LITERARY FORMS

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LITERARY FORMS

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English Literary Forms: *A Background to the Study of English Literature by Prasad* The Oxford Dictionary of Literary terms.

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UNIT - I

Lesson 1.1 - Literary Terms

Structure

1.1 Objectives

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1.1 Objectives

In this Unit, you will be introduced to terms which are commonly found used in studying literature—that is, in the classification, description, analysis and interpretation of literary works. The terms discussed are arranged in alphabetical order, like entries in a dictionary or a glossary. After completing the Unit, you will be able to:

➢ Understand how these concepts have been employed in the study and practice of literature; and

➢ Appreciate various literary forms in terms of how they utilise the methods covered in this unit.

1.2 Introduction

It is not always easy to define a literary term, primarily because classifying terms as literary or otherwise is an exercise in vagueness. The words and phrases which are usually termed literary may also be used by printers, compositors, grammarians and linguists because their fields of work are somehow related to literature and the literary. What you will find in this Unit is a list of terms which are regularly used by not only those who have an interest in literature but also by those users of language who know these terms but do not find any connection of these terms to literature. These are terms that a student of literature may be expected to be familiar with. This list is by no means complete or comprehensive. As you continue your familiarity with literature, you will be able to add to the stock of expressions you will find here.

1.3 Literary Terms

Alexandrine

This verse line of twelve syllables has been employed in French poetry since the 16th century, typically appearing as either two groups of six syllables or three groups of four. In the English language, the Alexandrine is a metrical line consisting of six iambic feet. It is sometimes employed as the concluding line within a Spenserian stanza. (Also read **Meter** below.)

Allegory

An allegory is a symbolic fictional narrative which has a second meaning hidden behind the obvious or visible meaning. The technique of an allegory in a written narrative is the use of a parallel between two or more levels of meaning in a story. The persons and events narrated correspond to those outside the tale. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory in which each character and episode embodies a Puritan doctrine of salvation.

Alliteration

The term "alliteration" comes from the Latin *litera*, which means "letters of the alphabet." Alliteration is a figure of speech in which words or stressed syllables are repeated, especially at the beginning. Such a repetition of sounds draws attention to the lines where it is employed. It also generates greater auditory rhythm. Alliteration in poetry can also refer to the repetition of consonant sounds in the stressed syllables of a line. The English language has employed alliteration as a literary device for hundreds of years. It can be found in works of literature dating back to *Beowulf*, the eighth-century poem written in Old English. Alliteration was a constant and necessary feature of the metrical system in Old English poetry. It was used in this manner until the late Middle Ages. A number of fourteenth-century Middle English poems, such as William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, continued to use and play with variations of the old alliterative meter. All four stressed syllables in the opening lines of *Piers Plowman*'s, for example, alliterate:

In a somerseson, when soft was the sonne.

However, in later English versification, alliteration is utilized only for unique aesthetic effects such as reinforcing content, linking related

words, or providing tone and colour. This would lead to increasing the palpability of enunciating the syllables. Although alliteration is most common in poetry, it can also be seen in prose and drama. In the actual world, it is frequently used in nursery rhymes, well-known speeches, and advertising slogans. Alliteration can also be seen in several popular tongue twisters. Look at the following examples:

> Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
>
> She sells seashells by the seashore.

Allusion

Allusion is defined as an implicit reference. It is a reference in a literary text to another work of art or literature, or a person, a place or an event without identifying them explicitly. Educated readers may be expected to recognize most allusions; but only a coterie would recognize some other allusions. The use of an allusion works in such a manner as if it were a kind of invitation by the writer where the reader is welcome to share an experience with the writer. An allusion enriches the work by association and gives it depth. An allusion works only to the extent that the writer and the readers partake of a body of common knowledge or tradition and the readers are able to identify the reference in the writing. It is possible to distinguish the following kinds of allusion:

- ➤ A reference to events and people: Dryden and Pope used plenty of such instances in their satires;
- ➤ A reference to facts about the author himself/herself; for example, Shakespeare's references to Will, and Donne's pun with Donne, Ann Donne and Undone;
- ➤ Metaphorical allusions: T.S. Eliot's works abound in them; and
- ➤ Imitative allusions, like Johnson's allusion to Juvenal in the poem *London*.

Anachronism

This Greek word means "back-timing". It refers to the situating of an event, person or thing outside of its historical era. To give examples, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, is set in ancient Rome, but it has the mention of a striking clock which was invented much later than the age shown in the play. Similarly, *Antony and Cleopatra* has a reference to billiards. And, the Emperor in Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* is referred to as the

"Defender of the Faith". Sometimes anachronisms are deliberately used to distance events and to emphasize that certain events can happen anywhere and anytime. A related term to anachronism is **Anachorism** ("something misplaced"). It refers to some action, scene or character which is placed where it does not belong.

Apostrophe

An apostrophe (Greek "turning away") is a figure of speech in which the speaker addresses a dead or absent person, an abstraction or an inanimate object as if these were present and were capable of understanding. It is one of the conventions typically used in an ode and an elegy. A classic example is Wordsworth's line in "London 1812":

Milton! Thou should'st be living at this hour….

Assonance

Assonance denotes the repetition of vowel sounds in order to generate internal rhyming within phrases or sentences. It, together with alliteration and consonance, serves as one of the many building blocks of verse. Assonance does not always have to be a rhyme. The mere sequence of both vowel and consonant sounds can confer upon it its identity. Therefore, assonance is a resemblance of units that are generally lower than a syllable. It is sometimes referred to as 'vocalic rhyme'. It is made up of the repetition of similar vowel sounds and it results in achieving a musical effect. Assonance is seen to occur more often in verse than in prose. It is used in (mainly modern) English-language poetry. It is particularly important in languages such as Old French, Spanish and the different tongues of the Celts.

Examples of assonance can be seen in several of the English proverbs:

The early bird catches the worm.

Honesty is the best policy.

A stitch in time saves nine.

The assonance in these phrases helps to make them more memorable in a subtler way than what could have been achieved through rhyming words.

Blank Verse

Most commonly found in the form of iambic pentameter, blank verse is a type of poetry which is written in a regular meter that does not contain rhyme. English poetry has a strong tradition of using blank verse. Many famous English writers such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, and William Wordsworth used blank verse in their works. When Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare began incorporating it into their works in the 16th century, blank verse became popular in England. A careful reading of Shakespeare's plays will reveal that much of the dialogue is written in in blank verse, i.e., unrhymed iambic pentameter. John Milton's most famous work *Paradise Lost* is also written in blank verse. For the Romantic poets in England, blank verse was a favourite meter. It finds favour also with many contemporary American poets.

The popularity of blank verse can be attributed to its ability to allow an author to be free from the restrictions of rhyme. English has very limited capabilities and possibilities with rhyme. Even as rhyme can be given a go by, blank verse still creates a more poetic sound and sense of pattern. This is due to the regular use of stressed and unstressed syllables. In English, unlike in Romance languages, meter is generally easier to use than rhyme since the majority of its words are short with just one or two syllables. This is the reason for blank verse to remain in favor with English poets for nearly half a millennium. But in most of the poetry written in the recent times, blank verse has been replaced by free verse.

Difference Between Blank Verse and Free Verse

Blank verse and free verse may sound like similar concepts. However, there are some notable differences between them. By its very definition, blank verse is a type of verse that does not have rhyme; at the same time the meter must be regular. On the other hand, free verse places no constraints as to rhyme scheme and pattern of meter. While blank verse still carries a musical quality with it due to its meter, free verse generally mimics natural speech.

Couplet

A couplet is a term given to a successive pair of lines in a poem. These pair of lines that comprise a couplet generally rhyme with each

other. And, they contain the same meter. Couplets are either closed or open. A closed couplet is one in which both lines are end-stopped. In an open couplet, there is enjambment involved. Here, the meaning of the line runs on beyond the end of the line. The couplet is a form of great antiquity. Couplets have been an important part of the literary traditions of many different cultures. It is one of the main verse units in Western literature. In English, Geoffrey Chaucer was one of the first to use it. He used this versatile form in *The Legend of Good Women* and in most of *The Canterbury Tales*. Writers have always been attracted to the couplet form because it can pack so much meaning into a pair of short lines. At the same time, it also lends itself to developing a longer whole. Often, the first line states something and the second line answers what is stated.

Types of Couplets

Elegiac: Ancient Greek poetry used this type of couplet primarily for themes on a smaller scale than the epic. Here the practice was that each couplet would make sense on its own, but at the same time it also would contribute to the larger meaning. The composition of an elegiac couplet is characterized by a hexameter line (i.e., a line which has six poetic feet) that is followed by a line in pentameter (i.e., a line which has five poetic feet). This structure results in the creation of a sense of rising action in the first line. The second line creates the sense of falling action. Ancient Greek elegy was always written using this type of couplet.

Heroic: A heroic couplet is a lot similar to the elegiac couplet. Like the elegiac, this is generally closed and self-contained, and as a result has meaning on its own. This type of couplet became popular came into popularity in English epic and narrative poetry during the mid-14th century. The meter of heroic couplets is usually the iambic pentameter, although some poets did take liberties with changing the meter at times to provide what would look like a closure. Heroic couplets rhyme in pairs: aa, bb, cc, and so on. They came to be called "heroic" in the seventeenth century because such couplets were frequently used then in heroic (i.e., epic) poems and heroic drama. It was Geoffrey Chaucer who introduced this verse form into English poetry. His *The Legend of Good Women* and much of *The Canterbury Tales* are written in heroic couplets. The heroic couplet was the predominant English measure for all kinds of poetic forms from the age of John Dryden through that of Samuel Johnson. Some poets like Alexander Pope used it almost to the exclusion of other meters.

Another name for closed couplets is formal couplets, while open couplets are sometimes are given the name of run-on couplet.

Although the term couplet is generally used to refer to its use in poetry, it can also be found in folk songs.

Epilogue

An epilogue, is a piece of writing at the end of a work of literature, usually used to bring closure to the work. This term comes from the Greek *epílogos*, which means "conclusion" or "in addition". Thus, an epilogue is the final chapter placed at the end of a story and it often serves to reveal the fates of the characters. Of course, there are some epilogues that may feature scenes that are only tangentially related to the subject of the story. Epilogues can be used to hint at a sequel or wrap up all the loose ends. They can occur even at a significant period of time after the main plot has ended. In some cases, the epilogue is used as a means to allow the main character a chance to "speak freely".

In terms of narrative style and perspective, an epilogue can continue in the same manner as the preceding story. However, an epilogue can occasionally take the form of being drastically different from the overall story. It can also be used as a sequel.

Farce

As a theatrical term, farce denotes a comedy that aims at entertaining the audience through situations that are highly exaggerated, extravagant, and therefore improbable. The purpose of a farce is to provoke mirth of the simplest and most basic kind: roars of laughter rather than smiles, so to speak. Though it is associated with burlesque, it must be distinguished from burlesque which has elements of clowning, buffoonery, slapstick comedy. The basic elements of farce are exaggerated physical action, exaggeration of character and situation, absurd situations, improbable events, and surprises in the form of unexpected appearances and disclosures. Due to the many plot twists and random events that occur, farces can often be highly incomprehensible plot-wise. But the viewers are neither expected nor encouraged to try to follow the plot in order to avoid confusion. Physical humor, the use of deliberate absurdity or nonsense, and broadly stylized performances are also characteristic features of a farce. Farces have been written for the stage and film. Furthermore, a farce is often set in one particular location, where all events occur.

The origins of farce are obscure. At its simplest form, it could be described as a kind of prehistoric horseplay. Farcical elements are to be found in classical literature in the plays of Aristophanes and Plautus. The first plays to be described as farces were French and these belong to the late Middle Ages. These poked fun at the follies and vices of everyday life.

Figures of Speech

A figure of speech, or simply "figure" is an expression that departs from the accepted literal sense of standard language; it can also be a departure from the usual order (syntax) of words, or an expression in which patterns of sound are used to produce an emphasis. Such a language, termed "figurative", is important as a poetic device but it is not necessary that all poetry should have it. It may also be present in forms of language other than poetry but in the other forms of speech and writing, it may go unnoticed. Figures are also known as "schemes", from the Greek word for "form". The traditional theory of Rhetoric, which was used to teach the art of public speaking in Greece about the 5th Century BC, identified and classified a number of schemes. Rhetoricians, but, made a distinction between "tropes" or figures of thought and "schemes". The term trope was applied to figures that extended the meaning of words. Schemes were figures of speech that affect word order or the impact of words upon an audience.

The most important tropes are simile, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification and irony. Let us discuss these in some detail, although some of these terms have been used elsewhere in this Unit. Do read those entries as well in tandem with the discussion below for a better understanding of the terms.

A **simile** is an explicit comparison between two dissimilar things, actions or feelings which in the normal course of life are not comparable. Here "as" or "like" are used to effect the comparison. An example for this is the following line from Wordsworth:

I wandered lonely as a cloud

Or, look at a possible sentence from ordinary life:

He eats like a pig.

Another simple example is from Robert Burns:

O my love's like a red, red rose.

Then there is this simile from S.T. Coleridge (from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*):

And ice, mast-high, came floating by,

As green as emerald.

The use of similes is very common in prose and verse but it more tentative and decorative than metaphor. While similes in everyday speech are simple comparisons based on familiar objects or the natural world, it is also seen that the original aptness of the comparison is frequently lost. For example, see the expression "dead as a doornail". In literature, a simile can be specific, direct, lengthy and complex than that in ordinary speech or writing. For example, consider these lines from Shakespeare's *Othello*:

Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic Sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont;
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne'er look back…

Here the simile performs two functions: first, it asserts that Othello's urge for vengeance cannot just be wished away; secondly, the simile brings in huge natural forces. The proper nouns which are used in the passage suggest an exotic and remote world and bring in mythological and historical associations which bring to mind Othello's foreign origins and his adventurous life before he came to Venice.

A more elaborate kind of simile is the Homeric or epic simile which contains digressive reflections in a narrative work. An example of this are the following lines from Homer's *Iliad*, Book XII:

As one who would water his garden leads a stream from some fountain over his plants, and all his ground—spade in hand he clears away the dams to free the channels, and the little stones run rolling round and round with the water as it goes merrily down the bank faster than the man can follow—even so did the river keep catching up with Achilles albeit he was a fleet runner, for the gods are stronger than men.

The **metaphor** is, perhaps, the most important and common figure of speech. This is a figure in which a word, expression, idea or action is referred to by a word or expression that normally denotes another thing, idea or action. This would suggest that the two have some common quality. In a metaphor, there is no assertion of a comparison; the resemblance between the two things/ideas/actions … is an imaginary identity which is stated as a direct comparison. For example, if Burns' line were "O my love is a red, red rose", he would have used a metaphor and not a simile. Stephen Spender uses a series of metaphors to speak about the eye as it goes over a landscape:

> Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
>
> Drinker of horizon's fluid line.

Parts of speech other than nouns can also be used metaphorically. Shakespeare uses a verb metaphorically in *Merchant of Venice*:

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank

and these lines from Andrew Marvell;s "The Garden" illustrate the metaphorical use of an adjective:

> Annihilating all that's made
>
> To a green thought in a green shade.

A **mixed metaphor** is one that joins together obviously diverse things/qualities, etc. leading sometimes to ludicrous result, as in

> Girding up his loins, the chairman plowed through the mountainous agenda.

But in the hands of the able poet, mixed metaphors are eminently functional. Let us look at two such examples from Shakespeare:

> to take arms against a sea of troubles,
>
> And by opposing end them (*Hamlet*, III.i.59-60) and
>
> O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
>
> Against the wrackful siege of battering days? (Sonnet 65).

A **metonymy** originally might have been considered a sub-species of the metaphor but today is considered a trope in its own right. In this figure, the literal term for one entity is applied to another with which it has

come to have close association. For instance, "crown" and "sceptre" stand for the king or queen, Hollywood may stand for the film industry and Shakespeare can denote the writings of the bard.

Synecdoche is a trope where a part of something is used to signify the whole, or sometimes the whole is used to signify a part. For instance, "ten hands" may be used to refer to ten workers and "a sail" may be used to refer to a ship. Milton uses this figure when he uses "blind mouths" in "Lycidas" to refer to the corrupt clergy.

Personification is also related to metaphor. Here an inanimate object or abstract concept is spoken of as if it were a human being or having human attributes. A related term is **pathetic fallacy**. This is the proper name for the poetic convention in which natural phenomena that cannot feel as humans do, are portrayed as if they can feel human emotions. It is pathetic fallacy that is used when rain clouds are mentioned as "weeping" or when flowers are said to be "joyful". This is more or less to suggest that these are in sympathy with the speaker's, or the poet's, mood.

Irony is said to be used when an apparently straightforward event or statement is given an entirely different significance with reference to its context.

For more details, read the entry on Irony elsewhere in this Unit.

The other important tropes are **hyperbole** (or overstatement), **litotes** (or, understatement) and **periphrasis** (or, circumlocution). Then there are some minor rhetorical figures like antithesis, anaphora, apostrophe, and the rhetorical question that emphasize or enliven a point in a number of different ways. Alliteration, Assonance and Consonance are sometimes called figures of sound. They achieve emphasis by the repetition of sounds.

Hyperbole

This is a figure in which exaggeration or overstatement is used either for heightened seriousness or for comic effect. Here is an example from Pope:

Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,

And op'd those eyes that must eclipse the day

Imagery

Imagery is a literary device that consists of descriptive language which can function as a way for the reader to better imagine the world depicted in the piece of literature that the reader is reading. It also adds symbolism to the work. Imagery draws on details of the five senses, viz., taste, touch, sight, smell and sound. Imagery can also kinesthetic: that is when it pertains to details about movement or a sense of a body in motion. It can also draw from the emotions or sensations of a person, such as fear or hunger. Such imagery are called organic imagery or subjective imagery. The purpose of using imagery is to help the reader develop a more fully realized understanding of the imaginary world that the writer has created.

All types of literature from cultures around the world feature imagery. Poets, novelists, and playwrights use imagery for a variety of reasons. One of the key usages is to use imagery in a piece to help create a mood. This can be seen in such a clichéd opening as "It was a dark and stormy night." As soon as one reads this kind of an opening, one immediately pictures the kind of setting in which the story is going to take place. This particular imagery also creates a mood of foreboding. Indeed, even Shakespeare used this type of opening in *Macbeth*. The three witches in the opening of the play speak of the "thunder, lightning [and] rain" and the "fog and filthy air." An author may use imagery merely to help the readers understand the fictive world. At the same time, details of imagery can often be read symbolically. In the example from *Macbeth* discussed earlier, the thunder and lightning that open the play symbolize two storms: first, the storm that is already blowing across Scotland and secondly the figurative one that is about to begin once Macbeth usurps the throne. Hence, when analyzing literature, it is important to interpret the imagery used so as to understand both the mood and the symbolism in the literary piece.

In everyday speech too, imagery is frequently used to convey our meaning. Read the following examples in which imagery from each of the five senses is used:

Touch: The bark of the tree was rough against her skin.

