousness of the world around him. He is always precise in his words, suggesting many interpretations of meaning in his poems.

### 5.1.5 Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965)

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, an industrial city in the centre of the USA. His ancestors on his father's side had migrated to America in 1688 from East Coker. The poet's father, Henry Eliot, took to the brick trade in St. Louis. He married Charlotte Stearns, who was an enthusiastic social worker as well as a writer of great caliber. Thus, it is clear that Eliot's mother contributed a lot to his development as a writer, especially as a religious poet. Eliot's complex, many-sided personality was the outcome of a number of inherited factors.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Eliot came to England and continued his studies at Oxford until 1915. His financial difficulties compelled him to take up the job of a school teacher. Though born an American, Eliot came to be a citizen of England. In 1917, he gave up teaching and worked as the assistant editor of *The Egoist*. In 1923, he became the editor of the *Criterion*, which he continued to edit until the outbreak of the Second World War. During this time, he had also been writing poetry, and his reputation as a poet was constantly growing. In 1917, he wrote *Prufrock and Other Observations* in Boston, Europe, and during his first year in England. The poetry is of urban streets, houses and people, not of woods, fields and flowers. The rottenness, the poignancy, the corruption and the decadence of contemporary society are exposed with a rare poignancy. The most important poems of his collections are:

*The Love - Song of - J. Alfred Prufrock*

*Portrait of a Lady*

*The Preludes*

*Rhapsody on a Windy Night**The Boston Evening Transcript*

Eliot's poetry marks a complete break from the 19th century tradition. He rejected the romantic theory that all art is basically an expression of the artist's personality. Reacting against subjectivism, Eliot advocated his famous theory of the impersonality of poetry. In the third phase, Eliot wrote the most significant poems. They are

*Gerontion**Burbank with Baedeker**Sweeney Erect**A Cooking Egg**Sweeney among the Nightingales**The Waste Land**The Hollow Men*

These poems are strictly urban in character. They reveal the poet's distress at the corruption and decay of contemporary European civilization. The range and scope of poetry were much enlarged.

*The Waste Land* is a kind of compressed epic, and it portrays the state of the civilization out of which it grows. The poem reveals a considerable maturity in the poet's powers. Though the poem is fragmented in effect, it symbolises the breakdown of beliefs and values in the culture of the West. *The Journey of Magi*, and *Ash Wednesday* are more religious in tone and reflect Eliot's thinking and feeling about the religion. *Four Quartets* examines the external problems of men without reference to the Christian tradition.

Eliot's reputation continued to grow and he paid a short visit to Harvard in 1933 to lecture there as a visiting professor. At this time, Eliot was also developing a practical interest in drama with a view to reaching wider audiences. He wrote four great masterpieces of poetic drama. They are

*The Murder in the Cathedral*

*The Family Reunion*

*The Confidential clerk*

*The Cocktail Party*

Notes

Eliot's success both as a poet and as a dramatist was remarkable. *Murder in the Cathedral*, his most significant play, deals with the martyrdom of Thomas Becket. The setting is medieval. In *The Family Reunion*, the setting is contemporary and social. The play discusses the domestic social issues and the reunion of the British middle-class family.

Eliot stands in the long line of poet-critics such as Ben Johnson, Dryden, Johnson and Matthew Arnold. Eliot's critical essays were published in the form of articles and essays in periodicals and journals of the day.

*Tradition and Individual Talent, Poetry and Drama, The Function of Criticism, The English Metaphysical Poets, The Frontiers of Criticism, etc.* are among his most popular essays in literary criticism. His phrases like 'dissociations of sensibility', 'objective correlative', 'unified sensibility', etc. have gained wide popularity among the readers. To conclude, Eliot must always be ranked as one of those great innovators who have created new traditions and renovated language and literature. As Frank Kermode has pointed out, "English poetry have had no future without the invaluable work done by T.S. Eliot."

#### **5.1.6 William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)**

W. B. Yeats was born in Dublin and educated at Erasmus School in Dublin. He studied art and developed an interest in literature. His father encouraged him to write poetry. The Irish Nationalist Movement inspired him because of his meeting with Lionel Johnson. Yeats made acquaintances with many English writers. One of them was Maud Gonne, whom he loved and made many references to in his poems. His meeting with Lady Gregory stimulated his interest in the theatre. In 1902, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin came under the management of the Irish National Theatre Company. Yeats was made the director, and he produced several plays. *The Land of Heart's Desire* is one of the important plays of Yeats. Yeats published his lyrical poems in 1895, entitled *Poems*. *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) is a volume of poems written by Yeats.

*The Wind among the Reeds* (1899), *The Wanderings of Origin and Other Poems* (1889), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) are his early poetry collections. In 1923, Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Yeats was an Irishman and was very conscious of his native background. Like T.S. Eliot, Yeats was also conscious of the spiritual barrenness of his age. The Bible, Irish legends and Christian faith influenced him.

Yeats is essentially a symbolic poet. He expressed his deep emotional and intellectual experiences through symbolic expression in his famous collection, *Byzantium Poems*. He adopted symbols from history and mythology. His symbol 'Helen' refers to his lady love Maud Gonne. 'Tower' is another symbol used by Yeats to suggest man's aspiration for philosophy, decay of civilization or ancient ceremony

In *Easter 1916*, he used 'swan' as a symbol of purity and 'horse' as change. In *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, Yeats expresses his wish to leave the world of spiritual barrenness into a world of remote and calm. His great symbolic poems are *Sailing to Byzantium* and *The Second Coming*. 'The city of Byzantium' becomes the central symbol in his poems. Yeats uses the famous symbols - the falcon and the widening gyre. The 'falcon' stands for the spirit of man who lost contact with tradition and the falconer is Christ. The 'widening gyre' is the spiritual movement of history towards the ultimate return of Christ.

Yeats is one of the most difficult modern poets. His verses are popular among the readers for their quest for beauty, conscious sentimentality, simplicity and melodic grace. His compact, closely woven style, each word used with calculated effect made all his poems unforgettable.

#### **5.1.7 Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973)**

W. H. Auden was born in New York and educated at Christ Church, Oxford. He worked as a schoolmaster in England for some time after being a university graduate. He was one of the members of a group of revolutionary poets. Auden was a leftist who protested against the rise of dictatorship in Europe. He became an active member of the political movement against the dictatorship.

Naturally, his first volume of verse, *Poems*, was strongly political in content and implication. *The Orators* (1932), Auden's next publication, was a strange mixture of prose and poetry probing into the human psyche. *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935) and *The Ascent of F6* (1936) are two of his significant plays. Auden's political interest was shown clearly in another volume of verse, *Look Stranger* (1936).

Auden visited many countries like Europe, Iceland, China, and the United States, where he stayed for writing and lecturing. Auden had an intellectual relationship with Europe. In 1956 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Among the works of Auden, the most important poetical works are

*Another Time* (1940)

*The Double Man* (1941)

*For the Time Being* (1945)

*The Age of Anxiety* (1946)

*The Shield Auden of Achilles* (1955)

Auden was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Age of Anxiety* in 1947. In this long poetical work, he portrays four characters who investigate the present human condition during the Second World War. He published his last work, *Epistle to a Godson*, in 1972, a year before his death.

Though his poems are political, Auden also touched on metaphysical and religious problems. His boldness of imagination, subtle intellectual power, wit and technical skills made his poem the most readable. *The Unknown Citizens* is well-known for its mixture of satire and irony. Most of his poems are committed to the social and political issues of his time. His poems reflect contemporary issues, ideas, science, philosophy, psychology, and politics. He also used symbols in his poem. He experimented with various verse forms such as the ballad, the sonnet, and the elegy. He wrote elegies like *The Cave of Making* and *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* and love poems like *That Night When Joy Began* and *For What Is Easy*.

Through the fine combination of intellectual and spontaneous skill in writing poems, Auden composed his poems reflecting the survival

problems of the middle class and contemporary manners and pretences. To conclude, Auden was a prolific writer of the 20th century.

### 5.1.8 Stephen Spender (1909 – 1995)

Spender was born in London and educated at University College of Oxford. He was a wide-ranging traveller. He was a Marxist and shifted to the position of a liberal humanist. He was repelled by the rise of fascism and dictatorship in Europe. He was one of the supporters of the 'New Poetry Movement' to protect against the orthodox political beliefs. The movement was started with the sole aim of writing poetry of social hope and bringing liberalism. He believed that poetry would give expression to the social and ethical values of the time. He focused his interest on outward events in search of what he called a universal experience through subjective contemplation.

Spender was a lyrical poet of personal and romantic concepts. He acted as the co-editor of 'Horizon' and the editor of 'Encounter' during the 1950s. Spender's remarkable poetical works are

*Poems* (1988)

*The Still Centre* (1939)

*Ruins and Vision*

*Poems of Dedication* (1949)

*The Edge of Being* (1949)

He wrote an anti-totalitarian tragedy in five acts - *Trial of a Judge*. *The Backward Son* (1940) is his novel, and *Burning Cactus* is a collection of short stories published in the 1940s. Spender's well-known literary criticisms are

*The Destructive Element* (1935)

*The Creative Element* (1953)

*The Struggle of the Modern* (1963)

*The Generous Days* (1971)

His only autobiographical work was *World within World*, published in 1951. He was awarded the Queen's Medal for poetry in 1971. He had been a lecturer at Cambridge University and also worked as a professor of English literature at University College, London. As a socially concerned poet, he was sad about the state of culture, the decaying urban life, political corruption, poverty, unemployment and other contemporary issues.

### 5.1.9 Robert Bridges (1844-1930)

Robert Bridges was born in Walmer, Kent. He went to Eton and later to Oxford for his studies. He began as a medical student and worked as a physician in hospitals in London. He was a gifted writer and published his first volume, *Shorter Poems*, in 1873. He went on to write several well-known poems like "A Passer – by", "London Snow", "I Will Not Let Thee Go" and "The Downs".

His poems primarily dealt with the subjects of love and nature with flawless taste and restraint and with the delicate artistry of an accomplished technician. The beauty of nature, the charm of the landscape, the joy and romance of love, and the memories of his childhood were the predominant themes of his poems. He published his collection of sonnets, *The Growth of Love*, in 1889. His longer poems are *Prometheus the Firegiver* (1883) and *Eros and Psyche* (1885), featuring beautiful images of the Italian countryside. In *Poems in Classical Parody* (1903) and *Later Poems* (1914), Bridges tackled the themes of politics and war.

His collections, *October and Other Poems* (1920) and *New Verse* (1925), demonstrate his prowess as a lyric poet. In his poems, Bridges recollected memories of his great childhood and experiences of his later years. The long philosophical poem *The Testament of Beauty* is his attempt to present beauty as the supreme force in life and to trace man's growth and perfect wisdom. Bridges has also produced plays in the Elizabethan tradition like *The Feast of Bacchus* (1889), *The Christian Captives* (1890), *The Return of Ulysses* (1890) and *The Humours of the Court* (1893). His plays, however, were failures. He was successful as a poet but not as a dramatist.

### 5.1.10 Walter de la Mare (1873-1956)

Walter de la Mare was born in Kent and educated at St. Paul's Cathedral School. He was a prominent member of the Georgian group of poets. He received honorary degrees from the universities of Cambridge, St. Andrews, Bristol and London. He wrote for children. He rarely found his inspiration in the social problems of modern life and instead concentrated on romance and nature for inspiration. *The Listeners and Other Poems* (1912), *The Fleeting and Other Poems* (1932), *Bells and Grass* (1941), *Collected Poems* (1942), *The Burning Glass and Other Poems* (1945), and *The Traveller* (1946) are some of the most notable volumes of his poems. His poems showcase his love for nature with an elusive, dream-like quality. He also proved himself to be a gifted novelist and short story writer. *The Riddle and Other Stories* (1923) and *The Lord Fish and Other Stories* (1933) are his major short story collections. As a modern writer, Walter de la Mare used the traditional forms of English poetry.

### 5.1.11 Ted Hughes (1930-1998)

Ted Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire. He received his education at Pembroke College in Cambridge after attending Naxborough Grammar School. He took up teaching and taught creative writing at the University of Massachusetts. His first collection of poems, *The Hawk* was published in 1957 and caught the attention of critics and the general public alike. Most of his poems dealt with violence — by wind, rain, and sea, birds and wild animals, and also by men at war. One of his major poems, “The Thought -Fox” is known for its unconventional theme and masculine power. In the 1960s, he published a series of works, such as *The Burning of the Brothel* (1967), *Wodwo* (1966), *Scapegoats and Rabies* (1964), *Animal Poems* (1967), *A Crow Hymn* (1970), *Eclipse* (1976) and *Chiasmodon* (1977).

The violence of animals and natural forces are the central themes in all of his works. Ted Hughes is called an animal poet for the readers through his poems get a unique experience of animal behaviours — of hawks, crows, Jaguars, crabs, dogfishes, apes, foxes, and boa-constrictors. In “The Hawk in the Rain” and “Hawk Roosting”, the hawk appears to be



a recurring metaphor. He uses animal qualities as symbols and metaphors to represent the vitality and violence in nature. In his poems, “A Few Crows” (1970) and “Crow Wakes” (1971), the crow becomes the central metaphor, and all human pretensions are scrutinised by the crow. To him, the crow is God's adversary and man is a creature trying to justify his lust for survival with his words. Another favourite theme of Ted Hughes is death, which acts as the link between man and the rest of creation. His animal poems are known for black humour because Ted Hughes is preoccupied with death. The poet sees human survival as cruel and meaningless because the world is also cruel and meaningless.

Ted Hughes' poems are notable for their verbal inventiveness, rhyming words, and masculine imagination. The fusion of unrelated concepts to produce symbolic effect and paradoxical meaning makes his poems vibrant and masculine. For his poems, he received the New York Poetry Centre First Publication Award, the Guinness, and the Queens Gold Medal for Poetry.

## Lesson 5.2: Modern or Twentieth-Century Drama

### Structure:

- 5.2.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2.2 Characteristics of Modern Drama
- 5.2.3 George Bernard Shaw (1856 -1450)
- 5.2.4 John Galsworthy (1867-1988)
- 5.2.5 John Millington Synge(1871-1909)
- 5.2.6 Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937)
- 5.2.7 Sean O'Casey (1880-1964)
- 5.2.8 Christopher Fry (B. 1907)
- 5.2.9 Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)
- 5.2.10 Harold Pinter (B. 1920)
- 5.2.11 John Osborne (B.1929)

### 5.2.1 Learning Objectives

After studying this unit, the reader shall be able to understand:

- The characteristics of modern drama
- The Problem Plays of G. B. Shaw
- The Topical plays of Galsworthy
- Synge as an Irish dramatist
- Scottish plays of Sir James Mathew Barrie
- Sean O'Casey's Dublin plays
- Psychological plays of Christopher Fry
- Absurd plays of Samuel Beckett

- Harold Pinter's *Comedy of Menace*
- John Osborne's post-war plays and the concept of 'angry young man'

### 5.2.2 Characteristics of Modern Drama

The twentieth century has seen many innovations in the field of drama. Early in the century, dramatists became dissatisfied with the techniques of Realism and turned to Expressionism, which is widely gaining traction in Germany. In the early works of the American dramatist, Eugene O'Neil, expressionism found powerful use. The techniques involved gross exaggeration of character and incident, very stylised language, carefully manipulated distortions of time and action, and heavily loaded ironic comments. Expressionism aimed at exposing the crass materialism and mechanisation of the world that led to the breakdown of human relationships and the brutalisation of the whole civilization.

The revolt against Realism gave birth to Surrealism, a technique that made use of fantastic and incongruous imagery. This technique gave the drama a dream-like, hallucinatory atmosphere. Then came the Literature of the Absurd. The leaders of this school were Albert Camus, Eugene Ionesco, Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Adamov, and Samuel Beckett. The 'Absurdist' saw man as an isolated being in an alien environment in which all the old values of goodness, justice, brotherhood, and the rest counted for nothing. Beckett's famous sentence sums up the modern writer's predicament "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." This absurd dilemma is to be seen on two counts: the irrationality of all human action and enterprise, and the absurdity of it. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* still remains the supreme expression of the "Absurd" creed. Harold Pinter and Edward Albee are other major absurd dramatists. The search for 'existential' freedom continues even today.

The problem play, also known as the Comedy of Ideas or Thesis Play, brings to life some contemporary controversy or social ills

such as women's rights, unemployment, penial reforms, class privilege, etc. to stimulate thought and action among the audience. Problem plays usually take up issues of social concern, present inherent problems in these issues, and end on an open note, leaving it to the audience to find their own solution. The plays of G. B. Shaw and Henrik Ibsen are well-known problem plays.

Contemporary dramatists from all parts of the globe have continued to experiment so as to give appropriate expression to the modern spirit. Some of the new forms include Feminist Theatre, Afro-American Theatre and the Theatre of Cruelty, and the experimentation is bound to continue. As long as man continues to evolve, searching and striving for perfection, the arts, which give expression to his inner needs and feelings, cannot afford to lag far behind.

### **5.2.3 George Bernard Shaw (1856 -1950)**

G. B. Shaw, the most provocative of writers and an iconoclast of modern times, was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1856. His father was a minor civil servant, and his mother was a very good musician, from whom Shaw inherited his love for music. Shaw grew up in an atmosphere of genteel impecuniosity. After finishing his schooling for a short period, Shaw went to work as a junior clerk for a Dublin estate agent. Five years later, he migrated to London where his mother and sister had gone the preceding year.

Shaw was bent on becoming a literary man, and he began writing novels in 1879. He wrote five novels for which no publisher could be found. Then he became a music critic for four years in the magazine *The World*. He wrote musical and dramatic criticism for several journals, including the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He had become a socialist after listening to a lecture by Henry George. He joined the Fabian Society soon after it was founded. He came into contact with Sydney, Beatrice Webb and Mrs. Annie Besant in the society. They remained lifelong friends and initiated him into several social reforms and political movements. In 1889, he edited the Fabian essays on socialism. He understood the greatness of Ibsen and he was determined that his own plays should also be vehicles of ideas.

Shaw wrote *The Philanderer* about the new woman and Mrs. Warren's *Profession* dealing with the economies of prostitution. In 1894, he produced *Arms and the Man*, a play making fun of the army. He continued to write and brought out two volumes, *Plays Pleasant* and *Plays Unpleasant*. His play, *Candida*, is a study of feminism. A brief piece on Napoleonic life was portrayed in *Man of Destiny*. Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite* is a study of Wagner, which combined musical criticism with Marxism.