Sight: The sunset was the most gorgeous they'd ever seen; the clouds were edged with pink and gold.

Hearing: The banging on the door was so loud that her ears rang for hours afterward.

Smell: After eating the curry, his breath reeked of garlic.

Taste: The familiar tang of his grandmother's cranberry sauce reminded him of his youth.

Irony

Irony, in its broadest sense, is a rhetorical device, literary technique, or event in which what appears on the surface to be the case, differs radically from what is actually the case.

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. Irony may also denote a situation that may end up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. In other words, irony is a difference between the appearance and the reality. The term is derived from an Ancient Greek word meaning "dissimulation, feigned ignorance".

Types of Irony

Based on definition, it is possible to distinguish two basic kinds of irony. These are Verbal irony and Situational irony. A verbal irony is one in which somebody says what he/she does not mean. For example, if one says "What a great idea!" in response to a foolish idea from someone, it is an instance of verbal irony. If, on the other hand, someone is chuckling at the misfortune of another even as the same misfortune, in complete unawareness, is befalling the former, it is an instance of situational irony. Similarly, it is situational irony when you laugh at a person who slipped on a banana peel and the next thing you know, you too slipped.

Situational Irony and Dramatic Irony

In situational irony, both the characters and the audience are fully unaware of the implications of the real situation. Dramatic irony is a kind of situational irony, which is frequently employed by writers. Here, while the characters are oblivious to the situation, the audience is not. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience knows much before the characters that characters are going to die. Similarly, *Othello* has plenty of instances where Shakespeare has employed dramatic irony.

In real-life circumstances, irony may be comical, bitter or sometimes unbearably offensive.

Verbal, dramatic and situational irony are often used for emphasis in the assertion of a truth. The ironic form of simile, used in sarcasm, and some forms of litotes can emphasize one's meaning by the deliberate use of language which states the opposite of the truth, denies the contrary of the truth, or drastically and understates a factual connection.

Now let us look at some common examples of Irony:

The name of Britain's biggest dog was "Tiny".

The butter is as soft as a piece of marble.

"Oh great! Now you have broken my new camera."

Metaphor

A metaphor is a rhetorical figure of speech that compares two subjects without the use of "like" or "as." Metaphor is often confused with simile, which compares two subjects by connecting them with "like" or "as" (for example: "She's fit as a fiddle"). While a simile states that one thing is like another, a metaphor asserts that one thing is the other, or is a substitute for the other thing. A metaphor asserts a correlation or resemblance between two things that are otherwise unrelated. The English word "metaphor" originates from the Greek metaphorá, which means "to transfer" or "to carry over." Indeed, a metaphor transfers meaning from one subject on to another so that the target subject can be understood in a new way. Rhetoricians have further elaborated on the definition of metaphor by separating and naming the two key elements. There are a few different sets of names for these two parts: they can be called the "tenor" and the "vehicle", the "ground" and the "figure", or the "target" and the "source". Consider this famous example of a metaphor from Shakespeare's "As You Like It":

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players.

In this example, the world is the primary subject, and it gains attributes from the stage (i.e., from theatre). Thus, in the binary pairs, the world is the "tenor", the "ground" and the "target," while the stage is the "vehicle", the "figure" and the "source".

Metaphor is a key component of all forms of literature, including poetry, prose, and drama. This is not only because metaphor is a highly useful literary device, but also because it is a vital part of all language and communication. Many cognitive theorists have researched and written about the importance of metaphor in the way we understand the world around us. For example, in western culture the phrase "time is money" is quite prevalent. This is not just a cliché; we talk about time in terms of wasting it, spending it, saving it, and so on. The metaphorical comparison of these two concepts ends up influencing the way people in cultures actually perceive time.

In literature, the use of metaphor allows authors to present unfamiliar ideas or situations in ways that the reader is able to comprehend by comparing unknown things to known things. This can be a good technique for fantasy writers or science fiction writers to make the worlds they create seem more familiar to the reader. Metaphors can also be used, however, to compare very common things to one another. This type of usage forges a cognitive link between previously unrelated objects and makes readers appreciate them in a new way.

(See also, "Figures of Speech".)

Meter

Meter is the rhythm of syllables in a line of verse or in a stanza of a poem. Depending on the language, this pattern may have to do with stressed and unstressed syllables, syllable weight, or number of syllables. Many older and more formal poems contain strict meter, which either continues throughout the entire poem or alternates in a specified rhythm. The study of meter forms as well as the use of meter in poetry is called prosody.

The earliest known example of meter is in a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns called the *Rigveda*, which dates back to between 1700 and 1100 BC. There are many other examples of meter from the Iron Age in multiple cultures. All poetry from the medieval period was written in meter, regardless of the literary tradition, from Tang Dynasty Chinese poetry to Classical Persian poetry to the Bardic poetry of Europe. It is unknown why meter became so ubiquitous at this period in world history, but this fact certainly leads many literary scholars to determine that meter is indeed a fundamental element of poetry. Not all poetry contains meter, especially

in more contemporary times. However, it contributes a rhythmic unity to the verse and highlights the difference between the elevated language of poetry and normal speech patterns.

Common Forms of Meter in English

Many forms of meter are broken into feet, which is a specific group of syllable types. In English, these feet are combinations of two to three stressed and unstressed syllables, which are then repeated to form a line of verse. In Classical Latin and Classical Greek, a metrical foot contains a combination of long and short syllables. In English, there are five standard or common metrical feet. They are:

Iamb: Two syllables, the first of which is unstressed and the second of which is stressed. For example, com**pute**, dis**pel**, a**gree**.

Trochee: Two syllables, the first of which is stressed and the second of which is unstressed. For example: **ar**gue, **bish**op, **doc**tor.

Spondee: Two syllables, both of which are stressed. For example: **ice cream**, **hot line**, **cell phone**.

Dactyl: Three syllables, the first of which is stressed and the next two of which are unstressed. For example, **el**ephant, **poss**ible, **tri**nity.

Anapaest: Three syllables, the first two of which are unstressed and the third of which is stressed. For example: of a **kind**, souve**nir**, under**stand**.

Look at the table below for a better understanding of the metrical feet. Note that in the foregoing examples, as well as in the ones following, the stressed syllables are indicated by letters printed in **bold**. The division of the feet is indicated by a vertical line [|].

Foot	Adjective	Stress pattern	Example
Iamb	Iambic	Unstressed-stressed	I **wand**	ered **lone**	ly **as**	a **cloud**
Anapaest	Anapaestic	Unstressed-unstressed-stressed	I am **mon**	arch of **all**	I sur**vey**
Trochee	Trochaic	Stressed-unstressed	**Tyger,**	**Tyger,**	**burn**ing	**bright**

Dactyl	Dactylic	Stressed-unstressed-unstressed	**Can**non to | **right** of them
Spondee	Spondaic	Stressed-stressed	**Break**, **break**, | **break**

The meter in a line of verse:

A metric line is known by different names that suggest the number of feet it has. Thus,

a monometer has one foot

a dimeter has two feet

a trimeter has three

a tetrameter has four

a pentameter has five

a hexameter has six and

an Octameter has eight.

Therefore, the following line is in iambic pentameter.

The **cur** \| few **tolls** \| the **knell** \| of **par** \| ting **day**

It has five feet, each of which is an iamb where an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed one.

An alexandrine is a line of poetry set to iambic hexameter. It has twelve syllables, divided into six feet, each containing a weak or unstressed syllable followed by a strong or stressed syllable. It is the most common measure of French poetry, and has been derived from its use in a collection of twelfth-century romances on the adventures of Alexander, the Great. Although it has been used in English, Dutch and German poetry, its use has not been as prevalent as in French. Edmund Spenser used this line as the last of each stanza in his *The Faerie Queene*. This verse line has the potential of slowing down the flow of a poem, as illustrated by Alexander Pope: in "An Essay on Criticism":

A needless alexandrine ends the song

That like \| a woun \| ded snake, \| drags its \| slow length \| along.

Oxymoron

This is a figure of speech that fuses two opposing or contradictory ideas. An example is Milton's use of "freezing fire" inn *Paradise Lost* Book I.

Pentameter

This is a verse line traditionally described as a line of five 'feet'. This line consists of five stressed syllables forming part of ten syllables. Since the time of Chaucer, the pentameter has been used as a standard line in many forms of English poetry in its various forms including blank verse, the heroic couplet and the sonnet.

Personification

If, in a figure of speech, a thing, an idea or an animal is given human attributes, that figure is known as personification. The non-human objects thus personified are portrayed in such a way that it would seem that they have the ability to act like human beings. In personification human qualities are given to animals, objects or ideas. Personification in arts means representing a non-human thing as if it were human. Here human traits and qualities—such as emotions, desires, sensations, gestures and speech—are given to non-humans often by way of a metaphor.

Visual arts widely use personification, such as in the following examples from writing:

The leaves waved in the wind.

The ocean heaved a sigh of relief.

The Sun smiled at us.

Personification is a literary device that helps us to relate actions of inanimate objects with our own emotions. Look at the following examples:

Look at my car. She is a beauty, isn't it so?

The wind whispered through dry grass.

The fire swallowed the entire forest.

Another commonly used instance of personification is when animals are given names or labels in stories for recognition. This is called

anthropomorphism. Organisms may also be used as embodiment or incarnations of a concept.

Onomatopoeia

This is a figure of speech in which words stand for, or contain, the sounds that they describe: *hiss*, *bang*, *buzz*, *ding-dong*, *cuckoo*, etc. In poetry this occurs usually when a line can express a characteristic of what is portrayed. Sylvia Plath uses it in "Daddy" to suggest the movement of a locomotive:

> An engine, an engine
> Chuffing me off like a Jew.
> A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

Similarly, Tennyson uses the figure in these lines from "The Brook":

> I chatter over stony ways,
> In little sharps and trebles,
> I bubble into eddying bays,
> I babble on the pebbles.

Prologue

Derived from the Greek *prologos* meaning "before word", the prologue is the opening of a story which establishes the setting and gives background details. The main function of a prologue, generally speaking, is to tell some earlier story and connect it to the main story. In addition, it serves as a means to introduce the characters of a story and to throw light on their roles. A prologue, in its modern sense, acts as a separate entity. It is not considered part of the current story that a writer intends to tell. So now a prologue it is the opening section of a work. It is a sort of introduction which is part of the work and not prefatory. This device was common in drama in the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was often written in verse. One of the earliest examples is Chaucer's *General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*. This prologue was built on the conventional pattern. And, Chaucer used it to introduce all his characters or pilgrims on their way to Canterbury to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Beckett. The characters are introduced in great dramatic detail before each of them told their story. As has already been said, the primary function of a prologue is to let the readers/audience understand the earlier part of the story and to relate the earlier part to the main story. This literary device is also a means to present characters and establish their roles.

Pun

A pun is a play on the multiple meanings of a word, or the use of two words that sound alike but have two different meanings. It is also called paronomasia. The humour here is achieved by conceiving an ambiguity. Look at an instance of punning in this nursery rhyme:

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a white horse;
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.

Shakespeare use punning to extract humour in all his comedies. However, serious poetry also uses puns, as shown in these lines from John Donne's "A Hymne to God the Father":

Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou haste done;
I fear no more

where there are puns on son/sun and done/Donne.

A similar instance can be seen in Shakespeare's *Richard III*:

Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York.

Refrain

If a phrase, a line or lines are repeated at regular intervals during a poem, especially at the end of a stanza, that phrase or line(s) is a refrain. It is a poetic device of great antiquity. It can be seen to have been used in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Bible, Greek and Latin verse, in Provencal and Renaissance verse and in many ballads. A refrain is often the repetition of the exact words, though there are instances when slight modifications are introduced, more so when the poet attempts to develop an argument.

Rhyme

Rhyme is a popular literary device in which the repetition of the same or similar sounds occurs in two or more words, usually at the end of

lines in poems or songs. In other words, a rhyme is the sameness of sound in the endings of verse lines (for example, *may* and *day*; *bright* and *might*). These matching sounds in verse lines help to create a melodic pattern. As a consequence, rhyme is pleasing to the ear. Moreover, it is used as a mnemonic device—something that can help us learn and remember things easily. Children's songs and poems often contain rhymes, as they make lines easier to remember and pleasant to listen to. For example, the following rhyme has been very useful to remember the number of days in the months of a year:

> Thirty days hath September,
>
> April, June and November.
>
> All the rest have thirty-one
>
> Except February alone,
>
> And that has twenty-eight days clear,
>
> And twenty-nine in a leap year.

Rhyme is used as a literacy skill with young children for them to hear phonemes. Authors often use rhyme to make their lines more memorable and to signal the ends of lines.

Read the following lines aloud to see and feel how rhyme is used:

> Jack and Jill went up a hill,
>
> To fetch a pail of **water**.
>
> Jack fell down and broke his crown
>
> And Jill came tumbling **after**.

And here are the opening lines of Thomas Gray's famous Elegy:

> The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the **lea**,
> The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
> And leaves the world to darkness and to **me**.

Some salient features of rhyme

For a rhyme to occur in English, the vowel sounds in the stressed syllables should match while the preceding consonant sound will not match. The consonants after the stressed syllables should match, at the same time. For example, the words "gaining" and "straining" rhyme in English because they start with different consonant sounds, but the first

stressed vowel in both the words is identical, as is the rest of the word. Rhyme has played a huge part in literature over many millennia of human existence. Indeed, rhyme has been found in many cultures and many eras. Rhyme also plays different parts in different cultures, sometimes holding almost mystical meanings in some cultures.

Types of Rhyme

Rhyme can be classified in plenty of different ways. To many readers, only "perfect rhymes" are the real type of rhyme. To explain a perfect rhyme, do note that "mind" and "kind" are perfect rhymes, whereas "mind" and "line" are an imperfect match in terms of sounds. And, within the classification of "perfect" rhymes, a few different types can be identified:

Single: This is a rhyme in which the stress is on the final syllable of the words ("mind" and "behind").

Double: This perfect rhyme has the stress on the second-to-last, syllable ("toasting" and "roasting").

Dactylic: This rhyme, relatively uncommon in English, has the stress on the third- from-last, syllable ("terrible" and "wearable").

Here are some other types of general rhymes that are not perfect:

Imperfect or near rhyme: In this type of rhyme, the same sounds occur in two words but in unstressed syllables ("thing" and "missing").

Identical rhymes: Homonyms in English do not satisfy the rules of perfect rhymes because while the vowels are matching, the preceding consonants also match and therefore the rhyme is considered inferior. For example, "way," "weigh," and "whey" are identical rhymes and are not considered to be good rhymes.

Eye rhyme: This is common in English because many words are spelled in the same way, yet have different pronunciations. For example, "good" and "food" look as if they should rhyme, but their vowel sounds are different. That is to say, eye rhymes do not appeal to the ear; on the other hand, they appeal to the eye.

Let us now look at a few other classes of rhyme:

Masculine rhyme: Here, a single stressed syllable bears the rhyme.

As an example, look at the lines from Gray's "Elegy" quoted above. It can be seen that *day* and *way* rhyme as do *lea* and *me*. These are instances of masculine rhyme.

Feminine rhyme: Here, an unstressed syllable which follows a stressed syllable bears the rhyme: as in *water* and *after* in the nursery rhyme referred to above.

End rhyme: this occurs when the words that rhyme are placed at the end of the lines, as in

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Internal rhyme: This happens when the rhyming words are placed within a line, as in

Jack and Jill went up a hill.

Exact rhyme: this is the use of identical rhyming sounds as in *Jill* and *hill*, and *day* and *way*.

Approximate rhyme or slant rhyme: This is the use of sounds that are similar but not identical, for example, *prove* and *glove*, and *queer* and *near*.

Satire

In literature, and sometimes in graphic and performing arts, satire is a genre in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule. Ideally, this is with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, so that they are compelled to improve themselves. Satire is usually meant to be humorous, however, it has a greater purpose: it is often constructive social criticism where wit is used to draw attention to both particular and general issues in society. Strong irony or sarcasm is a feature of satire. It has been said, "in satire, irony is militant". But other devices like parody, burlesque, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy, and double entendre are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing. This "militant" irony or sarcasm often gives the impression that the satirist approves of (or at least accept as natural) the very things he/she wishes to attack.

As a technique, satire is employed by writers to expose and criticize the foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society. They use humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. With the intention of trying to improve humanity by criticizing its follies and foibles. The writer of a satire uses fictional characters, who stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption. A satire may be pointed at a person, a country or even the entire world. Generally speaking, a satire is a comical piece of writing which pokes fun at an individual or a society to expose its follies, idiocies and shortcomings. The satirist, further, hopes that those criticized in the work will improve their character by correcting their weaknesses.

Satire can be found in many artistic forms of expression, including literature, plays, commentary, television shows, and media. It can also be used in advertising jingles and in lyrics.

Simile

When two unlike things are explicitly compared through the use of connecting words (usually "like" or "as"), the technique is known as simile. This technique is called a rhetorical analogy, as it is a device used for comparison. Simile can be an excellent way for an author either to make an unusual thing seem more familiar (i.e., "The planet Zenoth was as cold as ice") or a familiar thing seem more unique (i.e., "Her smile was jagged like a broken zipper"). In this way, similes can help the reader imagine the fictive world of a piece of literature. Good similes can also make readers think about things in a new way, and can sometimes create a lasting effect. For example, the Scottish poet Robert Burns' assertion in his poem that his "luve's like a red, red rose" has permanently linked the concepts of love and red rose in our minds.

Sometimes, a simile may be used to show a comparison, but with the conclusion that these two things are in fact unlike or even at odds with each other. This particular device can be termed a negative simile or an ironic simile. This is so because what is communicated is the opposite of what is expected at the beginning of the statement. For example, consider this famous feminist statement made by Gloria Steinem: "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle". This statement is an ironic simile because it ultimately concludes that a woman does not need a man.

For the reader, a simile can help establish new connections. Among the many purposes of literature, one is to help better explain the

world around us. One of those ways in which we are able to see things in a new way in literature is by the writers' use of the simile. It must be noted that all types of analogies are cognitive processes of transferring meaning from one thing to another. Considered in this manner, the use of simile in literature has real evoking effects. The simile has been a popular literary technique for many hundreds of years for this reason, as well as for aesthetic purposes.

There are many clichéd similes in the English language that we use regularly. Here are some examples: *as strong as an ox*, *as fit as a fiddle*, *as bright as the sun*.

You have also heard of the **epic simile**. It is an extended simile; it is elaborated to such an extent that it would eclipse the main action of a narrative work. It is sometimes called Homeric simile, after its frequent use by the Greek writer. In English, Milton used the device with considerable elan in *Paradise Lost*.

(See also, "Figures of Speech".)