In 1901, Shaw published a volume of plays that contained *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Devil's Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversation*. Two years later, Shaw published *Man and Superman* and *Don Juan*. He produced plays with sensational theatrical success. His play, *John Bull's Other Island*, deals with Irish nationalism. Shaw also wrote a work on practical civics, titled *The Commonsense of Municipal Trading*. At regular intervals, he wrote many plays until almost the end of his long life. In 1907, he brought out *Major Barbara*, dealing with the Salvation Army and the armaments trade. Four years later, he wrote a series of plays such as *Getting Married*, *The Skewing-up of Blanco Poset* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. A play on Shakespeare, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, appeared in 1914 along with *Misalliance*, discussing the theme of relations between parents and children. In 1916, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Overruled*, and *Pygmalion* were published.

Shaw's most ambitious play, *Back to Methuselah*, came two years later. He claimed it to be his best. It is made of five plays dealing with the theme of further biological evolution of the human race. Shaw imagines a future where man's longevity will indefinitely increase. *St. Joan* is the most popular of Shaw's works. It presents the tragedy of Joan of Arc in an impressive historical setting at a time when her name was very much in the public eye as a result of her canonization in 1920. This represents a high watermark of Shaw's achievement.

Shaw gives more importance to plot than to characters in his plays. He selects his plots with a view to discussing the theme he has set for himself. Characters are merely his mouthpieces and speak for the writer. His last phase of dramatic works are *Translation and Tomfooleries* (1926), *The Apple Cart* (1928), *Too True to be Good* (1934), *The Simpleton* (1934), *Geneva* (1939) and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939)

In this period, he also wrote an essay, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (1988). Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1926. He died at the age of 95 in 1950. Shaw was without a doubt the best English playwright since Sheridan and Goldsmith.

#### 5.2.4 John Galsworthy (1867-1988)

Galsworthy, one of the greatest Englishmen of letters of the 20th century, was born at Kingston Hill in Surrey. Galsworthy was born into affluence; his father was a well-known London attorney and the chairman of several corporations. After taking a law degree, he studied for the bar. But he was drawn to literature, and he indulged his natural bent, not following his hereditary profession.

Galsworthy's first attempts were short stories in which he narrated his travel impressions. The first book short of stories was *The Island Pharisees*. It shows him as an acute sympathetic critic of English institutions and characters. His characters were drawn from the world of middle-class — the Squire, the Parson, the trader, the merchant and the lawyer. *The Man of Property* (1908) lifted him into the front rank. Its success was so great that he was motivated to continue it in a series comprising three trilogies. The first series was called *The Forsyte Saga*, which included *The Man of Property*, *In Chancery* and *To Let*. The second series was called *The Modern Comedy*, which comprised three plays. They are *The White Monkey*, *The Silver Spoon* and *Swan Song*. The final trilogy was published posthumously, entitled *End of a Chapter*, which comprised *Maid in Waiting*, *Flowering Wilderness* and *Over the River*.

Galsworthy has been attracted to the topical plays with problems. His best-known plays are *Justice*, *The Silver Box*, *Strife* and *Loyalties*. They are a dramatisation of the burning problems of society, such as unequal laws, industrial unrest, treatment of Juvenile offenders, etc. He also wrote throughout his life, short stories, essays, sketches and reviews, all marked by the same integrity, dignity and humanity. In his plays, he preached a lofty ideal of patriotism, which would pave the way for the emergence of a truly international feeling brotherhood.

His works are extensively translated into European languages. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932. The government offered him a knighthood. He had sympathy for Indians. Early in his career as an author, he was against English dominance in India. Thus, Galsworthy takes his rightful place in literature, not as a preacher but as a careful artist.

### 5.2.5 John Millington Synge (1871-1909)

J.M. Synge was born in Newton and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. As a wide traveller, he met W.B. Yeats in Paris, who advised him to join the Irish Movement. Synge lived among the peasantry of Aran Island, where people still retained their Celtic culture. His book *The Aran Islands* describes his experiences with the Irish peasantry, their cultural ethos and their beliefs and superstitions.

Synge's plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1902) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904), are based on experiences in the Aran Islands. Both plays are about the lifestyle and attitude of Irish women. Here, the sea becomes a living force. Synge's play, *The Well of the Saints* (1905), is cynical and thought-provoking. *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) is a realistic comedy of Irish society. The play was produced by the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. His last two plays are *Deirdre of the Sorrows* and *The Tinker's Wedding*.

Synge is one of the greatest dramatists from Ireland. Irish life, culture and even the violence of the ordinary peasants find a place in his plays. Ironical humour and the musical quality of his dialogue are features of his plays. He ridiculed the morals and religious beliefs of the Irish, which evoked protests from Irish nationalists. He borrowed his themes from French writers and playwrights. The blend of tragic expression and a new trend of laughing stain is the contribution of Synge to the theatre.

### 5.2.6 Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937)

The Scottish novelist and playwright, J. M. Barrie was born in Kirriemuir and educated at Edinburgh University. As a journalist for a short period, he came to London and wrote for the *St. James' Gazette*, a periodical. He was famous as a novelist before he was known as a

dramatist. He wrote sentimental novels *My Lady Nicotine* (1890), *Better Dead* (1888) and *When a Man's Single* (1889). He sketches the simple village life of his native district and Scottish country people.

Beginning in 1900, Barrie became interested in theatre. He created many plays with a peculiar mixture of whimsicality, sentimentality, pathos and humour. His audiences were delighted by his simple grace and charm. His best-known plays are *The Admissible Crichton* (1902), *Peter Pan* (1904), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *Dean Brutes* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920). Barrie blended fantasy and reality with satire and gained immense popularity through these plays. In 1921, he was awarded the Order of Merit, and in 1980, he became the Chancellor of Edinburgh University.

Barrie was a prolific writer of plays of high quality. His characters are slight but charming. He shows his sympathy for the daydreamers and failures of the world. His dialogues are sensitive and sharp and he has a real feeling for words.

#### 5.2.7 Sean O'Casey (1880-1964)

Sean O'Casey was born into a poor family in Dublin. He was a self-educated labourer who worked in the stockroom of a hardware shop. He became an actor and attended the plays at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin where he learned the Irish language and wrote songs of satire. *The Shadow of a Gunman* was his realistic and amusing play, discussing the survival problems of the slum dwellers of Dublin. It proved to be successful.

His second play, *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) was a great success, centred on the Irish Civil War. It presents the tragedy of a family caught in the crossfire of battle and exposes the brutality of war. He presented an ironically comic vision of a chaotic and tragic world. His one-act plays *Kathleen Listens In* and *Nannies Night Out* are farce comedies. His great play, *The Plough and the Stars* (1924) deals with the people in the city tenements caught in the coils of war. In all his plays, O'Casey portrays the destruction of war and the illusions of heroism and patriotic pride.

As his plays were not welcomed by Irish nationalists, O'Casey felt like an alien in Ireland. He wrote four tragic comedies: *Within the Gates*



(1988), *The Stars Turn Red* (1940), *Red Roses for Me* (1942) and *Oak Leaves and Lavender* (1946). These plays were written during the years between the Great Depression and the Great War. He combined modern revolutionary ideas of socialism with his expressionistic techniques. He presented a moral protest against a decadent spiritual and social order. In his plays, comedy may merge with scenes of deep tragedy. O'Casey combines the superb effect of a tragic vision with comedy and melodrama to project the reality of life through characters and situations.

### 5.2.8 Christopher Fry (1907- 2005)

Christopher Fry was born in Bristol and educated at Bedford Modern School. As a teacher-cum- actor, Fry began writing poetry first and was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry. *Youth of the Peregrines* (1939) was his first play and then came *The Boy with a Car*. He used the style of comedy of manners in his plays. His poetic play, *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, brought him recognition as a playwright with genius and originality.

By using the dramatic techniques of ingenious plot, lively dialogue, cultured humour and symbolism, Fry retained his success with *The Lady is Not for Burning* (1948). It is based on historical events during the time of King Edward III. The play is known for its poetic beauty and wit. The central theme of the play is a plea for charity and human love in a world of persecution and neglect. His play *Thor, with Angels* (1948) deals with religious overtones, presenting the issue between primitive vengeance and Christian mercy. Another successful play, *Curmantele* (1961), is a historical play centred around the lives of Henry II and Thomas Beckett.

The two prominent plays by Fry are *Venus Observed* (1950) and *The Dark is Light Enough* (1954). His psychological play *A Sleep of Prisoners* (1981) is concerned with the dream of four people in a German-occupied cathedral in France during the Second World War. Fry has introduced several Biblical and Hebrew characters in this play. He also contributed scripts to several television plays, radio plays and screenplays.

Fry's plays are rooted in moral dilemmas. He introduced whim, fantasy, and divine participation in the naturalistic and realistic

theatre of modern times. He is concerned with the beauty of life and spiritual values. His dialogues are presented in poetic form with clarity and precision. Poetic drama is the distinguishing trend of Fry, which has developed mature contemporary poetry suitable for drama.

### 5.2.9 Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

Samuel Beckett was the son of Protestant Anglo-Irish parents in Dublin. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. He taught French at Trinity College for some time. He began a meaningful life of creative activity after spending two years wandering around France. In the beginning, Beckett experimented with stories and novels. *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934), and *Murphy* (1925) are some of his novels that present characters that are physically deformed and pervaded with a sense of irrationality about the world.

Samuel Beckett is a great Absurd dramatist who presented the sufferings of man and the metaphysical anguish to which modern consciences are subjected. The Absurd plays tried to portray man's longing to discover purpose and order in a world of chaos and disorder. Beckett performed his first play, *Waiting for Godot*, at the Theatre of Babylon in Paris in 1949. It was a tremendous success. The prime characters are two tramps whose ridiculous actions and meaningless speech signify nothing. Nothingness is the meaning of human life.

The setting of the play is an open, dry place with a single withered tree, symbolising the wasteland of modern existence. Nothing happens except the long waiting of the two tramps for a mysterious person named Godot — “Nobody goes, Nobody comes, Nothing happens”. The play affected the minds of spectators with a sense of anguish and sympathy for humanity.

Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) introduces two legless old people in a pair of dustbins trying to communicate with each other. Their invalid son sits in a wheelchair consuming painkillers. Beckett shows the futility of human life and uncertainty. His other play, *All That Fall*, was published in 1957 and tells the sad story of a fat old Irish woman's long and miserable wait for her blind husband at the railway station. In *Happy Days* (1961), Beckett expresses an anguished sense of boredom with life and human life.

His last two plays, *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) and *Act Without Words* (1959), illustrate the tragic helplessness and loneliness of man. His theme is simple, showing the impossibility of finding meaning in a world of uncertainty.

Beckett introduced a new conscience into the dramatic world—the absurdity of human existence and the stupidity of finding readymade solutions. Though his plays violate the three unities of time, place and action, they represent the author's initiation of the human condition in the modern world. Beckett used images and metaphors to represent the meaningless existence of humans. He is conscious of the communication gap between man and man and how that destroys love, friendship, goodwill, and charity. He sympathises with modern man because he is condemned to live in a world of inadequate language and thought and feels pity over the meaningless existence of modern man.

#### **5.2.10 Harold Pinter (1930 - 2008)**

Pinter was born in Hackney, London and studied at Hackney Downs Grammar School. He was a professional actor and director at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1989. He was a well-known actor who received the Orders of Merit.

With a wide experience in drama, Pinter started writing plays with unconventional themes. Like Beckett, he also felt sympathy for the destined life of the modern man, who lives in a world of fear, guilt and menace. He is more concerned with the lives of middle and working-class communities. *The Room*, Pinter's first play, was produced in 1957. The whole action takes place in a room. His famous play, *The Birthday Party* (1958), is about two killers who ask ridiculous and insulting questions to their victim. Pinter produced two plays together in 1960, *A Slight Ache* and *The Dumb Waiter*. The most successful play of Pinter is *The Caretaker* (1960), which made him the leading dramatist of his age.

Some of his other plays are *The Homecoming* (1965), *Silence* (1969) and *No Man's Land*. The plays are quite short and set in an enclosed, claustrophobic space and the characters are always in doubt about their existence. The plays express a deeper meaning of life. The audience is made a participant in the action of the play to decide its end.

Pinter leaves the audience to find the resolution. He never tries to end his plays by resolving social or psychic problems. He seems to leave his characters in obscurity because they are caught up in a world of futility and menace.

Influenced by Samuel Beckett, his characters' articulation is vague and sometimes meaningless. Pinter is a master of silence on stage, which suggests the failure to communicate at the time of need. Silence is a dramatic device to suggest what cannot be communicated verbally. This is a characteristic feature of the *Comedy of Menace*. Pinter employs non-verbal communication such as giggles, gasps, digressions, and repetitions to suggest the meaningless conversations of humans. He suggests that silence is a more powerful form of communication than words. One of his characters' names is Silence. He presents primarily a male world. For him, women are objects with great charm, mystery and danger. Pinter believes that both life and death are terrors and the audience feels a sense of terror and threat of violence in most of Pinter's plays.

### 5.2.11 John Osborne (1929 - 1994)

John Osborne was born in London to parents of very different backgrounds. His mother, Nellie Beatrice, belonged to a working-class family. His father, William Crawford, was a spruce man. Osborne's sympathy for the working-class community is not fictional but real. In his autobiography, entitled *A Better Class of Person*, he shared his own personal sufferings, disillusionment, and hatred towards the upper-class society.

He started his career as a journalist. He began writing plays in the 1950s. *The Devil Inside Him* was first produced at the Royal Theatre. The play *Look Back in Anger* (1956) made his reputation as a dramatist. John Osborne came to be known as the "angry young man." This label was both his good fortune and misfortune. The protagonist in *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy Porter, is the mouthpiece of Osborne. It is an auto-biographical play by the author. His dislikes of the posh newspaper, upper-class society, and the artificial ceremony in the church are represented through the angry young Jimmy Porter. *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1957) is technically similar to *Look Back in Anger*, discussing the theme of social inequality and the war between the working class and capitalists.

*The Entertainer* (1957), is another play by Osborne where he broke away from realism to encase the story of a rundown comedian's relations with his family. The play reflects the present state of Britain and relates Archly Rice's personal emotional failure. *Luther* (1961) was an epic-drama very much along the lines of Brecht's *Galileo*. He made Luther, a Renaissance angry man railing against social degeneration. In the opinion of many critics, his best play is *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964). The central character, Bill Maitland is a drunken, disreputable lawyer who finds that the world has ceased to listen to him. The play is written almost as a monologue, with the other characters presented as projections of Maitland's own neurotic, guilt-racked mind.

Osborne's another major play, *Patriot for Me*, tells the history of Alfred Redi's spying activities for the Austrians and the Russians in the years preceding the First World War. The play is an attempt to place Redi and his problem in a larger social and moral context. *The World of Paul Slickey* is an ambitious satirical musical about a gossip columnist with a dual personality. Osborne's *The Blood of the Bambergs* is a feeble satire about a royal wedding. His psychological play, *Under Plain Cover*, is about the world of private neurosis. It is a story of the strange, shared fantasy-world of a married couple who turn out to be brother and sister at the end of the play. *A Sense of Detachment* (1972), *The End of the Me Old Cigar* (1975) and *A Place Calling Itself Rome* (1973) are some of the other notable plays by Osborne.

In all these plays, Osborne has shown a large-scale, unruly talent. He remains a splashily effective, untidy dramatist. His works seem almost infallibly to capture the attention of a more broadly based public than that of any of his contemporaries. Osborne has been the recipient of a number of awards and distinctions. He has also made his mark as a writer of film scripts, with some of his own plays having been made into films.

## **Lesson 5.3: Modern Prose or Twentieth Century Prose**

### **Structure:**

- 5.3.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.3.2 Characteristics of Modern Prose
- 5.3.3 G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)
- 5.3.4 T. E. Lawrence (1888-1985)
- 5.3.5 Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)
- 5.3.6 Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
- 5.3.7 A. G. Gardiner (1865-1946)
- 5.3.8 Robert Lynd (1879-1949)

### **5.3.1 Learning Objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader will be able to understand:

- The characteristics of modern prose
- The paradoxical prose style of G. K. Chesterton
- Literary achievements of T. E. Lawrence
- Social essays of Aldous Huxley
- Hilaire Belloc's biographies of historians
- A.G. Gardiner's personal essays
- Humour and humanism in Robert Lynd's essays

### **5.3.2 Characteristics of Modern Prose**

The prose of the twentieth century is not vastly different from that which was written before. However, with the explosion of knowledge

in all fields of study, together with the increase in general readership, prose is capable of sustaining interest in a very large variety of readers. In recent times, prose is thought of as a form for expressing thoughts and ideas, while poetry, by and large, is meant for giving expression to feelings and emotions. The twentieth-century prose has and holds contemporary interest, for it is all about what people are thinking and doing at that time. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, much more was achieved by way of scholarship than by way of creativity. Literature in all its forms—both past and contemporary—was critically analysed and re-evaluated.

Modern prose writers are interested in writing biography, nature studies, politics, travel writing, philosophy, social history, and children's literature, each field having its own distinctive style. Biography has always been appealing because of the intimate knowledge we get from eminent personalities. Biographies of leading public and literary figures have always found a place in English literature. The most important biographer is Lytton Strachey, who wrote biographies such as *Eminent Victorians* (1918), *Queen Victoria* (1921), and *Books and Characters* (1922). The main features of modernism are individualism, experimentation, symbolism, formalism and absurdity. Modernism is practically inseparable from the theme of transformation. Transformation also means a change in beliefs, opinions, identity and thoughts. Individualism is one of the key elements of modernism.

### 5.3.3 G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Chesterton was born in London and educated at St. Paul's School. He graduated from University College, London. He was an essayist, poet, critic, novelist, biographer, and journalist. He was liberal in political thinking and nationalist in religion. He was highly respected and popular among intellectuals.

Chesterton started his career as a book reviewer for *The Illustrated London News*, a periodical. He published his first collection of poems *The Wild Knight and Other Poems* in 1900. His book of social criticism, *The Defendant* (1901), was a criticism of Victorian pessimism. He had a thoughtful and serious attitude towards life. He often used paradox and satire in his works, like *Twelve Types* (1902) and *Heretics* (1905). Chesterton's well-known novels are *The Man Who Was Thursday*

(1908), *The Napoleon of Nothing Hill* (1910), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1922), and *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911).