Soliloquy

A soliloquy is a popular literary device often used in drama to reveal the innermost thoughts of a character. The term has been derived from Latin word *solo* which means "to himself" and *loquor* which means "I speak" respectively. The soliloquy is a great technique employed to convey the progress of action of the play. This is done by means of making the character talk to himself/herself without acknowledging the presence of any other person. In doing so, the character expresses his/her thoughts about a certain character or an event past, present or anticipated. This technique is often used as a means of revealing the true nature of character; it is a means by which the character manifests to the reader or the audience of the play. It was sometimes considered essential because it could be used to present information about the plot and to expose the feelings and intentions of the characters quickly and succinctly when faced with a lack of time and space. Soliloquies were extensively used in drama once upon a time, for instance, in Elizabethan drama but now some people consider soliloquy a dated device though others still use it. The fall in the popularity of soliloquies began when drama shifted towards realism in the late 18th century.

Soliloquy vs Monologue vs Aside

Terrible confusion can sometimes occur because a soliloquy is wrongly mixed up with monologue and aside. It must be understood that the monologue and the aside are distinctly different from the soliloquy. A monologue, like a soliloquy, is certainly a speech, but the purpose and presentation of both is different. In a monologue, a character usually makes a speech in the presence of other characters, and to those characters. But in a soliloquy, the character or speaker speaks to himself/herself. By doing so, while the character keeps these thoughts secret from the other characters of the play, the readers or the audience are let in to the secret. An aside is a short comment made by a character towards the audience for another character. The other characters on the stage usually do not know about it.

You can find the extensive use of soliloquies in Shakespeare' his plays. But considerable use of this significant dramatic technique could be found even before Shakespeare, for example, in Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus*. At the very beginning of the play itself, Marlowe nicely sums up Faustus' life, motives, intentions and growth of his ideas that took place before the start of action through the effective use of a soliloquy. Doctor Faustus is revealed to us here as an extra-ordinary ambitious soul, one who is not satisfied with his scholarship in the existing branches of knowledge and who yearns for learning something beyond the powers of a human being.

Stanza

A stanza is a way of dividing the lines of a poem into units. It is a group of lines arranged together in a pattern of meter and rhyme. The number of lines in it, the meter and the rhyme scheme determine the structure of a stanza. Similar to a paragraph in prose, it deals wit a fresh turn of thought.

Types of stanza

Based on structure, the following most common types are identified:

A **couplet** is a stanza that has two lines. If two iambic pentameter lines that rhyme together is used, it is called a **heroic couplet**. Her is an example, from Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*:

The Fair ones feel such Maladies as these,

When each new Night-Dress gives a new Disease.

A **tercet** is a stanza of lthree lines. The **terza rima** is a series of interlocking tercets rhyming *aba bcb cdc*. Dante adopted this measure in Divine Comedy. And, Shelley used in his "Ode to the West Wind":

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,	a
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead	b
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,	a
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,	b
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,	c
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed	b
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,	c
Each like a corpse within its grave, until	d
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow	c

A **quatrain** is a stanza of four lines. Gray's "Elegy" is written in quatrains.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,

The plowman homeward plods his weary way,

And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

The same stanza from is used in Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*:

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,

A Jug of Wine, A Loaf of Bread—and Thou

Beside me singing in the Wilderness—

Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

A **pentastich**, a **sestet** and a **septet** are respectively stanzas of five, six and seven lines. A stanza of seven iambic pentameter lines rhyming *ababbcc* is called the **rhyme royal**, so named after its use by King James I. Since this stanza form was popularized by Geoffrey Chaucer, it is also called the **Chaucerian stanza**.

The octastich is a stanza of eight lines. An eight-line iambic pentameter stanza with the rhyne scheme abababcc is called ottava rima. It is of Italian origin and was originally used in long poems on heroic subjects. Giovanni Boccaccio was one of its earliest exponents. Byron used the stanza form in *Don Juan*:

> Ambition was my idol, which was broken
>
> Before the shrines of Sorrow and of Pleasure;
>
> And the two last have left me many a token
>
> O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
>
> Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
>
> Time is, Time was, Time›s past›, a chymic treasure
>
> Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes—
>
> My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

The Spenserian stanza is a stanza of nine iambic lines, the first eight of which are pentameters and the last a hexameter. This last is called an alexandrine, as already discussed above. Spenser created this stanza form for use in *The Faerie Queene*. The rhyme scheme used is *ababbcbcc*. Here are lines from Book I, Canto I of the poem:

> Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,
>
> As time her taught in lowly Shepheards weeds,
>
> Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,
>
> For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,
>
> And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;
>
> Whose prayses having slept in silence long,
>
> Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
>
> To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:
>
> Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.

Verse

Verse is writing in meter (See above), or metrical writing. This is very different from writing in prose which does not require metrical patterns. The word may also refer to a single metrical line in a poem. A number of verse lines are grouped together as a stanza (See above).

If a poem is written in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines, then it is said to be in **blank verse**. It is often used in drama because it sounds very much like ordinary English speech. William Wordsworth, Robert Browning and W.H. Auden used blank verse in their poems.

If a poem does not follow a regular metrical pattern, it is said to be written in **free verse**. It does not have metrical feet but has a rhythm that suits its meaning. The sounds of spoken language are used in lines that differ in terms of length. Many popular twentieth-century writers wrote in free verse, notably Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg.

The **villanelle** is a French verse form that has nineteen lines— these are split into five tercets and a quatrain. The tercets rhyme *aba* and the final quatrain rhymes *abaa*. Moreover, two refrains are formed by repeating the first line in the sixth, twelfth and eighteenth lines, and by repeating the third line in the ninth, fifteenth and nineteenth. Given below is Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night", which uses the villanelle:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

1.4 Let us sum up

In this Unit, we have discussed a number of terms that are used in the writing, and study, of literature. As has been said in the beginning, a student of literature is expected to show familiarity with these terms. A word of caution, though. Our discussion of the terms does not cover the entire gamut of literary terms. Further, terms that are discussed in detail elsewhere in the learning material are not included in this Unit. You will do well to supplement the list here with more elements that you learn of as you progress in the study of English literature.

1.5 Glossary

antiquity: ancient times; the quality of being ancient

compositor: one who sets type in a printing press

explicit: fully revealed or expressed without vagueness, implication, or ambiguity (the potential to have two or more meanings)

genre: a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content

glossary: a brief explanation of a difficult words or expressions; a book that explains difficult words or expressions

implicit: capable of being understood from something else though unexpressed

linguist: a person who is specialized in the study of language

literary: of, relating to, or having the characteristics of humane learning or literature

measure: poetic rhythm measured by temporal quantity or accent

Provencal: of, relating to, or characteristic of Provence (historical region and former province of southeastern France bordering on the Mediterranean Sea) or the people of Provence

rhythm: an ordered recurrent alternation of strong and weak

elements in the flow of sound and silence in speech; a particular example or form of rhythm

run-on: the running over of the sense and grammatical structure from one verse line or couplet to the next without a punctuated pause; also called enjambment

sequel: the next instalment (as of a speech, movie or story)

slapstick: comedy stressing farce and horseplay

syllable: a unit of spoken language that is next bigger than a speech sound and consists of one or more vowel sounds alone or with one or more consonants

symbol: something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance

symbolic: using, employing, or exhibiting a symbol

1.6 Let us check your progress

1. How many syllables are there in an alexandrine?
2. What technique of narration is used in *The Pilgrim's Progress*?
3. What is alliteration?
4. Who wrote *Piers Plowman*?
5. What are the uses of alliteration in modern poetry?
6. Define allusion.
7. What are the limitations of using allusion in a literary work?
8. Name the different kinds of allusion.
9. What is the difference between anachronism and anachorism?
10. How is apostrophe used in literature?
11. Why is assonance called vocalic rhyme?
12. Distinguish between Assonance and Consonance.
13. What are the advantages of using blank verse in English?
14. What are the different types of couplets?
15. Name the uses of the epilogue.

16. How does a farce entertain the audience?

17. What is a figure of speech?

18. Differentiate between a trope and a scheme.

19. What is an epic simile? Why is it called so?

20. Differentiate between a simile and a metaphor.

21. What is a mixed metaphor?

22. Explain metonymy.

23. How is personification different from pathetic fallacy?

24. What is hyperbole?

25. How is imagery used in everyday speech?

26. What are the different types of irony?

27. How does dramatic irony different from situational irony?

28. What is meter in poetry?

29. What are the features of the common types of meter used in English?

30. What is oxymoron?

31. What are onomatopoeic words?

32. Can puns be used in serious poetry?

33. Differentiate between refrain and rhyme.

34. How is satire used in literature?

35. What is the main objective of a soliloquy?

36. How is a soliloquy different from a monologue?

37. What is free verse?

38. How is Blank Verse different from Free Verse?

39. What are the features of a villanelle?

40. What is a Chaucerian stanza?

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UNIT - II

Lesson 2.1 - Poetry

Structure

2.1 Objectives

After learning this Unit, you will be able to

➤ Know the features of poetry

➤ Distinguish the different types of poetry and their features.

2.2 Introduction

Dating back to prehistoric times, poetry is one of the earliest of literary forms. It might have originated when people made use of what

we would call today poetic language to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Thus, it is safe to conclude that poetry existed even before writing was invented. The earliest extant poems are five short poems written on tablets in the Sumerian language sometime in the first half of the second millennium BCE. These poems along with other fragments tell the legend of Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk. Scholars are of the opinion that speakers of the Indo-European people who lived in north-west India composed the Vedas—collections of poems or hymns in Sanskrit—during the period 1500-1200 BCE. Such texts, in all probability were not originally written down but were handed down orally from generation to generation until writing developed over the ages.

To us, people of the modern times, poetry is a kind of literary writing which communicates to its readers through a variety of language that is different from the everyday language and that of other kinds of literature. As an art form, it is of a long vintage. It uses different kinds of artistic techniques and appeals to the emotions of the readers and fires their imagination. As an art form, poetry has evolved through the centuries and has given rise to many other literary forms in all the cultures of the world. It has adapted itself to diverse changes that have happened in language, taste and technology. It continues to be an important, perhaps the most important, way in which humans express themselves artistically. In this Unit, let us discuss what constitutes poetry, what its different forms are and what techniques are commonly used by poets to and to what effect.

2.3 What is Poetry?

Poetry may be defined in plenty of different ways. Here is a sample of the many such definitions: the British writer W.H. Hudson defined it as "an interpretation of life through imagination and feeling"; Thomas Carlyle called it "musical thought" and to Edgar Allan Poe it is "the rhythmic creation of beauty".

The word came from the Medieval Latin word *poetria* which itself is based on the Greek *poétés*, that is, doer or creator. So a poet can be understood as a creator who exercises imagination and interprets life through arousing in the reader the feelings of delight, sorrow, amusement of introspection. Practically speaking the word "poetry" can be used to speak about any kind of metrical composition (see **meter** in Unit 1). It basically is language that is sung, chanted, spoken or written according to a pattern. This pattern, usually a rhythm or meter, establishes a connection

between words on the basis of sound and sense. It may also have rhyme or alliteration or both.

Poetry is often used in contradistinction to verse. Whereas verse also has to have the mandatory requirement of rhythm and meter, it need not have what is known as poetic merit. Let us distinguish between them my noting that Shakespeare's sonnets are described as poetry whereas the Ogden Nash's wittily ingenious creations are described simply as verse. This, when both are in fact written in verse. So, it may be concluded that poetry is considered to be a superior form of creation to what is simply verse. At the same time, it does not follow that whatever is poetry is serious. In fact, many of the celebrated poets in various language around the world have written witty and humorous poems.

Poetry is also distinguished from prose. Prose is language that conveys meaning in a more expansive and less condensed manner. So it uses structures that are logical or narrative. That is not to say that poetry is illogical; we can say that poetry is often written to escape the tyranny of logic and to express feeling and emotions in a condensed manner.

As has already been said, poetry is literature in metrical form. It has features like meter, rhythm and rhyme which are not usually associated with a writing in prose. Questions have certainly been asked about the necessity of meter and rhyme in poetry, especially when we know that a number of good poems without rhyme or meter can be found in any language. However, we consider these devices important because they contribute greatly to the aesthetic pleasure that can be derived from poetry. It is the sound and rhythm that draws a reader/auditor to a poem and meter lifts our experience from the ordinary world of everyday experience. Moreover, our emotions are touched almost by magic when words that are arranged in a certain rhythmical order derive a new meaning and power. Another important feature of rhythm, rhyme and meter is that it is mainly because of them that our ancestors were able to memorize and recall the lines thus enabling the poems to be handed down from one generation to another at a time when handwriting had not been born.

Scholars have wondered about how poetry deals with truth, and about the importance of poetry vis a vis subjects like science which also deal with truth. There is no disagreement to the fact that both the poet and the scientist deal with nature and truth. The difference is in the way they approach these. A scientist is concerned with factual accuracy and literal

truth; but a poet uses imagination to go beyond reality. While we look to a scientist to explain a mystery, we look to a poet to awaken in us a sense of wonder about the mystery of the world around us. Does this mean that a poet is one who perpetuates lies? Certainly not. The truth that the poet seeks after and shows to the readers is not scientific truth; it is poetic truth. The poet, whose feelings are sincere and genuine, looks beyond scientific and historical truth and unearths patterns and connections which serve to interpret life. In doing so the poet enjoys what is known as poetic license, that is, the liberty to manipulate language, violate grammar rules, use archaic language and so on. They take liberties with literal truth so as to produce poetic truth. Such distortions serve to enhance the aesthetic beauty or the poetic truth or both of a work of art.

2.4 Classification of Poetry

Poetry can broadly be classified into two main categories—they are Objective Poetry and Subjective Poetry. As the names themselves suggest, **Objective poetry** is that in which the poet is detached from what is written. The poet writes dispassionately about the actions and emotions of others without bringing in his/her own self or personal feelings. In **Subjective poetry**, on the contrary, the poet reflects on his/her own self, feelings and experiences.

Of the two types, the objective kind is supposed to have had a longer ancestry than the subjective. The former is supposed to have originated among the prehistoric people in times that dated before literacy. In those ages, chances are that people were more interested in the world around them and actions and things that they experienced in the real world than deep thought, personal feelings and emotions. Therefore, poetry must have been a more societal thing than a personal thing. Subjective poetry would have evolved only when people started to take their own emotions, feelings and thoughts seriously. They must have also thought that these were good enough to be shared with the others. While the Ballad, the Epic, the Metrical romance, the Dramatic monologue and the Limerick are the common types of Objective poetry, the Lyric, the Ode, the Elegy, the Idyll, the Sonnet and the Epistle belong to Subjective poetry. Of course, the classification above is useful but the categorization is not a very strict one, as there may be times when the different types do not respect the classification and start taking on the elements of the other category. In the next section, we shall discuss each one of the various types of poetry.

2.5 Ballad

Derived from the Latin *ballare* "to dance", a ballad is a song that narrates a story. Ballads were in existence even when people had not learnt how to read or write. Originally, they were musical accompaniments to a dance. Then they were songs sung by wandering minstrels to the accompaniment of dance and musical instruments. The pattern would be that while one person sang and the others would dance and/or joined in on the refrain.

Basic characteristics of ballads

a) Ballads would often have abrupt openings—for instance, a ballad may begin with someone asking a question; the rest of the ballad will be the answer to the question. For example, the Scottish ballad "The Demon Lover" begins:

> Oh, where have you been, long, long love
>
> This seven years and more?

b) They have simple language, as the poet would want all the listeners to understand his song.

c) The story is told through dialogue and action; and usually there is only one episode that is narrated.

d) The theme is often tragic, though there are several ballads which have comic themes. Love, adventure, war and bravery are the common themes and basic emotions like love, hatred and pity are dealt with. There is also the use of the supernatural.

e) The material is usually drawn from community life, local and national history, legend and folklore.

f) There is often a refrain because this device adds to the effect and bolsters the argument.

g) Traditionally a ballad would be composed of a four-line stanza (quatrain) containing four-stress and three-stress lines. The rhyme scheme is usually *abcb* or *abab*.

Types of Ballads

Ballads may fall into any of the following types based on tradition, medium or authorship.

i.   Popular Ballad

Also known as Folk or Traditional Ballad this type of ballad has been in existence for generations and are of anonymous authorship. They have been passed on by word of mouth. And in each of such transmissions, changes might have happened to them as individual singers might have made their own changes to them. Examples of Traditional ballads are:

The EIfin Knight, *The Twa Sisters*, *Lord Randal*, *The Cruel Mother*, *The Three Ravens*, *The Wife of Usher's Well*, *The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington*, *The Gypsy Laddie*, *The Demon Lover*, and *Get up and Bar the Door*.

ii.   Robin Hood and Border Ballads

These are ballads inspired by the stories of the 12th century outlaw Robin Hood. The following are the relatively better known of such ballads:

Robin Hood and the Monk, *Robin Hood's Death*, *Chevy Chase*, *Johnnie Armstrong*, *Johnnie Cock,* and *Captain Car*.

iii.   Broadside Ballads

These are ballads written by usually anonymous writers, printed on one side of a single sheet of poor-quality paper and sold in bulk on the streets. These are sentimental stories of murder, execution or adventure. Some of this type of ballads have been ascribed to authors, for example, *A Ballade of the Scottyshe Kynge* by John Skelton, *The Journey into France,* A Ballad Upon a Wedding by Sir John Suckling, and *On the Lord Mayor and Court of Alderman* by Andrew Marvell.

iv.   Literary Ballad

Several distinguished ballads—Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads*—which are narrative poems written in imitation of traditional ballads belong to this category.

v.   Mock Ballad

These are ballads with all the features of the literary ballad but written with a comic theme thus mocking the seriousness of the ballad form they imitate. Notable examples are William Maggin's "The Rime of the Ancient Waggoner" and William Cowper's "The Diverting History of John Gilpin".

2.6 Epic

An epic is a long narrative poem, on a grand style and tells the stories of the exploits of warriors and heroes. The telling of the story incorporates myths, legends, folk tale and history. As they are embodiments of the history and aspirations of a nation in a grandiose style, they are of great importance.

The basic characteristics of an epic are the following:

a) An epic is usually a very long piece of poetry, often running into several books. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* both have twenty-four books and Milton's *Paradise Lost* was published first as ten and later as twelve books.

b) The action of an epic is spread over a large canvas. The action of *Odyssey* takes place across the Mediterranean basin; *Paradise Lost* has the entire cosmos for its setting.

c) The scale of action thus depicted is also on a gigantic scale. Often superhuman and supernatural deeds and journeys on treacherous terrains form part of the action.

d) The action of an epic is spread over large a span of time, often not less than ten years.

e) The heroes of epic are larger-than-human: Achilles, the hero of *Iliad* is the greatest of the Greek warriors and Adam, the hero of *Paradise Lost*, was the first human to be created.

f) Gods and supernatural beings are made part of the character list of an epic. The gods on Olympus are characters in Homer, and Christ and Satan are part of the action in Milton.

g) Of much significance is the language used in an epic. It is always lofty, formal and grandiloquent to match the grandeur of the theme. The language of *Paradise Lost* has the characteristics of Latin and uses sentences that are far away from the standard of everyday

language. A characteristic feature of this style is the use of classical allusions and epic similes. An epic simile, as the name suggests, is a grand simile which runs into several lines in order to make an elaborate comparison.