His *Father Brown* series is popular among readers. As a true Roman Catholic, he committed himself to reforming Christian practice by removing ambiguities. He wrote Catholic essays and several religious biographies. Chesterton was a prolific literary critic. His critical comments on the works of major Victorian writers are edited and published under the title *The Victorian Era in Literature* (1913). He is famous for his paradoxical prose style. *A Defence of Nonsense* is the best example of this style. He was an optimist and traditional in his outlook. Commonplace truths are expressed in a clear and witty manner in his essays.

#### 5.3.4 T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935)

Lawrence was born in Wales and educated at Jesus College, Oxford. As an architecture student, he visited the Middle East, studied Arabic and identified himself with the Arabs. During the First World War, he was involved in favouring Arabs in their liberation struggle against the Turks. He had suitable qualities of leadership. Under his leadership, the Arabs made great contributions to the war efforts to help the British Empire. After the war, he returned to England and joined the Air Force as an ordinary officer. His contributions to the Arab war against the Turks were glorified. He was called the 'Lawrence of Arabia.'

Lawrence happened to meet Bernard Shaw and learned the craft of writing from him. He began to write about his Arab experiences under the title *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in 1926. Its continuation was published next year under the title *Revolt on the Desert*. His other works are *The Mist* (1935) and *Crusader Castles* (1936). Lawrence was a man of action, a writer and a philosopher by experience. His philosophical intellect enabled him to see the facility of worldly titles and the vulgarity of ambitions and achievements. He translated the *Odyssey* into English.

#### 5.3.5 Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

Aldous Leonard Huxley, one of the most brilliant and provoking writers of the modern English period, was born in Godalming, Surrey. No British writer has had such formidable literary merit as this brilliant



essayist, novelist and poet. He had an intellectual family background and has been called "a congenital intellectual".

Huxley began his career as a writer with minor literary work for *Athenaeum*, a British journal. He then started writing short stories and published *The Gioconda Smile and Other Stories* (1921). His novels *Antic Hay*, and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) were also produced during this period. In 1932, he wrote *Brave New World*, a brilliant satire on the popular idea of a utopia created by steady technological progress.

In the 1930s, Huxley was in Italy writing novels and during this period, he established himself as a master of the essay. The most significant essays are *Along the Road* (1925), *Proper Studies* (1927), *Do What You Will* (1929) and *Music at Night* (1931). He also brought forth two excellent travelogues, *Jesting Pilate* (1926) and *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1924). *The Oliver Tree* (1936) was followed by a most insightful essay, *Ends and Means* (1937). It marks a spiritual turn in Huxley's outlook. Huxley no longer tried to be a clever and cynical intellectual. He believed that only good means could lead to good ends.

Huxley's work during and after the Second World War shows a striking variety. *Grey Eminence* (1941) is a psychological biography of Father Joseph, the 17th-century French mystic and politician. *The Art of Seeing* (1943) is a challenging work about visual re-education. *After Many a Summer* (1949), *Time Must Have a Stop* (1945) and *Ape and Essence* (1949) are delightful novels, that laugh at the influence of wealth. *Themes and Variations* (1950) is a collection of essays. In *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), Huxley emerges as a philosopher of great lucidity.

Aldous Huxley is the most versatile thinker of the modern age. His essays are satirical and powerful, charged with knowledge, and written in a brilliant style. He touched upon an amazing variety of themes of science, philosophy, politics, history, economics, psychology, music, painting, and life. His books are not books of words, but books of thoughts and wisdom.

### 5.3.6 Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

Hilaire Belloc was born in France and educated at the Oratory School in Edgbaston. He was in military service for a few months and a Member of Parliament for a period. He started his career as a writer with *Verses and Sonnets*, *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (1896) and *More Beasts (For Worse Children)*. His interest in history motivated him to come out with *Danton* and *Robespierre*. Belloc also wrote statistical novels like *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election* and *A Change in the Cabinet*. His travelogue, *The Path to Rome*, is interspersed with historical comments.

Belloc was also a poet and biographer. He wrote *The History of England* in four volumes. He published a number of biographies of historical personalities in England, from Wolsey to King James II. He wrote a collection of poems titled *Heroic Poems in Praise of Wine* (1928). He criticised the bureaucratic setup and the ruling class in his sociological work, *The Servile State*.

Belloc was one of the pioneers of modern English prose. As a Catholic, his religious faith affected his essays in theme and style. He chose commonplace themes and made them sublime with his presentation. His prose is notable for its easy flow and vitality. His language is elegant, clear and amusing.

### 5.3.7 A. G. Gardiner (1865-1946)

Gardiner, born in Chelmsford, launched his career as an editor of the journal *Daily News* in the 1910s. He wrote his essays under the pseudonym 'Alpha of the Plough'. His essays were collected under the title *Pebbles on the Shore* in 1916. He wrote a series of biographies of his contemporaries, which were collected in *Prophets, Priests and Kings* (1908). *Leaves in the Wind* (1918), *Windfalls* (1930), and *Many Furrows* (1924) are the books of essays by Gardiner. He discussed everyday aspects of social and personal life in his essays. He made his essays in a readable style with an attitude of pleasing thoughtfulness, imagination, and choice of themes. In *On Saying Please* and *On Umbrella Morals*, Gardiner comments on his own observations on human behaviour, social foibles, and natural laws. *On Being Remembered* is a personal essay by Gardiner that discusses the vanity of human desires.

Gardiner's other major works are *Pillars of Society*, *The War Lords* and *The Anglo-American Future*. Humour is the backbone of his essays. He took up commonplace themes, brought them to a higher level, and gave practical suggestions to rectify the errors. Gardiner transformed trivial and mundane themes into thought-provoking ones by employing metaphors, paradoxes, and anecdotes.

### 5.3.8 Robert Lynd (1879-1949)

Lynd was born and brought up in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He pursued a journalistic career and became the editor of the 'News Chronicle'. Lynd established himself as an essayist following the tradition of Steele and Addison. Like Charles Lamb, Lynd blended humour and humanism in his essays. *The Pleasures of Ignorance* (1921), *The Blue Lion* (1923), *The Peal of Bells* (1930), *I Tremble to Think* (1936), and *Life's Little Oddities* (1941) are some of the remarkable collection of Lynd's essays. His two literary criticisms are *The Art of Letters* (1921) and *Dr. Johnson and Company* (1928).

Lynd chooses trivial day-to-day life incidents as his themes and makes them interesting. The most important characteristic feature of Lynd's essays is their twinkling humour. Lynd is a master of civilised irony and thoughtful pathos. He has a talent for characterisation, as seen in "A Hero of the Kerb." "Good Resolutions" and "Arguing" are examples of Lynd's originality. "On Holidays" and "Changing Houses" exemplify his sense of humour and tolerance. His essays are personal and confessional. Lynd is not interested in preaching or counselling, but he leads the reader through their advocacy of life values.

## **Lesson 5.4: Modern Novel or Twentieth Century Novel**

### **Structure:**

- 5.4.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.4.2 Characteristics of Modern Novel
- 5.4.3 Herbert George Wells (1866-1946)
- 5.4.4 Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)
- 5.4.5 Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)
- 5.4.6 James Joyce (1882-1941)
- 5.4.7 Edward Morgan Forster (1879)
- 5.4.8 George Orwell (1903 – 1950)
- 5.4.9 Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)
- 5.4.10 William Golding (b.1911)
- 5.4.11 P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975)
- 5.4.12 Summing up
- 5.4.13 Self Assessment Questions
- 5.4.14 References

### **5.4.1 Learning Objectives**

After studying this unit, the reader shall be able to know:

- The literary merits of 20th-century fiction
- Science Fiction novels by H. G. Wells
- Adventure novels of Joseph Conrad
- Autobiographical elements in Maugham's novels
- The stream-of-consciousness technique

- Adventure and autobiographical novels of James Joyce
- The social outlook in E. M. Forster's novels
- Allegorical novels of George Orwell
- Portrayal of human relationships in D. H. Lawrence's novels
- Portrayal of social manners and culture in Virginia Woolf's novels
- Use of allegory and symbols in William Golding's novels
- Autobiographical elements in P. G. Wodehouse's novels

#### **5.4.12 Characteristics of Modern Novel**

The novel is the most popular literary form of the twentieth century. Modern publishing activity has also made the book appealing to the eye, for there are various kinds of print to suit all kinds of visual tastes. The novel's reader has at his command the accumulation of assorted information and ideas on every issue that concerns humanity. Modern novelists have developed various techniques to help the reader in his task. The modern novel has assimilated the techniques of poetry and drama, diversified literary techniques, adopted cinematic and other visual art techniques and expanded its scope. It also has borrowed from the great pool of knowledge.

Modern novelists experiment with new techniques in their novels, like the stream-of-consciousness technique. Inner monologue is a stream-of-consciousness technique. It is a representation of the perception and experience of the character without the interference of an external narrative voice. The novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce employ the stream-of-consciousness method. There are two types of first-person narration: the 'I' as a witness point of view and the 'I' as a protagonist. The author must confine himself to what the narrator sees, hears, and experiences; he must allow the narrator to project a point of view that seems natural to him.

Modern novelists write realistic novels which talk about society in -depth. Novelists like D.H. Lawrence discuss the themes of relationship and sex explicitly. H. G. Wells, Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennet focused on the social problems of their times and made the novels an instrument of social propaganda.

### 5.4.3 Herbert George Wells (1866-1946)

H. G. Wells was born at Bromley in Kent. Due to the family's poor circumstances, he could not complete his school studies. After earning his bachelor's degree, he worked as a science teacher and began writing short stories and science articles.

His first novel, *The Time Machine*, was published in 1895, in which he turned his knowledge of science into a riveting story. He introduced the new genre 'science fiction', earning him the reputation as a writer of scientific romances. The well-known science fiction of Wells are:

- *The Wonderful Visit* (1895)
- *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896)
- *The Invisible Man* (1897)
- *The War of the Worlds* (1898)
- *The First Man in the Moon* (1901)

Wells introduced flying machines, escalators, imaginary planets, strange food and threatening weapons of destruction to quench the thirst of science fiction readers. Wells was conscious of maintaining moral and human values, though his works concerned science. He achieved mastery in his characterisation, especially Dr. Moreau in *The Invisible Man*.

Wells has also written sociological novels. He was interested in the social implications of the discoveries in modern science. Wells was a socialist, reformer and prophet. Wells' highly admirable sociological novels are;

- *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900)
- *Kipps* (1905)

- *The history of Mr. Polly* (1910)
- *Tono Bungay* (1908)
- *The Passionate Friends* (1913)

In these novels, Wells discusses the lifestyle of the English middle class with their ambitions and dreams. He applies critical analysis in all sorts of fiction.

Wells was not a writer of mere entertainment, but he wrote his novels with a social and cultural purpose. His novels lack the artistic quality like that of Dickens. His *Ann Veronica* (1909) asserts women's right to equality. He wrote on several subjects in *The Country of the Blind* (1911), a collection of short stories. *The Outline of History* (1930) and *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932) are some of his other works. His novels are full of new ideas and detailed descriptions, but too much insistence on ideas often affects their artistic quality. Wells lost his optimism in humankind towards the end of his life, as reflected in *Mind at the End of its Tether* (1946).

#### 5.4.4 Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

Conrad was born in Ukraine, Northern Russia, where his parents were exiled. After his education, he joined as a member of the crew of an English merchant ship in 1884. As a crew member, he visited many countries and Islands on the warship of England. As recognition, he became a British citizen. He learnt the English language and developed a prose style of his own.

The sea becomes the setting for most of Conrad's novels and stories. His knowledge of the sea, cyclones, high tidal waves and ports of different types are visualised in his novels. *The nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) was his first great novel and dealt with corruption in human society. *Lord Jim* (1900) is a tragic story of a young Englishman who loses his honour and ship in a moment of panic, and he regains both through a heroic death after a struggle at the end. Conrad's novels are remarkable for their rich imagination. *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906) is the last of his novels based on experiences and memories of the sea.

*Nostromo* (1904) is a political novel by Conrad who brings out how politics and economics threaten the integrity of human character and corrupt personal relationships. Conrad's other well-known novels are;

- *The Secret Agent* (1907)
- *Under the Western Eyes* (1911)
- *Chance* (1914)
- *Within the Tide* (1915)
- *The Rescue* (1920)

The theme of his novels is mostly adventure in the sea. He wrote about violence and danger. His careful narration of the story makes the reader feel thrilled. His portrayal of people, scenes, and fearful dramatic situations originate from his experiences at sea. He narrates his stories with reality and psychological interest in character. Though Conrad's novels have a pessimistic attitude, there is a scope of human solidarity against the dangers of the realities of living.

Conrad has a strong notion against the material interests which corrupt human relationships. If anyone tries to escape from such interests, the result will be destruction. He believes that fidelity, loyalty and endurance can relieve man from suffering. Hence, Conrad can be considered a specialist in writing human experiences.

#### **5.4.5 Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)**

Maugham was born in Paris and educated at King's School Canterbury and Heidelberg University as a medical student. He qualified himself as a doctor, but he never practised. His interest was turned towards literature. He began his literary career as a novelist and then turned to drama. During the First World War, he served with the Red Cross and then in the Intelligence Service. He travelled widely in Europe and the Far East, and these experiences motivated him to write travel books.



His first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), is based on his experiences as a medical student in London. He wrote 25 novels. Among them, the remarkable novels are

- *Of Human Bondage* (1915)
- *Mrs. Craddock* (1902)
- *The Moon and Six Pence* (1919)
- *The Painted Veil* (1925)

His novels have an autobiographical element. Like him, his protagonist also entered medical school and shifted his interest to art, painting, and philosophy. *Cakes and Ale* (1930) is a satire on literary society – how a young writer achieves popularity by flattery and self-advertisement. *The Razor's Edge* (1944) is about Maugham's visit to India to learn about man's spiritual struggles.

Maugham is a master of first-person narrative. The narrator is not a participant but a mere observer of the events. His choice of subject is mainly human relationships. The individuals he happens to meet in clubs, streets, ships, and hotels have become the main characters in his novels. His novels and stories have been written in the backdrop of several countries and exotic places. He exposes the hypocrisy in human behaviour and never tries to moralise. He was very frank in describing sexual relationships, and many readers found his novels embarrassing. He used straightforward language.

As a dramatist, Maugham contributed twenty-five plays as a whole. The famous plays are

- *A Man of Honour* (1903)
- *Caesar's Wife* (1919)
- *The Circle* (1921)
- *For Services Rendered* (1932)

He also wrote a few travel books and the autobiographical books *The Summing Up* (1938) and *A Writer's Notebook* (1949). Maugham was a prolific writer of multiple genres.

#### 5.4.6 James Joyce (1882-1941)

Joyce was born in Dublin and educated at Clongowes Wood and Belvedere College in Dublin under Jesuit teachers. As a student, he was interested in philosophy and modern languages like Norwegian, French and Italian. Joyce was well-learned through his wide range of reading and his endless wanderings in the streets of Dublin. The city of Dublin became the primary locale of his novels and short stories.

Joyce's first collection of short stories is *Dubliners* (1914). The sentiments, dreams, and way of life of Dublin people become the plot of the fifteen stories. Joyce presents his four segments of life – childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life in *Dubliners*. He published his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). The stream-of-consciousness technique was used in this novel, along with autobiography. The novel shows the gradual development of the protagonist from early childhood to early manhood. The story presents the young artist's comprehensive vision of life and detachment from the decaying society. The story is a combination of spiritual experience, realism and aesthetic theory.

Joyce's long epic novel is *Ulysses* (1921). The hero, Leopold Bloom, is the modern Ulysses. He is an eternal wanderer, lover, warrior, home-lover, schemer, etc. It is based on the model of the *Odyssey* by Homer. The book is a complete presentation of his consciousness. The stream-of-consciousness technique and the internal monologue are used with significant effect. Bloom has been described as "the most complete character in fiction." The single hero is replicated/reproduced as numerous other characters in history. Joyce's sole aim is to reveal the sordid meanness of modern life as contrasted with life in the heroic age. *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) is another remarkable novel by Joyce. It portrays the lifestyle of the keeper of the public house in Dublin. The novel took seventeen years to complete with the vivid portrayal of the experiences, dreams, sensations and visions of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, the keeper of a public house. Joyce explicates the philosophies of sin and redemption, sexual behaviour and religious beliefs.

Joyce is a serious novelist concerned chiefly with human relationships – man concerning himself, society and the whole race. He is

a keen and subtle observer of man's inner consciousness – the psychoanalyst of his day. Joyce exposes his 'quest' for experience and truth through his protagonists. Joyce's interest in language and eager experimentation are unparalleled in any period of literature. He used language as a tool of probing into reality. Joyce's themes and innovative techniques made his novels a successful one. Joyce is known for his sentences, marked by their rhythm's fall and rise. The internal monologues are employed to express the characters' inner feelings directly to the readers.

#### 5.4.7 Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1940)

E. M. Forster was born in London. He was educated at Tonbridge as a day scholar and then studied at King's College, Cambridge. He travelled to Greece, Italy, Germany, and India. His experiences in India for some years enabled him to write the famous novel *A Passage to India* (1924). These experiences also provided him material for his autobiographical work *The Hill of Devi* (1953).

Forster has written five major novels to his credit. His first novel was *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905). It is about a shiftless widow of means who marries a cheap Italian and has a baby with him and then dies at last pathetically. Her brother-in-law goes to Italy in search of the baby. The novel has much charm and brims with humour. The novel's theme is the effect of a foreign country and culture upon the insular ideas of provincial personalities.

*The Longest Journey* (1907) is an autobiographical novel which displays Forester's hatred of conventionality. The novel was written with many incidents but not a compact one. Forester's travel experiences are narrated through the protagonist Rickie, and two other characters, Gerald and Stephen, are well portrayed. The characters represent different personalities and social backgrounds.

*A Room with a View* (1908) is set in rustic Italy and then Surrey. It is a comedy with a serious intent. It is an ironic presentation of a love affair. Forester could share his Italian experiences in this novel with vivid descriptions of Italian landscape and culture. The story opens in a room with the two lovers, Beebe and Charlotte and explores the sexuality

between them. Forester discloses the lack of depth and artificiality in modern love.