Types of epics

Two basic types of epics have been distinguished; they are called primary and secondary. Primary epics are also known as oral or primitive. They belong to the oral tradition and were composed orally and recited. Some of them have later been written down. *Gilgamesh*, *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Beowulf* belong to this category. Secondary epics are also called literary. They have all originally been written down. Virgil's *Aeneid* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* belong to this category.

Mock epic

A mock epic is a poetic work that uses the epic conventions of a lofty style, a serious tone and the supernatural machinery, but all for either parodying an epic or for treating of a silly subject thereby making the subject and theme look ridiculous. Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock is considered the masterpiece in this kind of poetry. Pope had a precedent to this in *Batrochomyomachia*, or *The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice* which is attributed to Homer. Some people call a mock epic a mock-heroic poem, which term means something in the manner of a mock-epic but it has a slightly larger application in that such a poem would adopt the heroic manner to make a trivial subject appear grand thereby making fun of the style. This style is commonly used in burlesque and parody.

2.7 Metrical Romance

Literally, this kind of poetry is a romance written in verse where romance stands for a story that narrates the improbable adventures of some idealized characters. In fact, the word romance originally denoted a work written in French, a Romance language (that is, one which evolved from the Roman language). In many features the metrical romance resembles an epic but you can distinguish between them on the premise that the former represents a courtly and chivalric age whereas an epic relates to a heroic age of tribal wars. So the verse stories that are considered as metrical romances dealt with chivalry, knight-errands, fighting, love, adventure and magic. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is often thought of as a splendid example

of a metrical romance. Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* can also be referred to by the same name.

2.8 Dramatic Monologue

A dramatic monologue is a kind of poem in which one imaginary speaker addresses an imaginary audience and narrates his/her experiences and shares innermost feelings. Most of the poems of this kind try to imitate the style of natural speech. A dramatic monologue can be considered successful when the readers do not confuse the persona of the poem with the poet. The fully developed dramatic monologue is considered to be the product of the Victorian age and having effectively been created by Tennyson and Browning. The most outstanding example of a typical Victorian dramatic monologue is Browning's *My Last Duchess*. In this poem an Italian Duke addresses an envoy of a prospective father-in-law and appears to confess that he had murdered his wife whom he now wants to replace. Right from the beginning of the poem the Duke engages the attention of the reader till the end when he condemns himself unwittingly. This kind of a self-revelation is an outstanding feature of a typical Browning dramatic monologue. *Andre del Sarto* and *Fra Lippo Lippi* are two of other notable examples. In the modern times the dramatic monologue is considered a fundamental poetic genre and is not particularly noticed but few poets have been able to match the quality of excellence that Browning brought to the form. Modern dramatic monologues cannot successfully be distinguished from interior monologues. Some poets like Philip Larkin have been able to create personae distinct from themselves but at the same time having some kind of a connection with their own selves.

Features of a dramatic monologue

a) It has all the features of drama—plot, character, dialogue and setting. But it is a poem and, as such, is meant to be read and not performed on a stage.

b) There is only one person who speaks; and this person is not the poet.

c) The speaker makes this speech at a critical point—in *Fra Lippo Lippi*, a truant monk is caught by the watchman and the monologue is the monk's explanation of his situation.

d) The presence of other characters is indicated; but they do not speak and their presence is understood only through the words of the speaker.

e) Similarly, we understand the setting and background from the words of the speaker.

f) Self-revelation appears to be the chief purpose of a dramatic monologue.

2.9 Limerick

A limerick is a popular verse form in English. It is a kind of light verse consisting of five lines which are anapaestic and rhyming *aabba*. Look at the following example:

> There was a young person of Mullion,
>
> Intent upon marrying bullion;
>
> > By some horrible fluke
> >
> > She jilted a duke
>
> And had to elope with a scullion.

The origin of the term is obscure. According to a theory, this was an Old French form brought to Limerick, an Irish town, by soldiers returning from the French war. Some say it originated in the nursery rhymes published in *Mother Goose's Melody*. Yet another theory postulates that it sprang from the refrain, "Will you come up to Limerick?" sung at friendly gatherings where nonsense verses were fashionable.

Although the form is considered light, even distinguished writers like Tennyson and R.L. Stevenson, and D.G. Rossetti and Kipling wrote them. Many of the best limericks are ribald, many others obscene and a few even distinguished.

2.10 Lyric

A lyric is a short non-narrative poem that expresses a particular mood or feeling. Originally, in Greece, a lyric was a poem composed to be sung by a single person to the accompaniment of a lyre. In the modern times, a song is often called a lyric, and any song-like quality is also termed

lyrical; in literature it is a poem which does not narrate a happening; it is a poem in which the poet is chiefly occupied with his own thoughts or feelings. It is the most extensive category of verse, comprising the bulk of all poetry. It may be composed in any meter; there is no restriction as to the subject matter but love and grief are the most common feelings presented in poems of this kind. Some of the most common lyric forms are the ode, elegy, sonnet, hymn and haiku.

In terms of structure, a lyric has three well-defined parts: first, a statement of the poet's emotion or the subject matter of the poem; the second is the main body of the poem in which the poet develops the emotion; and the third where the emotions are balanced and the poem moves to a reasonable conclusion. This is the part where the indication of a lesson learnt or comfort found is made. A sigh or a smile can bring up the close of the poem.

Let us sum up the basic features of a lyric.

a)   A lyric is a short poem that expresses an emotion without telling a story.

b)   It has an essential musical quality about it.

c)   It is subjective poetry and expresses the poet's emotions.

d)   It has a well-defined structure, and takes us through the different stages of the poet's emotion(s).

2.11 Ode

An ode is a long lyrical poem, which is of a serious or meditative nature. It has an elevated style, a formal stanzaic structure and is usually in the form of an address to someone or something. It has its origins in Greek, where it was intended as a poem set to music and sung by a band of singers. The Greek ode is of two types—Dorian and Lesbian—with distinct differences in structure. The ode developed in English relatively free of classical influences. However, in English too, two different models that closely follow the classical models can be identified. They are the public and the private. The public ode is used for ceremonial occasions—birthdays, funerals, state events, etc. Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is an example. The private ode often celebrates intense personal occasions. Therefore, they tend to be meditative and reflective. Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is an example of the private ode. The Greek

writer Pindar (5ᵗʰ century BCE) wrote choral odes devoted to public praise of athletes. The Latin writer Horace (c. first century BCE) wrote odes which were private and reflective. Pindar's odes were composed for performance by a chorus. They had an unfixed number of stanzas of lines of varying length arranged into a complex structure pf strophe, antistrophe and epode, each of which corresponded to a dancing movement of the chorus. Pindaric odes are also called Dorian, after the district and dialect from which they originated. English has very few close imitations of the Pindaric ode—they are called **regular odes;** a good example is Thomas Gray's "The Progress of Poesy". Abraham Cowley introduced a looser **irregular ode** with strophes of varying lengths. John Dryden, William Collins, William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge followed this model which is sometimes called the Cowleyan ode. Horatian odes, also known as Lesbian odes after the place of their origin, are odes in which the same stanza form is repeated regularly. These are calmer and more meditative than the Pindaric kind. The celebrated odes of Keats are of this kind.

The main characteristics of an ode may be summarized thus:

a) The subject matter is lofty and is treated seriously; the poem has a heightened tone and style.

b) It is longer and more formal than a lyric and the emotions are elaborately developed.

c) A person, object or an abstract concept is directly addressed.

d) The purposes of an ode can be to commemorate an event, the death of someone important or the inauguration of an eminent institution.

2.12 Elegy

The word elegy has roots in the Greek word *elegos*, meaning song of mourning. In Classical literature an elegy was a poem composed of elegiac distichs, also known as elegiacs, that is, a pair of metrical lines of differing lengths, which were rhymed and expressed a complete idea. Often the first line would be a dactylic hexameter and the second a dactylic pentameter. These poems could have almost anything for subject matter—death, war, love, etc. This form was also used for epitaphs and commemorative verses. There usually was a mourning strain in them. However, since the 16ᵗʰ century, an elegy has meant a poem of mourning for an individual, or a lament for some tragic event. But English did not have many compositions

of this kind, primarily because it was difficult to write a long series of dactylic hexameters and pentamers in the language. Later the term elegy came to be applied to a serious meditative poem. English has a virtual treasure house of such poems.

Many elegies are laments for specific people, well-known examples of these include Thomas Carew's elegy on John Donne, Pope's "Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats". Four poems are considered the major elegies in English. They are *Lycidas* (Arnold's elegy on Edward King), *Adonais* (Shelley's elegy on the death of Keats), *In Memoriam* (Tennyson's lament for Arthur Henry Hallam) and "Thyrsis" (Arnold's elegy on Arthur Hugh Clough). These major elegies belong to a sub-species of the elegy called the **Pastoral Elegy**, which will be discussed in more detail below. Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* is in a class of its own because this poem does not mourn the death of a particular person; instead, it laments the passing of a way of life. Similarly, Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* is a lament for rural decay. Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" commemorates Abraham Lincoln.

Here are the basic features of an elegy:

a) An elegy laments the death of a person, the end of an era or the passing of a way of life.

b) The form does not matter; the poet has a lot of freedom in this department.

c) The tone used is solemn and dignified.

d) This poetic form is suited for seriously thinking about important subjects like life and death.

e) Some poets during the course of the lament, deviate from the subject matter and express their views on other topics. This kind of deviation is termed digression.

f) Though an elegy expresses grief, there may be a change of moods towards the end: peace, resignation or even happiness when the poet reconciles with his grief.

2.13 Pastoral Elegy

You have already read that the Pastoral Elegy is a sub-species of the elegy. That is to say, this poetic form is a kind of elegy. This form is supposed to have originated in the pastoral laments of Theocritus, Moschus and Bion who were ancient poets of Sicily. The pastoral tradition in English could be seen to have been inaugurated by Spenser in *Astrophil* (1586). This elegy for Philip Sidney uses what are known as pastoral conventions. The following are, in broad terms, the pastoral conventions:

a) The scene is pastoral (literally, the countryside where the sheep graze; the society of shepherds is presented as uncomplicated and uncorrupted) and the poet and the person mourned both are represented as shepherds

b) The poem opens with an invocation to the Muses; diverse mythological characters are referred to in the course of the poem

c) Even Nature is shown as mourning for the dead person

d) The poet addresses the guardians—angels, fairies, etc.—and asks them where they were when the shepherd died

e) A procession of mourners is described

f) There is a meditation on divine justice and evils of the time

g) There is a description of the floral decorations, of for example the brier and

h) The poem ends with a sense of hope, even joy, as the poet affirms that death is in fact the beginning of life.

Milton established these conventions in *Lycidas* (1637)—a poem that was occasioned by the death of Henry King. Shelley's *Adonais* (1821) and Arnold's "Thyrsis" (1867) also followed the same tradition as *Astrophil* and *Lycidas.* But Tennyson's *In Memoriam* abandons these conventions. This reflects the practice later in English poetry: although there have been a large number of elegies, the pastoral form has largely been given the go-by.

2.14 Idyll

This term is derived from the Greek *eidyllion*, meaning little picture, and refers to a short poem in which a pastoral or rural landscape is suggested. Once upon a time, the word suggested a number of short

poems which had simple subjects and in which there was a description of natural objects. Theocritus who helped develop the pastoral conventions popularised the form through his *Idylls*. During the Renaissance the term was used to differentiate narrative pastorals from pastorals in the dialogue form. During the nineteenth century, the popularity of Victor-Richard de Laprade's *Idylles héroïques* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* helped the use of this word for poems on a variety of subjects so much so that the idyll scarcely is meant as a definite literary form. (But its adjective form, idyllic, has been used as a synonym for rustic, tranquil and pastoral.) So it is meant as a short poem or an episode in a larger poem like a lyric. The idyll is used to describe a beautiful rural scene or incident; thus, it is can be a series of brief poetic images that vividly describe an idealized or peaceful environment. Rural life is presented in an idealized manner and the beauty, simplicity and harmony of nature is depicted in an idyll.

2.15 Sonnet

This term is derived from the Italian *sonetto*, meaning 'little sound' or 'song'. It refers to a fixed verse form that has fourteen lines set to iambic pentameter lines which have a definite rhyme scheme. It is a unique form in the sense that the major writers in Western literature have continued to be interested in it during the course of the centuries of its existence. The sonnet is believed to have originated in the thirteenth century in the hands of the Sicilian school of poets who were inspired by the love poets of Provençal troubadours.

Petrarchan Sonnet

The sonnet reached its highest expression in the fourteenth century in Tuscany in the hands of Petrarch (1304 - 74). His 317 sonnets, included in his *Canzoniere* and addressed to Laura, established the Italian sonnet, which after the poet, is termed Petrarchan.

Structurally and thematically, the Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two parts: the octave and the sestet. The octet is the first eight lines and is used to state a problem, ask a question or express a tense emotional state. The sestet is the next six lines in which the problem is resolved, the question answered or the tension relieved. The octave rhymes *abbaabba* but the sestet may have different rhyme schemes: *cdccdc*, *cdecde* or *cdedce*. The well-marked pause between the octave and the sestet is called *caesura*. The turn of thought after the break is called the *volta*. This form is the

classical form of the sonnet and is called the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet. In English, John Milton and Christina Rossetti, among others, used the Petrarchan form. Milton's "On His Blindness" is an outstanding poem using this form. Let us now analyse the structure of the poem:

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

The first eight lines constitute the octave, and it asks a question (Read up to "I fondly ask.") Then there is a pause, the caesura. It is followed by a turn in thought, the volta. The last six lines give a resolution of the problem.

The Petrarchan sonnet became a strong influence of European poetry and soon spread to Spanish, Portuguese and French literature. It also spread to Polish and other Slavic literatures. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, introduced the sonnet, along with other verse forms, to England in the sixteenth century. These forms resulted in the great flowering of Elizabethan lyric poetry. The sonnet reached the pinnacle of its popularity in England during this period. An evolution of the poetic form was inevitable in English as the language was less rich than Italian in terms of rhymes. The Elizabethan sonnet, which is known also as the English sonnet, is composed of three quatrains, or stanzas of four lines each and a final couplet. Each quatrain has an independent rhyme scheme and the couplet is rhymed. The typical English sonnet has the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*.   The greater number of rhymes in the English sonnet makes it less demanding than the Petrarchan variety but the rhyming couplet presents a practical difficulty: it has to compress the effect created by the first three stanzas.

Here is Shakespeare's Sonnet 18:

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

The Elizabethan writers used the sonnet form in the same manner as Petrarch. Petrarch's sonnets were all ordered into a sonnet cycle or sonnet sequence, that is, a collection of sonnets which are linked thematically and in which there is a progression of thought.

The Elizabethans composed the sonnets in a series of love poems. Each poem was an independent poem: partly conventional and partly self-revelatory but the sequence had the added advantage of providing a kind of narrative development. Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591), Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* (1591), Samuel Daniel's *Delia* (1592) and Michael Drayton's *Idea's Mirrour* (1594) are among the most notable of such sequences. Spenser's sonnet used a common variant of the sonnet form. This variant, now called Spenserian, uses the typical English quatrain and couplet form; but it uses the Italian practice of using a linked rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme of the Spenserian form is *abab bcbc cdcd ee*. Let us look at Sonnet LXXV from *Amoretti*:

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,	a
But came the waves and washed it away:	b
Again I wrote it with a second hand,	a
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.	b
"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay,	b
A mortal thing so to immortalize;	c
For I myself shall like to this decay,	b
And eke my name be wiped out likewise.	c
"Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devise	c
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:	d
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,	c
And in the heavens write your glorious name:	d
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,	e
Our love shall live, and later life renew.	e

Shakespearean sonnet

The sequence of sonnets written by William Shakespeare is by common consent the greatest of all such sequences of sonnets mentioned above. The English sonnet is called Shakespearean Sonnet because of the effect with which Shakespeare put this poetic form to use. His sonnets are addressed to a young man and a dark lady. There, of course, is the element of the love story in these sonnets but this theme is of less interest than the reflections contained in them on time and art, growth and decay, and fame and fortune.

After Shakespeare the sonnet departed even further from the traditional theme of love. John Donne wrote religious sonnets and Milton's sonnets dwelled on political and religious themes. They also had personal themes like his blindness. Thus, it can be seen that the sonnet by this time had become a medium to discuss all the subjects of poetry. The compactness of its form enabled the sonnet to embrace a wide range of themes: it can treat of the "light conceits of lovers" to reflections on time, life, death and eternity. The major writers of the Romantic era—William Wordsworth, John Keats and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for instance—wrote sonnets in the manner of Petrarch. Elizabeth Barrett Browning in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in *The House of Life* (1876) revived the love sonnet sequence. Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1922) is considered to be the most distinguished of this form in the twentieth century.

Curtal sonnet

Curtal is an obsolete word which means "shortened"; hence curtal sonnet could be taken to mean curtailed, shortened or contracted sonnet. Gerard Manley Hopkins used this term to describe the stanza form that he used in such poems as "Pied Beauty" and "Peace". This is a sonnet that uses eleven lines rhyming *abcabc dcbdc* or *abcabc dbcdc. Here the last line is called a "tail" or a half-line.*

2.16 Epistle

An epistle is a composition in verse and is written in the form of a letter addressed to a friend or a patron. Two types of verse epistles based on theme are identified—one derived from Horace's *Epistles* and the other from Ovid's *Heroides*. Horace inspired a tradition of epistels that dealt with moral and philosophical themes. This has been the more popular form in western literature since the Renaissance. The tradition that followed Ovid deals with topics which are romantic and sentimental in nature. This was more popular than the Horatian kind in Europe during the Middle Ages. The Pauline epistles in the Bible are well-known Horatian epistles. Ben Jonson used this form for the first time in English in his "The Forest". Alexander Pope, the greatest exponent of this form, used it in such works as "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot". John Dryden, William Congreve, W'H. Auden and Louis MacNeice also wrote epistles.

2.17 Satire

This form of poetry can be defined as a work whose chief aim is to ridicule vice or foolishness. This kind of work is not exclusive to poetry because a satire can be written in prose or drama as well. In the opinion of Samuel Johnson, a satire is a type of work "in which wickedness and folly is censured". In this artistic form, human vices, follies, abuses or shortcomings are held up for scrutiny and censure. The methods to do this would be to use ridicule, derision, parody, caricature, irony, burlesque, etc. A satire may commonly be used for didactic purposes with an intent to reform society; however, it could at times be put to use for venting personal grievances and airing complaints. As used in literature, satire can be of two kinds: direct and indirect. In the former, the narrator speaks directly to the reader; in the latter, the author's intent is realized within the narrative and the story. Another way to classify satires is into Horatian and Juvenalian. While the former is relaxed and more tolerant, the latter

harsh and cynical. To Horace, satire was a vehicle to gently laugh at human weaknesses. But to Juvenal, satire was a weapon to attack adversaries and condemn vice.

Some of the best examples of verse satire in English are the following:

John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681-82) and *Mac Flecknoe* (1682)

Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1684) and

Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* (1728-43).

Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* are satires in the novel form. Johnson used the literary form to satirize certain people in the society; Swift used it to call attention to the defects of all humankind; Dryden put it to excellent use to make fun of his political opponents and poetical rivals; and Pope satirized his rivals and critics.

(Read "Satire" in Unit 1 also.)

2.18 Let us sum up

In this Unit, we have discussed the nature and functions poetry. We have also discussed the different types of poetry. Now you will be able to distinguish different kinds of poetry and identify and compare the features of each one of them.

2.19 Glossary

abrupt:	sudden and unexpected
bullion:	gold or silver in the form of bars
chivalry:	*(here)* the system of behaviour followed by knights in the medieval period of history, when purity, honour, kindness and bravery were highly valued
contradistinction:	distinction made by contrasting the different qualities of two things
elope:	to leave home secretly in order to get married without parents' permission

ingenious:	very clever and skilful
jilt:	to end a romantic relationship suddenly and unkindly
knight-errands:	brave things done by knights in order to help people in trouble
perpetuate:	to cause something to continue
lament:	a song, poem or other piece of writing that expresses sadness about someone's death
legend:	a very old story or set of stories from ancient times, or the stories that people tell about a famous person or an event
myth:	an ancient story or set of stories explaining in a literary way the early history of a people or about natural events and facts
Olympus:	in mythology, home of the Greek gods
rustic:	typical of the countryside
scullion:	in the past, someone employed to do unskilled jobs in a kitchen
supernatural:	things that cannot be explained by science
the Renaissance:	the period of new growth of interest and activity in the areas of art, literature and ideas in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries
tranquil:	calm and peaceful and without noise, violence, worry, etc.
troubadour:	a male poet and singer who travelled around southern France and northern Italy entertaining rich people between the 11th and 13th centuries

2.20 Let us check your progress

1. How is poetry distinguished from prose?

2. What are the two mandatory features of verse?

3. Do you think that meter and rhyme are necessary in poetry?

4. What is poetic truth? How is it different from scientific truth?

5. Distinguish between objective and subjective poetry.

6. How did the ballad form evolve?

7. What are the different types of ballads?

8. What are the characteristics of the epic?

9. What re the two basic types of epics?

10. What is a metrical romance?

11. What is its connection with France?

12. List the characteristics of a dramatic monologue.

13. What are the features of the limerick?

14. Trace the evolution of the lyric.

15. How is a lyric usually structured?

16. Identify the features of a lyric.

17. What is an ode?

18. Distinguish between a regular ode and an irregular one.

19. What is a Pindaric ode?

20. Describe the features of the pastoral elegy.

21. What is the subject matter of an idyll?

22. Describe the origin and evolution of the sonnet form.

23. How does the English sonnet differ from the Italian?

24. What is a sonnet sequence?

25. Name a few famous cycles of sonnets.

26. What is rhyme scheme in the context of sonnets?

27. What are octave and sestet?

28. What is *caesura*?

29. What themes are popular in epistles?

30. How does satire criticize society?

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UNIT - III

Lesson 3.1 - Prose

Structure

3.1 Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 What is Prose

3.4 Classification of Prose

3.1 Objectives

After learning this Unit, you will be able to

➢ Know the features of prose

➢ Distinguish the different types of prose.

3.2 Introduction

Along with poetry, prose is considered as a major form of literary expression. It can be distinguished from poetry in more functional and less decorative or ornamental. Padmaja Ashok compares it to walking while poetry is like dancing. To amplify that statement, it is argued that prose is the natural medium for speech, and it is the form regularly used for writing letters, articles in newspapers and magazines, scholarly writing, and in short stories. If rhyme and meter are integral to poetry, a prose writer does not use these. But that does not mean that prose cannot be artistic and pleasing. In the hands of a skilful writer, prose also rises to the level of poetry. Puns, paradox, alliteration and metaphors are some devices that writers of prose use to adorn their writing in order to embellish the artistic features of this otherwise plain form of expression. Prose can be written in any style; in fact, prose has as many styles as the number of writers using this medium. The range of style may extend from the very simple to the very complex. Francis Bacon, one of the early and most accomplished practitioners of writing in prose, wrote in short, simple but pithy sentences whereas John Milton, who called his prose writings the work of his left hand, wrote long, complicated sentences in the Latinate

style. In the modern times, people prefer a fast-paced but easy-to-read lucid style which uses less colour and bombast.

As the term prose covers quite a vast variety of writing, it can be studied under various headings—nonfiction, fiction, literary criticism, for example. In this Unit, we shall explore the different forms of nonfiction prose writing—particularly the essay, the biography and the autobiography. Fiction will be discussed in Unit 5 of this learning material.

1.3 What is Prose?

The word 'prose' is derived from the Latin word 'prosa', that is 'straightforward' and thus refers to a direct and plain form of language that is used in everyday communication. The term is an inclusive one referring to all discourse that is not patterned into verse lines—metric or free. At one end of the spectrum of such discourse is the irregular and occasionally formal prose that is used in everyday conversation. Then there is distinguished written discourse, which John Dryden called "that other harmony of prose". This artfully written prose form is supposed to have evolved at a later time than when artfully written verse emerged. This "literary" prose has a number of functions—descriptive, expository, narrative and expressive—but in all these it exhibits different modes of rhythm and other formal features. The nineteenth century even had a name for such writings—the "prose poem". These are compact and rhythmic compositions which uses poetic resources but are written as continuous sequences of sentences without line breaks. There are also the elaborately formal special writings called euphuism.

1.4 Classification of Prose

As has been mentioned above, prose writing may be classified into distinct categories of nonfiction, fiction, criticism, etc. For the purpose of your course, we shall broadly distinguish between nonfiction prose and fiction. This Unit, as mentioned earlier, concerns with nonfiction prose, which may be classified into the following categories.

1. Essay

The word "essay" is derived from the French "essais", meaning to attempt, or to try. The term denotes a short non-fictional work that deals with a single subject matter. It usually presents the personal views of the

author. Aldous Huxley defines the essay as "a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything." Samuel Johnson called an essay "a loose sally of the mind; an irregular, undigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition." So we can define an essay as a short prose composition on a subject or the branch of a subject. More subjective than an article, the essay is not formal or authoritative as a thesis, a treatise or a dissertation are, but are eminently readable and discursive. They usually contain anecdotes or personal or autobiographical asides. Since it varies greatly in terms of style, treatment and method, it is a little difficult to study systematically. Essays can be long or short, depending upon the choice of the subject matter and the writer's style. As E.V. Lucas said, A good essay, more than a novel, a poem, a play, or a treatise, is personality translated into print. Francis Bacon wrote brief pieces of concentrated wisdom with each essay running to not more than a page or two whereas John Locke, Lord Macaulay and Herbert Spencer's essays were long enough to be called books. As for subject matter, Bacon wrote on subjects as varied as love, death, atheism, travel, marriage and gardens while Michel de Montaigne wrote on an assortment of random thoughts, quotations and anecdotes. Again, each writer has their own style in the treatment of their subjects. While Charles Lamb adopted a conversational style to take the reader through a gamut of emotions, Jonathan Swift made use of the essays to attack his opponents through biting satire.

Origin and growth of the essay

Montaigne, who first used the term 'essais' in 1580 is considered the father of the modern essay. Bacon, a pioneer of this form, applied the term in 1597 to this kind of writing for the first time in English. Bacon considered the letters of the Roman writers Cicero and Seneca as essays for these contained the thoughts of these writers on various matters. Plutarch, another classical writer, is also considered a forerunner of the essay. But the credit of pioneering the personal essay goes to Montaigne who wrote informal essays which had a warmth and grace about them. Bacon followed a style of his own and favoured a pithy, business-like prose. Abraham Cowley followed the style of Montaigne. Sir William Temple and John Dryden were instrumental for the development of the essay in English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were a great influence on Joseph Addison and Richard Steele who made popular a sub-genre of the essay called the 'periodical essay'. The list of popular essayists in English will be endless but the most famous of these writers have been Lamb,

William Hazlitt, Thomas de Quincey, S.T. Coleridge, Macaulay, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, R.L. Stevenson, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, E.V. Lucas and Robert Lynd.

Features of the essay

➢ The modern essay is limited in terms of length and range, as an overly long and exhaustive essay takes on the names of the dissertation or thesis. While the essay is addressed to the lay person, the dissertation or thesis is addressed to the specialist.

➢ An essay is not intended to give the reader an exhaustive or comprehensive understanding of its subject.

➢ It still gives the reader a sense of completeness in its treatment of the subject matter.

➢ The subject matter is virtually unlimited and the essay can cover a vast range of topics.

Types of essays

Essays can be broadly classified into two types: literary and non-literary. Literary essays may be grouped, according to content, into the following categories.

i) Aphoristic Essay

This type of essay gets its name from aphorisms, that is, sayings or maxims. The aphoristic essay therefore is one that is constructed like a set of aphorisms. It is best exemplified in the work of Francis Bacon who wrote highly objective and impersonal essays in which he does not reveal himself but offers advice in short, crisp sentences that sound like aphorisms. These sentences are unemotional and are without any literary frills and flounces. Some of his best-known essays are "Of Truth", "Of Studies", "Of Friendship" and "Of Revenge".

ii) Personal Essay

These are informal essays in which the writer shares their views with the readers in an intimate manner. Normal, everyday occurrences are the subject matter of these essays. They do not discuss serious matters like politics or spirituality. It often is autobiographical in nature and, as such, reflects the writer's inner thoughts and feelings. Montaigne, considered to be the father of this sub-genre, wrote two volumes of essays that are about his experiences in life. They

give his views on topics such as idleness and lying. Charles Lamb took the personal essay to great heights. He wrote about the people he knew and about events that happened in his life. His excellent writing took the readers through a range of emotions. His essays are characterised by humour, sentiment and common sense delivered in a uniquely personal style. Two collections of his essays—*Essays of Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia*—contain the best of Lamb's essays. Leigh Hunt, Thomas de Quincey and William Hazlitt are also well-known writers of the personal essay.

A personal essay can be seen as a short work of autobiographical non-fiction characterised by a sense of intimacy. It will be in a conversational manner with no prescribed structure or format. Here the author's intimate thoughts and experiences are related to universal truths.

iii) Character Sketch

Believed to have been pioneered by the classical Greek writer Theophrastus (371-287 BCE), this is a brief but detailed description of the appearance and habits of an individual or a generalised type. The purpose of this kind of writing is to amuse the readers and to praise or satirise the person or type being described. The art form of drama was greatly influenced by character sketches. These essays—called 'character'—were very popular in the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century preference for satire was a good reason for the popularity of characters. Popular examples of this type include Thomas Overbury's "A Good Wife" and "A Drunken Dutchman Resident in England", and Joseph Hall's "The Witless Gallant" and "Of the Flatterer". Some writers extended this form to places and institutions; John Milton's "Character of the Long Parliament" is an example. Many 18th-century essays of Addison and Steele are extended character sketches and they remain the last popular examples of this form of writing.

iv) Critical Essay

A critical essay is an essay that evaluates, discusses and interprets literary works. John Dryden made this kind of writing popular through the prefaces he wrote to his books (like, "Preface to the Fables") and the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, which is in the form of a dialogue. For his contribution to this kind of writing, Dryden is

considered to be the first literary critic in English. In the seventeenth century, coffee houses were the scenes of discussion and review of literary works. Severa critical essays were written in the neoclassical period. Samule Johnson who wrote his "Preface to Shakespeare" is another eminent practitioner of the critical essay.

v) Periodical Essay

A periodical essay is one that appears in a journal or a periodical. This form rose to prominence in the early eighteenth century when there was a spurt in journalistic activity. This form of writing was appropriate for social and literary criticism, and for character studies.

As mentioned earlier in these study material, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison made the periodical essay popular through their journals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. But Daniel Defoe had already published *Review*, a journal that featured periodical essays. The essays popularised by Steele and Addison held up a mirror to the vanities, vices and foibles of contemporary society. Steele was the main contributor but Addison too made a fair contribution to the periodicals. *The Tatler* featured 271 essays of which Steele wrote 188 and Addison 42. The rest were written by both jointly. According to Addison, these essays were intended "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality." According to George Saintsbury, Addison and Steele taught the eighteenth century "how it should, … and should not, behave in public places, from churches to theatres; what books it should like, and how it should like them; how it should treat its lovers, mistresses, husbands, wives, parents, and friends". Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith contributed to the popularity of this form. John was a regular writer in *The Rambler* and *The Idler*, and Goldsmith wrote a series titled "Citizen of the World" in *The Public Ledger*.

Another way to classify literary essays is according to their form and style. The following four types are identified.

i) Expository Essay

This is an essay in which the writer gives the explanation of an idea, theme or issue to the audience by giving their personal opinions. This essay is presented through examples, definitions, comparison, and contrast.

ii) Descriptive Essay

Here the writer gives the description of a particular topic or describes the traits and characteristics of something or a person in detail. This form allows artistic freedom and creates images in the minds of readers through the use of the five senses.

iii) Narrative Essay

This type is non-fictional in nature but describes a story with sensory descriptions. The writer not only tell a story, but also makes a point by giving reasons.

iv) Persuasive Essay

In this type of essay, the writer tries to convince the readers to adopt a position concurrent with the writer's point of view on an issue after providing them solid reasoning. This kind of essay requires a lot of research to claim and defend an idea. It is also called an argumentative essay.

2. Biography

Also known simply as bio, a biography is a detailed description of a person's life written by somebody else. It came into popularity during the second half of the 17ᵗʰ century. The word biography comes from the Greek words *bios* (life) and *graphein* (to write). A biography contains, in addition to the elementary facts like education, work, relationships, and death of the subject, the portrayal of the subject's experience of these life events and the story of the subject's life. This would include intimate details of experience, and an analysis of the subject's personality. A biographer may use all kinds of material for his purpose: the subject's own writings (especially diaries and letters), laundry bills, official archives, memoirs of contemporaries, the memories of living witnesses, personal knowledge, other books on the subject, photographs and paintings. Quite obviously, biographical works are non-fiction, but fiction can also be used to portray a person's life. A biography, more than an account of a person's life, is also a branch of history. Dryden, who was the first to use the term biography, defined it as the 'history of particular men's lives'.

An in-depth form of biographical coverage is called **legacy writing**. An **authorized biography** is written with the permission, cooperation, and at times, participation of a subject or a subject's heirs.

Origin and growth of biography

Biography almost certainly originated in the early accounts of monarchs and heroes. The sayings of the wise and the holy are also to be seen as branches of the genre. For instance, Plato's teachings tell quite a lot about his master Socrates and so do Xenophon's *Memorabilia.* The Roman historians Plutarch, Tacitus and Suetonius are regarded as the pioneers of the form. Plutarch's 1st-century CE work, *Parallel Lives* has the biography of twenty-three Greeks and twenty-three Romans. These later became an important source for many plays including some of Shakespeare's drama. Tacitus' *Histories* (c. 104-9) contains the lives of emperors Galba to Domitian. Suetonius wrote *Lives of the Caesars* (from Julius Caesar to Domitian) and also lives of Terence, Horace and Lucan. The Middle Ages did not have much to show for biography but there sure are some notable instances of biography of the saints, for example, Bede's account of Cuthbert and Adamnan's account of Columba. There were also the secular biographies of King Alfred and Edward, the Confessor. A remarkable work dating from the later Middle Ages is Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium.*

Biography acquired considerable interest at the Renaissance. Notable achievements in the 16th century were Sir Thomas More's Life of *John Picus, Earl of Mirandola* (1510) and his *History of Richard III* (1543, 1557); Vasari's Lives of the Painters (1550, 1568); Thomas Cavendish's Life of Cardinal Wolsey (published in 1641); and William Roper's *The Life of Sir Thomas More* (published in 1626). The Elizabethan period in England saw the publications of some notable translations of Classical biographers and also Bacon's *The History of Henry VII* (published in 1622).

The 17th century was the most important period for the development of English biography. John Aubrey's Brief Lives belongs to this period although it was published only in 1813. Izaak Walton's *Lives* of Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Robert Sanderson are major landmarks in the history of biography. Then there was Dryden's biography of Plutarch—prefaced to his translation of Plutarch's *Lives*.

Biography became an art form in the eighteenth century when writers used the novelist's techniques to embellish their writings. The principal works during this period are Roger North's *The lives of the Norths* (1740-44), Mason's *Life of Gray* (1774), Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1779-

81) and James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791). Johnson was undoubtedly the most influential of the biographers of his time. He made a change to the biographical discourse by deliberately avoiding all adulation and presented a rounded and detailed portrait of his subject. He himself became the subject of the biography written by Boswell. This account which combined Boswell's firsthand knowledge of his subject with information gathered from various other sources is regarded as a supreme example of the genre.

The prudishness and gentility of the mid-Victorian period affected the biographical works written during the period. These works tended to gloss over the unsavoury aspects of the subject's life in order to make them appear respectable. Notable exceptions to this trend were Carlyle's portrait of Abbot Samson in *Past and Present* (1843) and his account of The Life and Times of Frederick the Great (1858-65).

Lytton Strachey brought about a revolution in the art of biography post-World War I. despising panegyric and prolixity, he adopted the technique of criticising and exposing. His often-irreverent writing was characterised by elegance, ironic wit and acute perception. This trend in biography is termed "debunking". Strachey's famous biographies include *Eminent Victorians* (1918), *Queen Victoria* (1921) and *Portraits in Miniature* (1931). Harold Nicolson is considered one of the ablest of 20th-century biographers. His most notable works include *Tennyson* (1923), *Byron, the Last Journey* (1924) and *Curzon, the Last Phase* (1934).

Since the second half of the 20th century, biography has become highly respectable and a major source of information. It has also become a major publishing industry with a lot of historical and political biography written. Prominent figures in arts, sports and literature have also had their biographies written. There are also critical writings on biographies and biographers of the biographers.

Features of a biography

➢ As a biography is the story of an individual, the focus is on this individual. Therefore, other characters, even if they are greater in some way, play only a subsidiary role.

➢ A good biography traces not only the achievements of the subject, but also highlights their personality and character.

> A biography is not just a compilation of dry facts. The biographer arranges and presents the material in a manner that is pleasing and artistic.

> A well-written biography brings the personality of the subject to life.

Qualities of an ideal biographer

> An ideal biographer is expected to have only a professional interest in his/her subject, and remain detached from the subject emotionally.

> The ideal biographer desists from giving his/her own view of the subject and must be disinterested, that is impartial, in judging the life of the subject.

> The ideal biographer would present the vices as well as the virtues of the person.

> The biographer does not use the life of the subject to illustrate any personal theory or assumption, and should avoid claiming any moral or utilitarian motive to taking up the life of a person to write about.

> There shall be no exaggeration of the virtues of the subject as this would reduce the work to a biased eulogy.

Problems faced by a biographer

> A biographer can give an accurate picture of the subject only if the biographer has spent a lot of time constantly together with the subject. That is why a biography like that of Samuel Johnson written by Boswell has been acclaimed to be very good. Boswell was a very close friend of Johnson. Likewise, Sir Walter Scott's biographer, John Gibson Lockhart was Scott's son-in-law and thus had first-hand knowledge of his subject.