*Howard's End* (1910) is the most ambitious and satisfying of the five novels. It deals with several social and sexual problems. Its atmosphere is quiet yet suggestive of everything that matters to Forester. Forester discusses the theme of belongingness in the novel. If a man is denied his 'place', the house or native place, he will become restless and inhuman. It is the birthright or basic need of a man who stays in a place. The character Mrs. Wilcox loves her house, which is a symbol of permanence in the world.

Forster wrote his masterpiece novel *A Passage to India* (1924). The novel chiefly explores the possibilities of friendship between individuals of different races. Though there is not much of a story, Forester is merely interested in expressing through fiction what he feels to be the truth about the British in India. Forster looks around for alternatives to British rule but leaves things where he found them. The novel represents the division between Indians and the English. Forester expresses his dissatisfaction with the imperial rule in India, which tried to erase the cultural and social uniqueness of the native land. The novel emphasises the friendship among Aziz, Mrs. Moore and Fielding.

Forester is also a good critic. His *Aspects of the Novels* (1927) is an excellent and amusing criticism of novel writing. He considers novel writing as an art, not a profession. Forster finds seven aspects of the novel – story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern and rhythm. *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1934) is the most sympathetic biography by a pupil of a beloved master.

Forster is a good narrator who reveals moral and spiritual judgements on men and matters. Forester's novels are known for their regular plots, characters, dialogues, comic relief and moral judgments at the end. He believes that true friendship and love are humankind's finest qualities that can solve all our life's problems. His novels express humanistic philosophy. His comic vision and humour are deliberately expressed in his style.

#### 5.4.8 George Orwell (1903 – 1950)

Notes

Orwell was born in 1903 in Bengal, where his father was employed as an imperial military officer. His real name was Eric Arthur Blair. After schooling at Eton, he joined the Imperial Police Service in Burma and stayed there for five years till 1927. He was very much affected by the First World War. During the war, people realised the demerits of capitalism. In England, it was noted that between 1922 and 1940, the number of unemployed youths increased to one million. These unemployed men protested against capitalism. The decline of capitalism caused the growth of socialism. In 1922, Orwell was serving in the Indian Imperial Police. That was why he was much affected by that period's political ups and downs. In many of his novels, he presented the evil effects of the First World War.

The period in which Orwell wrote the novels is remarkable for scientific and technological advancement. The rise of revolutionary movements of fascism led to the development of industrialisation. The government started to open industries to remove the unemployment problem. People realised that technology could provide them with good money. Therefore, scientists got an opportunity to work and make discoveries in different fields. Orwell emphasised the advancement of technology and science in his works. His essays are marked by the theme of industrialisation.

As a socialist, Orwell adopted voluntary poverty and sympathised with the victims of social injustice. His first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), is based on his experience during the world war. His first two novels, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (1936), are also drawn on his experiences earning a living at many odd jobs in the twin cities.

Orwell was an essayist, novelist, and journalist. In all his works, he documented the social and political upheavals. *Burmese Days* (1934) reveals his autobiographical touch because it presents the author's experiences in Burma. *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) has been a subject of criticism. The theme of his novel was weak, so many critics refused to take it as a work of literature. The most interesting element of the book is

that the protagonist is a woman. The novelist identifies himself with her in all aspects.

His next novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), deals with the theme of money. The author could not keep his life experiences away even in his book. Gordon Comstock is in the writing profession; he could not earn enough money. So, he quits the job and finds himself at war with money and respect. He realises that the society is insolent because he is poor. In *Coming Up for Air* (1939), Orwell advocates socialism. The novel contains two themes – socialism and the impacts of war. The conversational style of the novel also plays a significant part in its success.

*Animal Farm* (1945) is the greatest success of the author. Orwell could find no publisher because the book was a mocking allegory of political ups and downs. It was a powerful hit against the Russian Revolution. Even the British Government could not oppose this system directly. Orwell decided to publish it privately and got great fame. It was translated into many languages. The story of the novel starts with the revolt of animals on the farm against the farm owner. The animals drive out the farmer from the farm. The animal government falls under the control of pigs, and they establish tyranny. Orwell confirmed that power had corrupted even the animal species. Orwell presents his political thoughts in this novel. The animals, like pigs, stand for the force of fascism. The book is a unique attack on Russian policies and the Russian Revolution.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) is a sermon rather than a piece of orthodox fiction. Winston Smith, the hero of the novel, is a civil servant. He revolts against the totalitarian system under which he works. He is given the job of rewriting history to suit party policy shifts. However, he is opposed to the policy of the party. It results in the imprisonment of Winston, who is beaten and tortured to the extent that all his resistance is burnt out of him. Even his essays also reflect the political upheavals of his age. In *Sporting Spirit*, he exposes how politics plays its decaying role in the name of nationalism.

George Orwell was one of the leading novelists of the modern age. His novels are powerful satires on the political and social hypocrisies. By the quality of his writing, he has achieved international fame and

recognition. Orwell exhibits his social concern in a prophetic tone. Most of his novels deal with the themes of social oppression and the sufferings of the working-class community. He pinpoints the anxiety and agony of the modern man destined to live in a system of oppression, deception and hostility. He moved from simple narration to symbolic expression in his later writings.

#### 5.4.9 David Herbert Lawrence (1885 – 1930)

D. H. Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He was educated at a high school and the University College, Nottinghamshire. He trained for the teacher's certificate at the University College and worked as a teacher for some time. The inspiration for novel writing was born from his experiences in the mining district. The miner's lifestyle, behaviour, their wives and the cruelties and debasements have become the themes of his novels. He believed restoring a free and passionate primitive life and sensuous emotions were the solutions to man's degradation. He rejected the artificial moral values of life.

He left teaching literature after publishing his first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911). *The Trespasser* (1912) is another novel that established Lawrence as a significant novelist of the time. *The Rainbow* (1915) was considered an obscene novel and banned by the police, which made Lawrence try to leave England. His largely autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913) is compelling and sincere. It explores the great insight into the relationship between son and mother. Another novel, *Women in Love* (1921), profoundly studies contemporary English culture and society. Lawrence explores human relationships based on marriage and love. The two novels *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* were conceived initially as a single novel called *The Sisters*. These novels constitute the most outstanding and profound work of Lawrence. Lawrence explores the relationship between generations and individuals and comments on the opposition of instinct and intellect in marriage. He finds that humans' inner instincts and physical needs win over the intellect.

His next novel, *Aaron's Rod* (1922), discusses his Italian experiences and relationship with his German wife. *Kangaroo* (1923) depicts Lawrence's Australian experiences with its beautiful scenic

background. It also reflects the discontent in his marital life. *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) deals with Mexican life and Lawrence's stress on the values of the primitive life as opposed to the civilised. Lawrence's last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), explores the possibilities of human relationships in modern civilisation and is noted for its frank treatment of sexual relationships. The novel was banned for its allegedly obscene plot.

Lawrence was also a short story writer, and he published many collections of short stories, such as:

- *The Prussian Officer* (1914)
- *England, My England* (1922)
- *The Ladybird, The Fox, The Captain's Doll* (1923)
- *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories* (1928)
- *The Lovely Lady* (1933)

The short stories narrate the personal experiences of Lawrence in many places where he visited and stayed for a few years. There are autobiographical notes in the short stories.

Lawrence also was a good poet. He wrote poems on animals and flowers in 'verse libre' style. His poems are known for overwhelming spontaneity and direct simplicity of utterance. His collections of poems include:

- *Love Poems and Others* (1913)
- *Amores* (1916)
- *Look! We have come through* (1917)
- *New Poems* (1918)
- *Birds, beasts and Flowers* (1923)
- *Collected Poems* (1928)
- *Last Poems* (1933)



To Lawrence, the novel is a form of art, not a mode of writing. In his famous essay, 'Why the Novel Matters,' he expressed his perception of novels. Neglecting modern civilisation, he was concerned with human fulfilment and primitive true human relationships based on emotional fulfilment. According to him, humans are creatures of strong impulse and primitive emotions. They are studied with a remarkable depth of understanding and keenness of insight. Lawrence is a successful novelist in the analysis of human psychology.

#### 5.4.10 Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf was born into a cultured family as a daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, the eminent Victorian critic and scholar. She became a member of the famous 'Bloomsbury Group.' She began her writing as a contributor to literary journals. She was influenced by the works of Marcel Proust in France, Dorothy Richardson, and James Joyce in England. Woolf was fascinated by the novelty and reality of the techniques used by these writers, which opened up new vistas of exploration of human consciousness.

Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), is narrated conventionally. *Night and Day* (1919) and *Jacob's Room* (1922) primarily concern love and freedom. *Jacob's Room* is the story of a Cornish window's son, Jacob, from childhood through schooldays, university, London life and war to death. The story is narrated by the old mother's consciousness and a chain of memory. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) are concerned with the themes of marriage and truth. She portrays her chief characters with a penetrating subtlety in London's background. The stream-of-consciousness technique is used in both novels to reveal the characters' inner feelings. It is a story of a group of characters on holiday on an island. The Ramsay family incidents are presented in the three sections of the novel. Throughout the story, the lighthouse remains the same, and the house remains the same, but Mrs. Ramsay's and others' lives change. *The Waves* (1931) is the most stylised of Virginia Woolf's novels. It is the story of three girls and three boys and their complicated relationships journeying through life. A series of interior monologues are used to narrate the story. *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941) are her last novels discussing world and reality.