> Sometimes it is not possible for the biographer to know the subject personally. In such a scenario, the biographer faces the challenge of gathering, sifting and presenting information about the subject and has to rely to sources like records, letters and journals to piece together a story.

> In writing a biography, the different facets of a life have to be compressed notwithstanding the physical, moral, intellectual and psychological complexity of that life.

    ➤   The biographer can only guess at the thoughts and feelings that make up a person's life and which the subject may have been silent about.

    ➤   A very important difficulty lies in selecting the events and incidents in the life of the subject. The biographer has to exercise great skill and discretion. The biography will be in serious danger of slipping into mere gossip if too many personal details are given. Still, the biographer cannot ignore giving insights into the subject's personality as the readers would desire to know about the person in the biography.

3. Autobiography

An autobiography is a piece of writing about one's own self. It is believed that Robert Southey was the first to use this term in this sense. The writing of an autobiography is not a factual record of someone's experience of life. Where the biography is largely objective, the autobiography is always subjective in the selection and presentation of facts. H.W. Longfellow said, "Autobiography is a product of firsthand experience; biography, of second-hand knowledge."

Dr Johnson thought that nobody other than the person himself/herself was better qualified to write on his/her own life. But the fact remains that the writer may not recall all the details of his/her life, especially of the early part of the life, accurately. Hence the writer may have to rely on other people or other sources for information on oneself. Further, writers practice self-censorship in various ways. They may want to present a certain picture of themselves, suffer lapses of memory and recollect only such material that would be shaped in ways that they desire. So, an autobiography is not a reliable source of information of a person's life because it may contain distortions and misrepresentations. It may also gloss over or ignore facts that the writer would not want to put on the public domain.

Origin and growth of autobiography

St Augustine's Confessions (397) is thought to be the first Western biography. It is 'confessional' in nature because there is personal revelation in it. For that reason, it is considered the first autobiography of note. Classical and medieval literature has many such autobiographical works,

many of them in the form of the apology (that is, a formal written defence or justification of one's actions or beliefs) and confessional writing.

The autobiography as a form became popular after the sixteenth century. The Renaissance, with its interest in the human being, encouraged the exploration of character and personality. When subjectivity became a trend, it provided the right conditions for the autobiography to develop. *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1432-38) is the earliest surviving autobiography in English. It narrates Kempe's mystic visions and the consequent conflicts with the authorities. John Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1666) is an early autobiography. In the seventeenth century it was a practice among people to maintain diaries and journals of everyday happenings, and as a consequence this resulted in the writing of a number of autobiographies and memoirs (a writer's account of personal experiences, memories and feelings). The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782-89) provided a model for writers trying their hands at autobiographies.

From the nineteenth century onwards, autobiographies and literature have interacted in a number of different ways. Notable examples are William Wordsworth's recollections in the poem *The Prelude* (1805, 50) and D.H. Lawrence's thinly-autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Both these works incorporate memories of growing up.

Several autobiographies were published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901), Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* (1903) and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) are some of the well-known autobiographies of the twentieth century. Modern-day autobiography writing is dominated by famous figures in sports, politics and entertainment, social workers, medical professionals and spiritual gurus. Some of them take the help of a ghost-writer (a writer who writes in the place of another who does not have the time or does not believe he/she cannot write well).

Features of an autobiography

➢ An autobiography is more a reflection of the writer's inner life as well his/her public achievements, set in the context of the time than a mere narration of events in the life of the writer.

➢ It is made interesting by the presentation of details in an artistic and engaging manner while remaining true.

Qualities of an ideal writer of autobiographies

- The ideal autobiography has certainly to be in a lively and engaging style. But that does not mean that the writer can be pompous and boastful.
- The writer should against straying into exaggeration, embellishment and glossing over when writing of one's own achievements.
- Due credit must be given to people who played significant roles in the life of the writer.

Problems faced while writing an autobiography

- The writer may want to give the readers a truthful account of his/her life. But it is not easy to recall all the details of one's life accurately. So, the writer will have to rely on others to recapture incidents/ events that happened, especially, early in one's life.
- An authentic recreation of emotions and impressions is difficult to achieve. Here again the writer has to depend on others' impressions and memories.
- Recounting incidents involving others can be tricky because if they are shown in a bad light, it can lead to embarrassment and resentment.
- The artistic nature of the autobiography may force the writer to omit sundry details of ordinary life which are common to everybody and focus on singular and the exceptional. This may lead the readers into the belief that the subjects had extraordinary lives whereas the readers had pedestrian ones.

Comparison between biography and autobiography

The readers look for objectivity and factual accuracy in a biography, whereas they look for the little personal details in the subject's life in an autobiography. A biography aims to give the readers a perspective—an objective view of the history, background and influences that shape the life and personality of the subject. An autobiography gives the readers the emotions, motives, hopes, doubts, fears, joys and sorrows that only the writer knows and wants to share.

4. Memoir

A memoir is the history or record of life or events composed from the writer's personal observation and experience. It is closely

related to autobiography and is often confused with it. But it differs from the autobiography mainly because it lays emphasis on external events. An autobiography, in contrast is primarily concerned with the writers themselves: they are the subject matter. A memoir is usually written by persons who have played roles in, or have been close observers of, historical events. Their main purpose is to describe or interpret the events. For example, the English Civil Wars of the 17th century produced many such reminiscences. The most notable of the are the Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow and Sir John Reresby. Some excellent memoirs have been written by the French. One of the greatest memoirists of his time was the Duc de Saint-Simon. His *Mémoires* (covering the early 1690s through 1723) is famous for their penetrating character sketches. They have proved to be an invaluable source of information about the court of Louis XIV. François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, was another great French memoirist. He devoted the last years of his life to his *Mémoires d'outretombe* (1849–50; "Memoirs from Beyond the Tomb"). In the 20th century, many distinguished statesmen and military men have described their experiences in memoirs. Notable reminiscences of World War II are the memoirs of England's Viscount Montgomery (1958) and Charles De Gaulle's *Mémoires de guerre* (1954–59; *War Memoirs*, 1955–60).

Features of a memoir

> ➢ A memoir relates a particular event or time to the life of the writer.

> ➢ In order to make the memoir interesting to the reader, the writer may use dramatic tension and this would alleviate boredom in the reader which would be the result if the writer were to use too much of introspection.

> ➢ A memoir makes the readers relate to the memoirist's emotions and situations written about.

> ➢ A memoir is an honest account of the events that happened in the life of the writer.

> ➢ A good memoir reflects the change in the physical, emotional and intellectual make-up of the writer.

5. Travelogue

A travelogue is a kind of travel writing in which the writer gives a truthful account of his/her experiences of travelling. It is usually in the form of a narrative told in the first person and in the past tense. The term

is variedly interpreted as a blend either of 'travel' and 'monologue' or of 'travel' and 'catalogue'. As it is supposed to be a true account, it describes what the writer has experience while travelling in locales foreign to him/her. It may also have descriptions of the thoughts and emotions felt by the traveller, his/her observations on the history, politics and culture of the place travelled in. A list of modern travelogues would include *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, The *Caliph's House: A Year in Casablanca* by Tahir Shah, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, *The Lost City of Z* by David Grann, *The Beach* by Alex Garland and *Vagabonding* by Rolf Potts. The British travel-writer and historian, William Dalrymple is a well-known writer in the genre of travel writing with a number of books on his travel in the Indian sub-continent.

Types of travelogues

A travelogue can take on many forms. It can be written as an essay, an article, a book, a diary, a journal, a blog, a lecture or a podcast. One might also write it as a letter about travel with pictures, slides or a video as accompaniments. It can be written as a report, too, in which case it is supported by images. Some travelogues are written by the travellers themselves while some are written by writers commissioned by the travellers to write.

Features of a travelogue

➢ A good travelogue makes the readers feel as if they were transported to the place the traveller describes.

➢ It goes beyond the description of the basic facts of the place visited and weaves in engaging stories that can capture the attention and imagination of the reader.

➢ Most travel books are written in the first person and the readers get a vicarious experience of the place and catches the views and opinions of the traveller.

➢ A person or place encountered comes alive in the travelogue through concrete details provided by the writer.

➢ The sense of awe, respect and wonderment that the traveller experienced would be reflected in the travelogue.

1.5 Let us sum up

In this Unit, we have discussed the nature and functions of prose, found out about the broad classification of prose writing as fictional and non-fictional, and catalogued the most common types of non-fictional prose writing. You would also have learnt to distinguish the features of these different genres.

1.6 Glossary

anecdote:	a short interesting story about a real person or event.
discourse:	the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning
Horace:	Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 BC), Roman lyric poet, satirist and literary critic
Lucan:	Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (39– 65 AD), Latin poet
maxim:	a few words that express a rule for good or sensible behaviour
preface:	an introduction to a book which explains what the book is about and/or why it was written
Terence:	Publius Terentius Afer (195-159 BC), Roman comic playwright
King Alfred:	Known as 'the Great", Alfred (849–99), was the king of Wessex (871–99)
King Edward:	Saint Edward, the Confessor (c.1005–66), king of England (1042–66)
Renaissance:	the term used by several Italian intellectuals of the late 14th and early 15th centuries to describe their own age as one in which learning, literature and the arts were reborn after the "dark" Middle Ages.
St Augustine:	Christian philosopher and theologian (354-430), best known for *The Confessions* and *The City of God*

1.7 Let us check your progress

1. What is the most basic difference between prose and verse?

2. How does prose rise to the level of poetry?

3. What did Milton call his prose writings?

4. How did the term prose evolve?

5. What is a prose poem?

6. Give three different definitions of prose.

7. Is there any limit on the length of a piece of prose? If your answer is "yes", what is the limit?

8. Who is considered the father of modern essay?

9. Compare the styles of Montaigne and Bacon.

10. What kind of essay did Addison and Steele popularize?

11. What style of writing is called aphoristic?

12. Why is the personal essay seen as autobiographical?

13. What are the salient features of a character sketch?

14. Why is Dryden considered to be the first literary critic in English?

15. Name the journals published by Addison and Steele.

16. What was the stated purpose of the essays of Addison and Steele?

17. How are literary essays classified according to form and style?

18. What types of source material may be used by a biographer?

19. How did the biography originate and develop?

20. What are the qualities of an ideal biography?

21. What problems does a biographer encounter?

22. Compare the biography and the autobiography.

23. How does the autobiography and literature interact?

24. What are the features of a memoir?

25. What different types of travelogues do you know about?

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UNIT - IV

Lesson 4.1 - Drama

Structure

4.1 Objectives

This Unit is intended to familiarize you with the genre of literary drama and its types. After learning this Unit, you will be able to distinguish between drama and other genres of literature and identify the features of the different kinds of drama.

4.2 Introduction

Drama is counted, along with poetry, as one of the oldest of literary forms. The word drama has come from Greek words that mean "to do" or "to act". Basically meant to be performed on the stage, it is a kind of literature which acts a story out through elements such as plot, characters, dialogue and action. This makes drama different from the other literary forms. This also makes drama dependent for its real existence on the theatrical conditions of the times. So when you study drama, it is necessary that you also learn about the study of theatre. Therefore, this Unit also includes sections on the theatre. At the same time, let us also appreciate the fact that drama need not always be performed on the stage of a theatre. Drama—individual pieces are often referred to as plays—can also be

created for such media as the cinema, radio or television. Drama can also be enjoyed being read, that is, their text can be read and enjoyed instead of being seen and heard in performance. So drama also goes by the name of dramatic literature. But the study of drama as dramatic literature brings with it a string of problems. All these problems stem from the perception that literature is something written and meant to be read and drama is something that is performed on the stage and is heard and seen. Be that as it may, a play can certainly be appreciated for its qualities as a piece of writing but the reader who remains to the volatility of the play as a whole will take away from it richer rewards.

4.3 Origin of Drama in the West

All historical evidences point to the fact that western drama originated in ancient Greece. This drama was closely connected to religious practices and ceremonies. The earliest Greek drama sprang from festivals held in honour of Dionysus, the Greeks' god of fertility, revelry, wine and ecstasy. In ancient Rome also, drama was part of religious ceremonies. English drama, which originated much later than the Greek and the Roman, also had its origins traced back to the church.

Of course, there was not anything akin to the modern theatre for the people of ancient cultures. But they might have started drama by acting out stories of hunting, fighting or natural phenomena. Their religious rituals should also have included elements of drama. Symbols and dramatic story-telling might have been used primarily to make sense of the mysteries of natural forces and lager to establish and maintain structures of power in society. It is said that the crowning of the Pharaoh in ancient Egypt was marked by a play that told of his divine birth.

As has been said above, western drama took its birth in ancient Greece where dramas were presented as early as the 5th century BCE at religious festivals two times a year. These festivals grew out of ceremonies to worship Dionysus. These festivals featured choruses of men dressed as satyrs (half-men and half-goats) who sang hymns in praise of Dionysus. In fact, the term "tragedy" which is used to typify a class of drama (see below in "Classification of Drama") seems to have evolved from the Greek *tragos* (goat) and *aeidein* (to sing). The Great Dionysian festival in Greece featured three contests: one in comedy, another in tragedy and the other in dithyramb (an elaborate choral poem sung by fifty singers). These festivals threw up some of the world's greatest dramatists like the tragedians

Aeschylus (525–456 BCE), Sophocles (496–406 BCE) and Euripides (480–406 BCE), and the comic playwrights Aristophanes (448? –385? BCE) and Menander (342–291 BCE).

4.4 Classification of Drama

Drama has traditionally been classified into two broad categories: tragedy and comedy. But during its evolution down the ages, the various types of drama transcended these two categories. But this categorisation still remains a strong influence when drama is classified.

Tragedy

A tragedy is a dramatic representation that depict serious actions that have a disastrous end for the protagonist—a person of noble birth or high rank. As has been pointed out earlier in this Unit, Greek tragedy is one of the earliest forms of drama in the West, as exemplified by the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In England, the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods saw some of the finest tragedies in English written by Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and John Webster.

Tragedy has been studied by numerous writers, critics and philosophers who were interested in it as an artistic form and in its themes. The characteristic features of the early Greek tragedies have been made familiar to us mainly through *Poetics* (335 BCE), written by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. He derived a theory of tragedy based on the tragedies that he saw of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and a few others. Aristotle defined tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in the medium of poetic language and in the manner of action rather than narrative, involving incidents that arouse the twin emotions of pity and fear, which would result in the *catharsis* of such emotions".

Aristotle's thoughts on the tragic hero are also significant. According to him, a tragic hero is not a person who is thoroughly good, nor is he thoroughly bad. He is, but, a mixture of both. In addition, this hero is better, or nobler, than ordinary people. That is to say, he is of higher than ordinary moral worth. But he suffers a change in fortune from happiness to misery. This happens because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his *hamartia*—error in judgment. The plight of the tragic hero moves us to pity because firstly, he is not an evil man and secondly, his misfortune is greater than what he deserves. The tragic hero moves us to

fear, because we realize that we too are susceptible to the kind of mistakes that he makes. According to Aristotle, the plot of a tragedy should develop through complication to a catastrophe. This is brought about by *peripeteia,* that is, a sudden reversal in his fortune from happiness to disaster. This is brought on by *anagnorisis*, that is, the discovery of some facts hitherto unknown to the hero.

According to Aristotle, the cathartic effect, which he calls "the pleasure of pity and fear" is the basic way to distinguish the tragic from comic or other forms.

The concept of tragedy as stated by Aristotle has changed drastically with the passage of time. In the modern times, the focus of a tragedy is not on the destiny of the high-born or the highly-placed but the fate of ordinary folk.

Comedy

This word is derived from the Greek *komos*, which means 'revel, or merrymaking') Like in the case of tragedy, the origin of comedy also can be traced to Greece, in the revelry associated with fertility rites and the worship of Dionysus. The definition of comedy, down the centuries, has also been in the lines set down by Aristotle. If tragedy dealt with personages of high estate, comedy deals with lowly types of people; if tragedy was concerned with matters of great public importance, then comedy in contrast is concerned with the private affairs of ordinary life. The action depicted is not serious or dangerous and the story ends happily for the protagonist. In place of tragic flaw, comedy pictures some defect or ugliness that is not serious or destructive. Again, like in the case of tragedy, the concept of comedy has undergone changes with the passage of time.

Classical Greek comedy can be seen to fall into three distinct periods: old, middle and new. Aristophanes belonged to the old period. The wide variety of comedies that he wrote combined fine lyric verse, dance, satire, buffoonery, social comment, fantastic plots and exceptional characters. Middle Comedy was noted for burlesque. The most important writer of this period was Antiphanes (408-334 BCE). The other great Greek writer of comedy was Menander who belonged to the period of New Comedy. This period saw the writing of plays which focused on the amorous intrigues of young lovers and did not bother with social issues. Menander was the most influential of the Greek comedy writers and had a great impact on Roman comedy writers like Plautus (254-184 BCE) and

Terence (195-159 BCE). These Roman writers, in their turn, influenced many English writers of the Middle Ages. The comedy began in England through the imitation of the classical style of the ancient Greek and Roman writers. By common consent, Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553) is the first English comedy.

4.5 Dramatic Design

This section looks at some technical aspects of the dramatic art which may be useful for understanding the different types of drama. Every dramatic narrative takes its form out of some conflict (which may be defined as an opposition between persons, ideas or interests). It is this conflict which would lead to the development of the plot, which may be structured into parts. Gustav Freytag (1816-1915), the German novelist and playwright borrowed heavily from Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and created the structure of a five-act plot. This is frequently referred to Freytag's Pyramid. According to this model, the narrative arc of a drama can be broken into five distinct sections, as shown below:
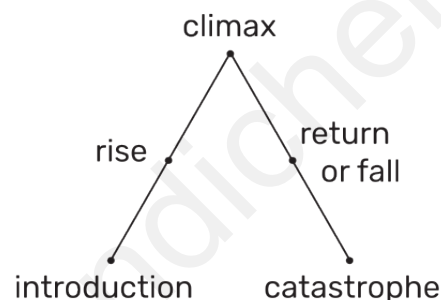
The five plot elements/sections can be explained as follows:

1. **Introduction**: Also known as exposition or Act I, the introduction sets up the setting, or time and location of the story, as well as the main characters, and the atmosphere of the story. Exposition also informs the reader or viewer about each character's backstory and how they relate to each other. The most important element of this first act is a suggestion of the story's primary conflict through an exciting or compelling event, which is also known as the exciting force or inciting incident. In Freytag's Pyramid, the exposition is the structure's lowest part on the left.

2. **Rise** or **Rising action**: The second part of the pyramid is labelled the "rising movement". Here the story builds toward its central conflict

by placing obstacles in the path of the protagonists as they attempt to reach their goals. The action rises further with the introduction of new characters—the primary antagonist and other adversaries who further complicate matters for the other characters. Rising action is the middle-left portion of the pyramid, just above exposition.

3. **Climax**: The third element in Freytag's Pyramid is that part of the story that signals a turning point and occupies the highest point on the plot structure. The climax foreshadows the fate of the main character and the series of events that will lead to their success (in a comedy) or downfall (in a tragedy). These series of events, which form the second half of the story are also known as the counterplay, and represent those external factors created by the main character's choices that impact them in the remainder of the story.

4. **Fall** or **Falling action**: Also known as the Return, the fourth element in Freytag's Pyramid foreshadows the final outcome of the story. The conflict between the protagonists and antagonists will soon reach a conclusion. In Freytag's Pyramid, falling action is an arc that is separate from the previous three acts. Freytag also notes that a successful drama will also feature a sense of "final suspense"—a possibility that the conclusion may not end as expected.

5. **Denouement**. The final part, the denouement, is also known as the resolution, conclusion, or moment of catastrophe. It is the end of the story. It is either a happy ending—in which the protagonist achieves their goal—or a tragic ending—in which they fail to overcome the primary conflict. Writers tie up loose ends in the denouement and provide audiences with a moment of *catharsis*. The lowest right side of the pyramid, just below the falling action arc, is the location of the denouement.

The conclusion in a good dramatic composition would be a natural outcome of the previous events. According to Aristotle, "the unravelling of the plot … must arise out of the plot itself; it must not be brought about be the *deus ex machina*"—a device used in Greek drama where a god was lowered onto the stage by a machine. This god would deliver the protagonist of his difficulties or help disentangle the plot. In modern times this device takes on any type of contrived ending, such as the death

of the antagonist in an accident, the appearance of a lost will or the return of a prodigal son or an absent twin.

Freytag's Pyramid Illustrated

Now let us try to understand how Freytag's Pyramid can be used to understand the structure of a play. We shall use the example of William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet as a copybook example.

1. **Introduction: The audience is introduced to the** Montagues and Capulets—the two families from Verona, Italy. They also learn of the long-drawn feud between the two families.

2. Rise: The star-crossed lovers meet and fall madly in love. Despite the protestations of friends and family, Romeo and Juliet marry, which pushes the action of the story toward its climax.

3. Climax: A pair of murders begins the unravelling of the lovers' bliss. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, kills Mercutio, a friend of Romeo's. In turn, Romeo kills Tybalt. The crimes force the pair to separate and hatch a desperate plan.

4. Fall: Juliet plans to fake her own death rather than agree to a marriage that her father has arranged; she drinks a potion that puts her into a death-like state. She also outlines her plan in a letter to Romeo.

5. Catastrophe: The letter fails to reach Romeo before he discovers Juliet's body. Believing her dead, he drinks poison. Juliet awakens to find Romeo dead, and grief-stricken, takes her own life with a dagger.

Freytag's Pyramid is certainly useful to analyse the structure of drama, especially the classical drama or the plays of Shakespeare. But modern drama often does not neatly fit into such neat patterns as you saw in the illustration above.

4.6 Types of Drama

This Section will introduce you to the different genres of drama, their features and examples. The emphasis will be on English drama but wherever it is important, we will discuss drama in other languages.

i)   Classical Greek Tragedy

Greek tragedy flourished during the fifth century BCE—the 'Golden Age' of Greek literature. The greatest names associated with drama during this time were those of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and *The Eumenides* (both 458 BCE), Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE), and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (429 BCE) are some of the best surviving Greek tragedies. The plays at this time were performed in huge amphitheatres. These might seat more than 15, 000 people. The enactment was done in a shallow 'speaking place' at the centre of the semi-circular theatre. Because the speaking place was shallow, there was not much scope for mass scenes. The dramatists had to keep such restrictions in mind when writing plays. These resulted in the kind of features which are peculiar to Greek tragedy.

Look at the picture of a Greek amphitheatre below, courtesy https://www.nationalsolutions.com/stories/epidaurus:
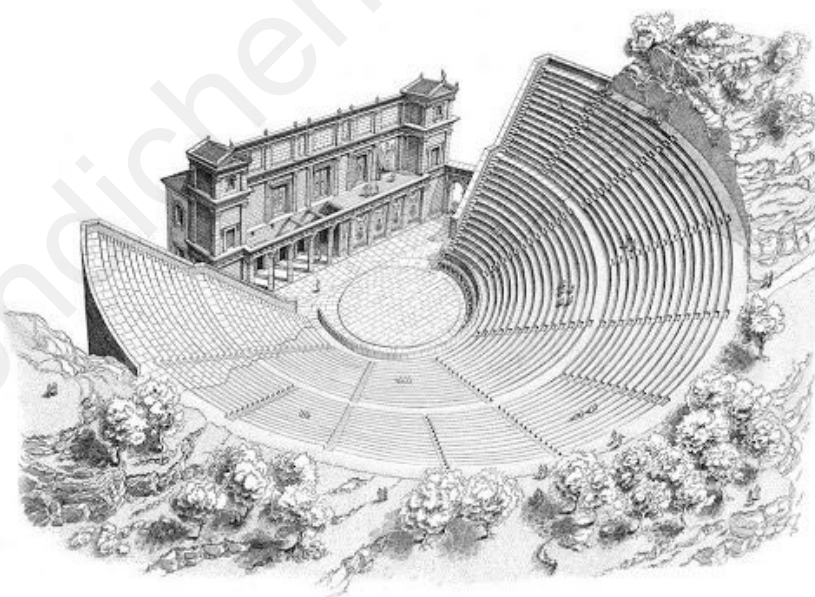
Features of a Greek tragedy

➢   The subject matter was limited by the religious angle of drama. Due to the vastness of the theatre, the audience would find it difficult to understand any unknown story. Therefore, the theme chosen was always familiar to the audience. So the dramatists chose stories from Greek mythology, which was known to all citizens. Thus the audience were able to easily follow the main storyline.

➢ The actors would not be visible to the huge audience. Therefore, the actors had to wear padded costumes, platform heels and large masks. These masks depicted the characters' states of mind. Of course, this helped the characters to be visible to the audience but the masks severely restricted the scope for making quick changes in the disposition of the characters. The costume cancelled out nuanced acting and prevented abrupt action. This led to the creation of stereotypes.

➢ Again, because of the distance between the actors and the audience, there were no rapid exchange of dialogue, low tones and changing inflections. Dialogue was rhetorical and non-conversational.

➢ There was not much scope for action, so all scenes that required action were narrated.

➢ The chorus was a unique feature of Greek tragedy. It consisted of a group of men, who wore masks, and sang and performed dance-like movements. They performed the role of commentators on the action and reflected the moral, social and religious attitudes of the age. The action of the drama was carried on from the beginning to the end in the presence of the chorus. They served as witnesses of the action.

➢ The dramatists followed the three unities—of time, place and action. The time represented in the play was limited to the two or three hours taken to enact the play, or at the most to a single day. The entire action took place in one location and the action was restricted to one plot.

➢ There was no scope for suspense in Greek tragedy because the story was already familiar to the audience. This was amply made up the presence of dramatic irony. This could be defined as the gap between the characters' ignorance of future events and the audience's knowledge of the same. (For a detailed discussion, see Unit 1.)

ii)   Senecan or Revenge Tragedy

The classical Roman writer Seneca, a first-century CE Stoic philosopher and dramatist, adapted tragedies from the Greek. The best-known among his plays are *Phaedra*, *Thyestes* and *Oedipus*. Seneca's plays are referred to as Senecan tragedies. They feature bloody revenge and supernatural elements. Senecan tragedy greatly

influenced Elizabethan tragedy in English and French neoclassical tragedy.

A revenge tragedy feature protagonist who concentrates on taking revenge upon those who wronged him. This type of tragedy was made very popular in English by Thomas Kyd (558-94). His *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) is the best example of the revenge tradition in English drama.

Features of a revenge tragedy

➤ The theme of these plays is usually revenge. The morally upright protagonist is pitted against cunning villains who have committed a crime which has gone unpunished.

➤ They often feature declamatory and emotionally-charged speeches. Soliloquies are also common.

➤ Murder, torture and other horrors are featured in these plays but most of the scenes of violence are not presented on the stage but are only narrated or depicted through a 'dumb show'.

➤ The rapid exchange of dialogue, a technique called 'stichomythia' is a common feature of this type of drama. Here is an example from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* III, iv:

Queen: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen: Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

➤ Real or pretended madness, murder, disguise and ghosts of murder victims are common elements.

Revenge tragedy had a strong influence on English drama. Nearly all the features mentioned above can be discerned in *Gorboduc* (1561), the first English tragedy written by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* were influenced by the Senecan revenge tradition, and so did Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* but Kyd deviated from Seneca in that he presented all the violence in the play on the stage rather than narrating them.

iii)   Neoclassical Tragedy

Italian and French dramatists of the sixteenth century modified the ancient Greek and the Senecan models and established a form of tragedy which differed from the classical tragedy in a few respects. This type of drama is termed Neoclassical tragedy.

Pierre Corneille's Medee (1635) and Le Cid (1636), and Jean Racine's Andromaque (1667) and Phedre (1677) are the best examples of neoclassical tragedy.

Features of a neoclassical tragedy

➢ Like the classicists, the neo-classicists also dealt with the great legends of the past. The chief characters belonged to an elevated background and were far above ordinary human beings.

➢ Romantic love between the hero and the heroine is a prominent feature. This is a significant departure from the ancient Greek and Roman drama because the classical writers believed that the introduction of romantic love would harm the dignity of the hero and the high seriousness of the narrative.

➢ The chorus was dropped from the neoclassical drama because the writers were convinced that it was an awkward and clumsy device. In the place of the chorus they introduced the concept of the confidant. The confidant had little or no role in the of action of the play except listening to the confessions of the protagonists and offering sympathy.

➢ The language is used is elevated and poetic.

➢ There was no attempt to reflect daily life in neoclassical plays.

iv)   Romantic Tragedy

An independent type of drama, free from the influence of Seneca and the neoclassicists, began to develop in England. This is known as romantic drama. The tragic genre of this drama is called romantic tragedy. Shakespeare's great tragedies like Macbeth and King Lear are examples of romantic tragedy,

Features of a romantic tragedy

➢ Like in neoclassical tragedy, the protagonists of romantic tragedy are men of high birth or rank. But these men are shown to interact with and move in the midst of common characters of lower social rank.

➢ The dialogue is predominantly poetical. But it sometimes lapses into the colloquial and the familiar. Thus this type of tragedy combines the idealistic and the realistic.

➢ The unities of time and place were completely neglected. The unity of action was so interpreted that the action contained a main plot and one or more sub-plots. The unity of action here consisted in the clever interweaving of all the plots.

➢ A lot of violence and movement is shown on the stage in Elizabethan tragedy. That is, romantic drama is a drama of action whereas neoclassical drama is a drama of narration.

➢ In order to relieve the intensity of the tragic scenes and to provide a sharp ironical contrast, humorous scenes are included.

➢ The inclusion of romantic love, a practice started in neoclassical tragedy, is continued in romantic tragedy.

v)   Romantic Comedy

This genre is made up of light-hearted plays that deal with the follies of young lovers or the misunderstandings between them. Shakespeare's name is closely associated with the romantic comedy. His *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are well-known examples of this form.

Features of a romantic comedy

➢ Young lovers who are kept apart by some obstacles is the commonly featured theme. These obstacles may be brought about by parents and guardians, or could be the result of peculiar circumstances.

➢ The love affair goes through quite a rough course yet the lovers eventually overcome all obstacles and the play ends happily, usually in one or more weddings.

➢ Stock characters are regularly featured. These include the drunk, the witty fool, the beautiful heroine and the clever servant.

➢ Sometimes the action shifts from the familiar world to an unfamiliar location or to a forest. This location would be far way from the problem-ridden civilised world. For example, in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the action shifts to a forest outside Athens, in As You Like It, there is a location shift to the forest of Arden and in *Twelfth Night* there is a shift to Illyria.

➢ The heroine is beautiful, witty and resourceful. Circumstances sometimes force her to disguise herself as a man. Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night* put on this kind of disguise.

➢ Cross-dressing, as explained before, and mistaken identities are common elements of the plot. These plays also abound in wordplay, puns and bawdy jokes.

vi)   Tragicomedy

This is a kind of play in which tragic and comic elements are harmoniously mingled together. This form is distinct from tragedy that has comic scenes, and from comedies that have tragic episodes. Tragicomedy is an entirely different genre with its own set of features.

Features of a tragicomedy

➢ Plot elements, character types and subject matter of tragedy and comedy are blended together. Such a blend provides the audience with both a comic and a tragic view of life.

➢ The protagonist is usually under the threat of some impending disaster, but this danger is averted all of a sudden and the play ends happily.

➢ Upper-class and lower-class characters mingle together—a feature strictly avoided by purists of classical forms.

➢ The characters often undergo some form of transformation before the play comes to a close.

Notable examples of tragicomedy are William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale*, and Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *Philaster*.

vii)   Chronicle Plays

Also called history plays, this type of plays deal with historical facts rather than with legends, myths of fictitious events. In England, there was a great deal of revisiting of history by dramatists in the wake of heightened nationalistic feelings after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. A major source for these dramatists was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England* (1577). Examples of history plays include Marlowe's *Edward II* (1593), and Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1591) and *Henry V* (1599).

Features of a chronicle play

➢ The life of a king or a national hero is the subject of the play.

➢ The major characters in the main plot will be real historical persons. Minor characters in the subplot may be fictional characters or composites of various historical characters.

➢ Minor episodes are inventions by the dramatists for dramatic or thematic purposes. However, usually the dramatists stick to history when it comes to important events. Sometimes historical events are telescoped to suit the narrative.

➢ Ambition, responsibility, succession to the throne, power and morality, and civil war are common themes and storylines.

viii)   Masque

Having originated in Italy, the masque was a form of courtly dramatic entertainment that flourished in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was very popular during the Stuart period.

Features of a masque

➢ Masques had slight plots, usually taken from mythology

➢ Poetry, music, song and dance were combined in a masque

➢ Masques try to convey a moral message

➢ Ladies and gentlemen of the court who wore elaborate masks made up the characters

➢ Each play was spectacular with costly stage décor and extravagant costumes

➢ Masques were presented as part of banquets or as part of celebrations like weddings, a coronation or on birthdays and were performed in courts or at the mansions of aristocrats

➢ The masques came to an end with the characters removing their masks and dancing with partners from the audience.

The best surviving masque in English is Milton's Comus (1634).

ix)   Antimasque

An allegory in song and dance involving fantastic and comic characters, an antimasque sometimes preceded the presentation of a masque. The antimasque presented an episode of buffoonery

or a grotesque dance performed by professional actors. It served as a contrast to the masque and was often farcical. This would be followed by the masque proper which depicted the triumph of good over evil and the restoration of order and harmony.

x) Comedy of Humours

This dramatic genre is most closely associated with the English playwright Ben Jonson (1572-1637) from the late 16th century. The term derives from the Latin word *humor* (or, *umor*), meaning "liquid," and its use in the medieval and Renaissance medical theory. According to this theory, the human body held a balance of four liquids, or humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler), and black bile (melancholy). When these humours were properly balanced, it was thought, the individual would have a healthy mind in a healthy body. An imbalance of any one or the other fluids would produce a distinct kind of disposition. An out-of-proportion presence would make a person sanguine—kindly, joyful and amorous; yellow bile would make one choleric—impatient and short-tempered; disproportionate black bile would make one melancholic—brooding, affected and satiric and phlegm would make on phlegmatic—cowardly, obstinate and vengeful. Jonson explains in his play *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) that the system of humours controlling the body may be applied to a person's inherent qualities of mind and character. A peculiar quality may possess a person in such a manner as to make him or her act in one way. Jonson's characters usually represent one humour and, thus they are unbalanced; they are basically caricatures. Jonson distinguished two kinds of humour: one was true humour, in which one peculiar quality actually possessed a man, body and soul; the other was an adopted humour, or mannerism, in which a man went out of his way to appear peculiar by affecting certain fashions of clothing, speech and social habits. Jonson's *Every Man In of His Humour* (1598) and *Volpone* (1606) are other well-known examples of the plays of this genre.

Features of a comedy of humours

➢ The major characters are depicted as having a predominant humour and therefore they appear as distorted and eccentric.

> The very names of these characters reveal their typical nature—for example, Wellbred. Knowall and Brainworm.

> The comedy of humours influenced the later Restoration comedy of manners.

xi)   Heroic Tragedy

The heroic tragedy is also known as heroic play, or heroic drama. It was a type of play prevalent in Restoration England during the 1660s and 1670s. This type of tragedy was modelled after French Neoclassical tragedy of Corneille. It was written in rhyming pentameter couplets. These plays featured characters of almost superhuman stature. The predominant themes of such plays were exalted ideals of love, honour, and courage. The heroic play was based on the traditional epic and romance. The most popular writer of heroic plays in England was John Dryden. His *Conquest of Granada*, in two parts (1670, 1671), had all the requisite elements of heroic drama—poetry, battle, courage, death, and murder. But it was Sir William Davenant (1606-68) who helped this form of drama to establish itself in England. Dryden's *All for Love* (1677) is the best example of this type of drama but, it must be noted that he did not use the heroic couplet form in it. The conventions of the heroic play generally and Dryden particularly were satirized by George Villiers, 2nd duke of Buckingham, in *The Rehearsal* (first performed 1671). Dryden continued to use the form through the mid-1670s, but the heroic play eventually died out as a genre by the end of the decade. The term heroic play has also been applied to plays with all the attributes given above, but which are written in blank verse.

Features of a heroic tragedy

> The subject of the play is the conflict between love and honour/ duty. The events depicted in the play had ramifications to the entire nation. Thus the theme had epic or heroic magnitude.

> The play is usually set in exotic, faraway lands—Mexico, India, etc.

> The hero of a heroic play is a man of great strength or moral character. The heroine is endowed with unmatched beauty and unattainable virtues. The hero and heroine are caught in such situations as would force them to choose between their passionate love and their duty towards their family or country.

> The language used is declamatory, bombastic and artificial.

> These plays are usually written in closed rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines. It is because of its association with heroic tragedy that this verse form came to be called heroic verse or heroic couplet.

xii)   Comedy of Manners

The comedy of manners is a witty, cerebral form of dramatic comedy. It depicts and often satirizes the manners and affectations of a contemporary society. This type of drama is concerned with social usage and it deals with the question of whether characters meet certain social standards or not. The governing social standard usually is morally trivial but exacting. This kind of comedy most frequently concerns itself with an illicit love affair or some such similarly scandalous matter. The plot of the play is usually subordinate to the play's brittle atmosphere, witty dialogue, and pungent commentary on human foibles.

Sophisticated authors wrote the comedy of manners usually for members of their own coterie or social class. This kind of drama thrived in periods and societies where there was a combination of material prosperity and moral latitude. A suitable illustration would be the ancient Greece during the time of Menander (c. 342– c. 292 BC). A forerunner of the comedy of manners, called the New Comedy, was inaugurated by Menander. His smooth style, elaborate plots, and stock characters were imitated by the Roman poets Plautus (c. 254–184 BC) and Terence (186/185–159 BC). During the Renaissance, the comedies of these writers were widely known and copied. In France, Molière was one of the greatest exponents of the comedy of manners. The hypocrisy and pretension of 17th-century French society was satirized by him in plays like *L'École des femmes* (1662; *The School for Wives*) and *Le Misanthrope* (1666; *The Misanthrope*).