Virginia Woolf gives much importance to the feelings and thoughts of people. To her, life is not orderly and systematically arranged but full of ups and downs, feelings and thoughts often appearing without any logical pattern. Death and time are central themes in almost all her novels. The destiny of man is stronger than death. Mrs. Woolf had a strong faith in the endless change of life caused by the impact of time. Woolf's greatest merit of her style is feminine.

Besides her novels, Woolf also wrote several essays on cultural subjects. They are:

- "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924)
- "The Common Reader" (1932)
- "A Room of One's Own" (1924)
- "The Second Common Reader" (1932)
- "The Death of the Moth" (1942)

Her essays reveal social manners and the realities of life. Virginia Woolf is a prose writer of genius. Her prose style has all the poise and charm of the cultured woman and conscious artist. She uses words with a rhythmic pattern and musical quality. She perfectly used the stream-of-consciousness technique to express feminine charm and poetic style.

#### **5.4.11 William Golding (1911-1993)**

Golding was born in St. Columb Minor, Cornwall. He was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and Brasenose College, Oxford. He started his career as a teacher and became a full-time writer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983.

Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, was published in 1954. It is a tale of a gang of schoolboys wrecked on a desert island degenerating into a society based on fear, violence and tyranny. Golding pictures the frightening picture of brutality and aggression in which a civilised man is caught and troubled. Golding traces the evolutionary history of man from the state of innocence to the state of anarchy and sin.

Golding's other novel, *The Inheritors* (1955), exhibits evil, corruption, and mob atrocity in politics and religion. *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* (1957) is the story of a shipwrecked sailor. *Free Fall* (1959) is presented from a religious point of view. It traces man's attempt to understand his guilt and fall from grace. *The Spire* (1964) and *The Pyramid* (1967) are well-known novels of Golding. He wrote scripts for several radio plays, including *The Brass Butterfly* (1956).

Golding's novels primarily focus on man's struggle for survival in crisis. He shows an in-depth knowledge of human behaviour in a society which breeds evil and brutality. He says, "Man produces evil as a bee produces honey." He presents the dual personality of man, the noble and brutal, the civilised and the barbarous. Golding uses allegory and symbols to present his moral vision of life. He raises questions about man's behaviour when the restriction of man in the name of civilisation is withdrawn. The chief lesson he teaches in his novels is that man is fallen, savage and selfish, a creature who perverts love and power. His excess preaching of morality becomes the weakness of Golding.

#### 5.4.12 P. G. Wodehouse (1881-1975)

Wodehouse was born in Guildford, Surrey. He was educated at Dulwich College. He was a prolific writer of novels and stories of humour and entertainment. Among his many novels, the ones worth mentioning are;

- *Love among the Chickens* (1906)
- *Picadilly Jim* (1917)
- *A Damsel in Distress* (1919)
- *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923)
- *The Luck of the Bodkins* (1935)
- *The Code of the Woosters* (1938)

Wodehouse's two remarkable autobiographical works, *Performing Flea* (1953) and *Over Seventy* (1957), are funny novels. Wodehouse is unique in using humour and humanism, wit and laughter and use of language. His plots are simple and neat to the understanding ability of readers. With his

sense of humour, he found laughter in everyday occurrences and exposed the aristocratic society's pretensions, hypocrisies and high postures. Wodehouse wrote his novels not for sentimentality or burning passion, but they are parodies of serious love stories.

Wodehouse is a master storyteller. He creates much fun out of dialogue and situations. His novels can be considered as situation comedies full of fun and frolic. His world is crowded by demanding lovers, reluctant damsels, angry aunts, objecting parents and roguish servants. He used his novel to explore the human psyche and entertain his readers with laughter. He made the world happier through his writings.

### **5.4.1 3 Summing up**

In the twentieth century, there is a persistent desire to probe, examine and test everything in the light of individual experience. Modern literature marked improvements in social, cultural and political issues. Reformation takes place in all genres of literature in the modern period. Fashions in life and literature changed rapidly at the turn of the century. Religion, science and family ties the whole fabric of civilisation changed. Political and economic reforms, the further spread of Education, the tremendous output of published material and a revived interest in social literature were also part of English life and culture at the beginning of this century. A new school of poetry, opposed to the aestheticism of the 1890s and the romanticism of the Georgians, came into being in 1914. The imagists strove to express modern thought in a concentrated, precise manner since traditional techniques were inadequate. Modern poets' faith in new rhythms and 'vers libre' or free verse played an essential part in liberating modern poetry.

Drama in the twentieth century has indeed come a long way. From Shaw's optimism to Beckett's absurdism and into the new millennium, modern drama is dominated by a serious yet comic spirit. More experimentation in modern drama comes in the form of 'surrealism', 'cubism', and 'futurism.' Considering the interest of modern readers, modern drama led to new dramatic movements such as Epic Drama, Theatre of Cruelty, Absurd drama, Expressionistic drama, etc. The Epic Drama is closely connected with Bertolt Brecht and his views on didactic drama. The Theatre of Cruelty envisaged a revival of purgation and

determinism, the cruelty not at all associated with physical punishment but with the inexorable surrender to the inevitable. The Absurd drama discusses man's lost identity, a feeling of being a stranger in his environment and a victim of despair and delusion. Irrationality, meaninglessness, and schizophrenia fill his world, which is unendingly repetitive. John Osborne's world of 'Angry Young Man' shows the disillusionment and desperate life of jobless youth in the post-war period of England. The dissatisfied, angry young generation depicts the belief of protest as the way of life to get equality in all walks of life. Pinter's commitment to theatre is intense. 'Pinterism' or 'Pinteresque' drama is not simply absurd or menacing. Pinter characters are plagued by their internal fears and psychoses that shatter entirely the all-too-fragile security wall they try to build around themselves. Thus, modern plays are experimental plays.

Fiction is the most popular literary form of the twentieth century. Many modern novelists have emerged as trendsetters and valuable contributors to the twentieth-century novel. H. G. Wells is hailed as a versatile and prolific science fiction writer. Joseph Conrad is one of the great stylists of the modern English novel. His great achievement was revitalizing English by giving it a rare and powerful beauty. George Orwell is another prominent novelist who rejected the fundamental premises of imperialism. A strong leftist rebellion, Orwell became disillusioned with the socialism of his day. Modern literature opened a path to new trends in literature. Social, cultural and psychological aspects of life of the contemporary period have been themes of the modern writers.

#### **5.4.14 Model Questions**

1. What are the characteristic features of modern poetry?
2. Write on Hopkins.
3. How does Hopkins express his religious faith and spirituality in his poems?
4. What is 'sprung rhythm'?
5. Comment on the 'Byzantium poems' of Yeats.
6. Comment on 'Waste Land'

7. Consider T. S. Eliot as a classicist in literature with reference to 'The Waste and.'
8. Write on the 'Four Quartets' of T. S. Eliot.
9. What are the literary biographies of G. K. Chesterton?
10. How do Huxley's essays reflect contemporary social and political events?
11. What are the major works of George Orwell?
12. Orwell as a social critic – Comment.
13. How does A. G. Gardiner raises the most commonplace themes to a philosophical level.
14. What are the important poetical works of W. H. Auden?
15. Write on the personal essays of Robert Lynd.
16. How did Stephen Spender utilise his poems to voice out fascism and dictatorship in Europe?
17. Ted Hughes is often referred to as an 'Animal Poet' – Discuss.
18. How does Osborne reflect the mood and sentiments of the angry young generation of England in his plays?
19. Write on the autobiographical elements in Osborne's plays.
20. 'The Passage to India' is the best work of Forester – Comment.
21. What are Huxley's views on nature and the causes of war?
22. G. B. Shaw is an Irish dramatist – comment.
23. Name the important plays of G. B. Shaw.
24. Shaw's plays are 'Problem Plays' – comment.
25. Write on Galsworthy's 'The Silver Box'.
26. How does Synge reflect Irish life in his plays?
27. Define 'Expressionism' in Orwell's Plays.
28. How was the Irish Civil War portrayed in 'Juno and the Peacock' by O'Casey?

29. Eliot's treatment of political, social, moral and religious problems in his plays – Discuss.
30. Give a brief account of 'The Absurd Plays of Samuel Beckett.
31. Define 'Comedy of Menace'.
32. How does Pinter portray man's metaphysical isolation and futility in his plays?
33. Briefly explain the 'stream of consciousness technique' in modern novels.
34. What is a picaresque novel?
35. What are the features of the historical novel?
36. What is the role of the Chorus in modern plays?
37. Describe the terms. A. Dramatic Monologue B. Soliloquy C. Aside.
38. Distinguish between the Comedy of Humour and the Comedy of Manners.
39. Importance of symbolism in Animal Farm.
40. Orwell as a social critic – Discuss with reference to his novels.
41. Forster as a 20<sup>th</sup> Century essayist.
42. Write an essay on the characteristics of modern drama of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
43. Discuss the nature of 'Problem Plays'.
44. Enumerate the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd.
45. How do absurd plays reflect the futility and bareness of modern life?