In England, the comedy of manners had a great time during the Restoration period. It was, of course, influenced by Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. But the Restoration comedy of manners was lighter, defter, and more vivacious in tone than the comedy of humours. The writers of the comedy of manners declared themselves against affected wit and acquired follies. They satirized these qualities in caricature characters who were given label-like names such as Sir Fopling Flutter (in Sir George Etherege's *Man of Mode*,

1676) and Tattle (in William Congreve's *The Old Batchelour*, 1693). The masterpieces of the genre can be found in the witty, cynical, and epigrammatic plays of William Wycherley (*The Country-Wife*, 1675) and William Congreve (*The Way of the World*, 1700). This form was revived in the late 18th century by Oliver Goldsmith (*She Stoops to Conquer*, 1773) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (*The Rivals*, 1775; *The School for Scandal*, 1777).

The Anglo-Irish playwright Oscar Wilde continued the tradition of elaborate, artificial plotting and epigrammatic dialogue in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). In the 20th century, the comedy of manners reappeared in the witty, sophisticated drawing-room plays of the British dramatists Noël Coward and Somerset Maugham, and the American writers Philip Barry and S.N. Behrman.

Noël Coward and Gertrude Lawrence in a performance of Coward's *Private Lives* (1930). Courtesy *Moviestore/REX/Shutterstock.com*

Features of a comedy of manners

➢ The theme of a comedy of manners would be the relations and intrigues of upper middle-class ladies and gentlemen.

➢ The play would be full of sparkling wit and repartee.

➢ Usually, the characters are stock types such as charming rakes, jealous husbands, flirtatious women and foppish dandies.

➢ There was a lot of obscenity and licentiousness because these plays reflected the immoral behaviour of the rich.

➢ The plots are elaborate and artificial.

➢ The scenes are loosely constructed.

> There will be a bedroom scene, with one or more characters hiding behind screens or curtains to eavesdrop on other characters.

xiii)   Genteel Comedy

This term referred to a subgenre of the comedy of manners which developed in the middle of the eighteenth century and which reflected the behaviour of the British upper class. It was different from the comedy of manners in that it was somewhat more artificial and sentimental than the latter. The term genteel comedy was made popular by the English playwright and essayist Joseph Addison (1672-1719). He used the term to describe the comedies that portray the most artificial style of eighteenth-century drama, the best example of which is Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* (1704).

Features of genteel comedy

> They faithfully reproduce the affectations of the upper class who lived during and after the reign of Queen Anne.

> The moral tone in genteel comedy is higher than that in the comedy of manners. Most of the "indecencies" of the latter are absent in this kind of play.

> It is characterised by artificiality and sentimentality.

> The brilliant wit of the comedy of manners is missing in genteel comedy. The laughter is provoked here by the affectations of an artificial society, and not of verbal fencing as in the brilliant repartee of the earlier type of comedy.

xiv)   Sentimental Comedy

Sentimental comedy denotes an 18th century dramatic genre in which middle-class protagonists triumphantly overcome a series of moral trials. This comedy aimed at producing tears rather than laughter. Plays that belong to this genre reflected contemporary philosophical conceptions of humans as inherently good but capable of being led astray through bad example. These plays tried to drive home the point that by an appeal to his noble sentiments a man could be reformed and set back on the path of virtue. These plays contained characters whose natures seemed overly virtuous, and

whose trials were too easily resolved. However, audiences accepted these plays as truthful representations of the human predicament.

Sentimental comedy had its roots in early 18th century tragedy. This tragedy had a vein of morality similar to that of sentimental comedy but it had loftier characters and subject matter than sentimental comedy. Colley Cibber and George Farquhar, with their respective plays *Love's Last Shift* (1696) and *The Constant Couple* (1699) are well-known writers of sentimental comedy. But the best-known sentimental comedy is Sir Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). This play deals with the trials and tribulations of its penniless heroine Indiana. The necessary happy resolution in the play is brought about by the discovery that she is an heiress. Steele, in describing the effect he wished the play to have, said he would like to arouse "a pleasure too exquisite for laughter."

Sentimental comedies continued to coexist with such conventional comedies as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775). But the sentimental genre waned in the early 19th century.

Features of sentimental comedy

➤ At first sight, sentimental comedy looks opposed to the spirit of true comedy because they present a bleak view of life. This type of comedy has little humour and the characters are presented to us as suffering throughout the play. Still, it is called a comedy for the contrived happy ending it has.

➤ This type of play is very didactic and it relies too much on the concept of poetic justice.

➤ The virtues of private life are foregrounded in this comedy while the vices are not given much space.

➤ The sentimental comedy features an extremely good-natured and magnanimous hero, while the heroine is virtuous but pitiable and the servants are honest and faithful.

➤ The audience are moved to sympathy by the portrayal of the distresses of the middle class.

➤ These comedies lack wit and brilliance.

> ➢ The end of this drama appears as if it wants to impart a moral, which was not the case with the comedy of manners which can best be called amoral.

xv)   Domestic Tragedy

This is a type of drama which features ordinary middle-class or lower-class protagonists. This is in contrast to classical and neoclassical tragedy whose protagonists were royals or aristocrats and whose downfall is not just a personal matter but is a serious event concerning the state. Three anonymous late-Elizabethan plays—*Arden of Feversham* (c. 1591), *A Warning for Faire Women* (1599), and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (c. 1606) are the earliest known examples of domestic tragedy. While the first play is the story of the murder of Mr. Arden by his wife and her lover, and their subsequent execution; the second deals with the murder of a merchant by his wife; and the last is about a father who destroys his family. Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse* (1607) can also be added to this list.

However, this genre of drama did not become popular until George Lillo reintroduced it in the 18th century. Lillo wrote *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* (1731). This is a sordid drama of an apprentice who murders his uncle-guardian. The play became very popular and it influenced domestic tragedy in France and Germany. G.E. Lessing paved the way for its critical acceptance in Germany though his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767–69). Another important play is *Maria Magdalena* (1844) by the German writer Christian Friedrich Hebbel. Domestic tragedy found its mature expression towards the end of the 19th century in the plays of Henrik Ibsen. In the hands of other playwrights who wrote domestic tragedies earlier, the protagonists were sometimes villains and at other times merely pathetic. But in Ibsen's plays *Rosmersholm* (1886), *The Master Builder* (1892), and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) the bourgeois heroes are endowed with a little of the grandeur of the heroes of classical tragedy. the German dramatist Georg Büchner wrote a tragedy on a humbler social level than that of the middle class. This was *Woyzeck* which was written as early as 1836. The hero of this play is a poor soldier and former serf, who is so reduced in status that he finds employment as a doctor's

guinea pig. This play was in advance of its time in the sense that lower class tragedy came to the fore only during the turn of the 20th century with such works as Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber* (1892; *The Weavers*) and *Rose Bernd* (1903). Other outstanding examples are Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934).

Features of a domestic tragedy

➢ The play is serious and is usually realistic in style.

➢ The subject matter is taken from the concerns of middle or lower class of society. Their personal or domestic matters are the stuff around which the action is constructed. Obviously, matters of state or national importance are not the theme of such plays.

➢ The audience will be able to easily identify with the protagonists because the characters are also common people like those in the audience.

➢ The plight of the characters arouses pity and sympathy. This type of drama has no pretension to arouse the sublime effects a grand tragedy is supposed to arouse.

➢ The earliest domestic tragedies were written in verse but from the eighteenth-century onwards they were written in prose.

xvi)   Closet Drama

This type of drama is one which is suited or intended primarily to be read rather than being staged. Notable examples of this genre include John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671), P.B. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound (1820) and Thomas Hardy's The Dynasts (three parts, 1903-08). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust, Part I (1808) and Faust, Part II (1832), although closet dramas originally are now theatre productions. The Victorian Age saw the writing of many closet plays.

Features of closet drama

➢ Closet drama became very popular among writers in Western Europe in the 1800s mainly because of the decline in the popularity of verse tragedy among the audience in the 19th century. With theatre-goers becoming more interested in melodrama and comedy, production of verse drama became commercially unprofitable. Writers had

then to be satisfied with reaching their plays to readers rather than the audience.

➢ Primarily designed to be read, these plays do not factor in matters like stage technique.

➢ Closet drama does not contain much action; instead, they have long philosophical passages.

➢ Inspired by classical models, this type of drama was often written in verse.

xvii) Farce

Farce is a comic piece of drama that has highly improbable situations, stereotyped characters, extravagant exaggeration, and violent horseplay. It is generally regarded as low comedy—intellectually and aesthetically inferior to regular comedy because of its crude characterizations and implausible plots. However, it has been popular and hence been a persistent presence throughout the Western world. Burlesque, clowning and buffoonery have been associated with it and it has no other purpose than entertaining its audience by depicting folly in a good-natured manner. It does not aim at correcting or criticizing society, as satire would purpose to.

The origins of farce can be traced to ancient Greek and Roman theatre, in the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus. It owes a lot to the popular native Italian *fabula Atellana*, that were entertainments which featured stock character types—such as glutton, graybeard, and clown—who were caught in exaggerated situations. The Latin term *farsa* (from *farcire*, meaning "to stuff") was initially used for passages of medieval French that were inserted in the Latin text of the Mass. It was later used to refer to insertions to religious plays in England. It was from this that the term was used with the modern sense. 15th-century France used it to describe the elements of clowning, acrobatics, caricature, and indecency found together within a single form of entertainment. Such pieces were "stuffed" into the texts of religious plays. Later such works were written independently. The most amusing extant text of this type is *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* (c. 1470). French farce spread quickly throughout Europe. The interludes of John Heywood are a notable example of this kind written in 16th-century England. Shakespeare and Molière used elements of farce in their comedies. There are strong elements

of farce used in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597). Christopher Marlowe used farce for comic relief in the tragedy *Doctor Faustus* (1592). Farce continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries in France. It also surfaced in music hall, vaudeville, and boulevard entertainments. Farce survived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in plays like Brandon Thomas's *Charley's Aunt* (1892). This play remains the best example of farce in English. The form found new expression in film comedies such as those of Charlie Chaplin, the Keystone Kops and the Marx Brothers. When presented at the Aldwych Theatre, London between the world wars, farces were enormously popular, and numerous successful television comedy shows attest to the durability of the form.

Features of a farce

➢ It is lowbrow comedy.

➢ Physical action and slapstick are the staple of farce.

➢ The characters are not true to life but are exaggerated types.

➢ Absurd situations, and improbable and nonsensical actions fill the space of a farce.

➢ There are several surprises and disclosures.

➢ Plot and situation are more important than character and dialogue.

➢ The plot is characterised by complexity and intricacy.

xviii) Melodrama

If farce can be understood as exaggerated comedy, then melodrama can certainly be called exaggerated tragedy. The term melodrama refers, in music, to lines spoken to a musical accompaniment; and, in theatre, it refers to a kind of drama with an improbable plot. This kind of drama presents the changes of fortune suffered by protagonists who are virtuous at the hands of villainous characters. But the play ends happily with virtue presented as triumphant. A melodrama features stock characters—like a noble hero, a long-suffering heroine, a cold-blooded villain and the like. Unlike in a regular tragedy, melodrama does not focus on character development; instead, it focuses on sensational incidents and spectacular staging.

Well-known examples of melodrama include Douglas Jerrold's *Black-Ey'd Susan* (1829), Edward Fitzball's *The Red Rover* (1829), *Maria Marten* (c.1830) *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1842) and Dion Boucicault's *The Streets of London* (1864).

The word "melodrama" in Greek 'song-drama' and was originally applied in the European theatre to scenes of mime or spoken dialogue accompanied by music. Generally regarded as having developed in France in the 18th century, it was a popular form of sensational drama that flourished in the 19th century. It survives today in different forms in modern cinema and television. It was introduced in England by Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* (1802), the translation of a French play. The genre was not really new to England. Theatres had already produced drama which combined music, singing and dancing due to restrictions in place from 1737. And, in early 19th-century London, many theatres were permitted to produce only musical entertainments. These theatres staged simplified plays, some of which were adapted from Gothic novels. It is from these simplified plays that the modern sense of melodrama derives: an emotionally exaggerated conflict of pure virtue or maidenhood and scheming villainy in a plot full of suspense. Subsequently, music and singing were gradually eliminated in the 19th century itself. As technical developments in the theatre made greater realism possible, more emphasis was given to the spectacular—*e.g.,* snowstorms, shipwrecks, battles, train wrecks, conflagrations, earthquakes, and horse races. With the growing sophistication of the theatre in the early 20th century, the theatrical melodrama declined in popularity. The melodrama died out in the 20th century as a dramatic form for two main reasons. Firstly, there was a dramatic reaction in Europe and America against bourgeois art-forms. Secondly came the rise of cinema, which offered a similar form of entertainment for considerably less cost. Still the melodrama remained indeed a vigorous form in motion picture and adventure serials until the advent of sound. The exaggerated gestures, dramatic chases, emotional scenes, simple flat characters, and impossible situations of melodrama were later revived and parodied. A good part of contemporary television drama is made up of melodrama. In modern times, the term denotes a dramatic piece characterized by sensational incident and violent

appeals to the emotions, but with a happy ending. The term is now used to describe anything that is sensational, sentimental and wildly unrealistic—like some soap operas or genre fiction (crime fiction, romances, horror stories, pulp fiction…).

Features of a melodrama

➢ It features sensational themes and its plots are full of intrigue.

➢ The characters are flat—perfect heroes, virtuous maidens, dastardly villains.

➢ The action is violent and bloody: drowning, abduction, murder and so on.

➢ Melodrama uses overwrought language, heightened emotion and exaggerated gestures.

➢ The protagonists suffer at the hands of antagonists but they triumph in the end, chiefly because of their virtue, endurance or luck.

➢ Many works of melodrama are adaptations of novels.

xix)   Cup-and-saucer Drama

This slightly pejorative term was used for the plays of Thomas William Robertson produced between 1865 and 1870 and those of his imitators. This was a kind of drama which was popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. It focused on realistic, domestic actions of the upper class. The realism that these plays employed is said to have set the standard for the revival of serious drama. The action of such drama was often set in the drawing room of a house and the script included the serving of tea. It is this that gave this type of play the name cup-and-saucer drama. Notable examples of this drama are Robertson's *Society* (1865), *Ours* (1866) and *Caste* (1867).

Features of cup-and-saucer drama

➢ These plays tackle serious contemporary issues such as class and social prejudices.

➢ They employ a naturalistic presentation and stage settings and props are highly realistic.

➢ The characters act as ordinary people in real-life situations, and there are no exaggerated and declamatory speeches.

xx)   Problem Play

The term problem play denotes drama that portrays a specific social dilemma or problem, and probably offers a solution. This genre is also called discussion play, thesis play, or comedy of ideas. It is thought to have begun in France in the 19th century in which a number of plays were written by Alexandre Dumas, *fils* and **Eugène** Brieux. In Norway, Henrik Ibsen perfected this genre and he has been a major influence of it. His *The Doll's House* (1879), which highlights the lack of social opportunities for women, is considered to be an outstanding specimen of this form of drama. In England, George Bernard Shaw became inspired by Ibsen and wrote many problem plays, for example, *Widowers' Houses* (1892), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) and *Major Barbara* (1905). John Galsworthy made notable contributions to this genre in *The Silver Box* (1907), *Strife* (1909) and *Justice* (1910). Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958), *Roots* (1959) and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1960) are akin to thesis plays. Other notable problem plays include Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1882) and Harley Granville-Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905).

The discussion play is in fact a sub-species of the problem play. This form is constructed more like a debate in which the characters put forth different points of view. Shaw's *Getting Married*, *The Apple Cart* and the third Act of *Man and Superman* exemplify this form of drama.

Features of a problem play

➤ Contemporary social issues are dealt with in this type of play.

➤ The dramatist uses the theatre as a forum for moral, social and political discussion with an aim to sensitise the audience to the issues discussed.

➤ Conflicting points of view are represented by the characters.

➤ One or more of such characters will be used to represent the dramatist's own point of view.

➤ The plays are realistic in presentation.

xxi)   Well-made play

This term is used to refer to a type of play which dominated European and American theatre during most of the nineteenth century and is constructed strictly according to certain technical principles. This type of drama extended its influence on theatre well into the twentieth century. It was the French playwright Eugène Scribe who developed the technical formula of this kind of drama. It included complex and highly artificial plotting, a build-up of suspense, all problems are resolved in the climactic scene and the ending would be happy. Such plays frequently featured conventional romantic conflicts (for example, a pretty girl faces the problem of choosing between an honest but poor young man and an unscrupulous but wealthy suitor). There would be misunderstandings, mistaken identities, loss or stealing of documents, secret information (like, the poor honest young man is in reality of noble birth) and such contrivances all of which could contributed to the suspense. Later playwrights like Émile Zola and George Bernard Shaw denounced this genre and the term well-made was used in a derogatory way to this play. Still Scribe and his successor Victorien Sardou remained popular during their time. Curiously. Shaw himself used some of the conventions of the well-made play in his plays. Henrik Ibsen and Oscar Wilde also used the techniques of this genre in some of their plays. Wilkie Collins, another practitioner of the well-made play, succinctly summed up the formula of the genre thus: "Make 'em laugh; make 'em weep; make 'em wait." Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Pinero improved upon characterizations and emotional tension and successfully used them in their plays. Pinero elevated the technique to the level of art in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893). Émile Augier and Alexandre Dumas, *fils* used the techniques of the genre for serious purposes in their plays which dealt with social issues like prostitution and the emancipation of women and thus became the precursors of the problem play (see section on Problem Play). The works of Lillian Hellman and Terence Rattigan also draw on the principles of the well-made play.

Features of a well-made play

➢ The plot of a well-made play is tightly constructed. A substantial part of the story has already taken place before the start of the action of the play. This part of the story is told through the exposition. What

is shown on stage is a series of complications that are the natural result of what has already happened and narrated in the backstory.

➢ The climax is usually placed as close to the end as possible.

➢ The plot usually revolves around a secret that the audience is told but most of the characters remain ignorant of it.

➢ Suffering protagonists, romantic conflicts, suspense arising out of misunderstandings between characters, mistaken identities and secret information are staple of a well-made play.

➢ Important papers or letters are shown to fall into the wrong hands. The twist in the plot is also brought about by such papers or letters.

➢ A reversal of fortune is brought about by revealing secrets hitherto unknown.

xxii)   Expressionist Drama

Expressionism is a term that refers not only to a 20th-century artistic movement, but also to a wider cultural preference for expression over form. This entailed deeper psychological expression through imagery, diction, syntax and other linguistic features. It involved the expression of inner experiences through rendering reality in a distorted manner. In literature it is particularly associated with the Swedish dramatist August Strindberg (1849-1912). His *A Dream Play* (1901), *To Damascus* (1898-1904) and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907) pioneered this genre. Time and space shift freely in these plays, and characters multiply and merge. Objects change their appearances frequently. His dramatic forms and stage techniques were incorporated into modernist thinking. Expressionist drama began in Germany and spread across Europe, and later to the USA. This genre found full expression in German plays like Oskar Kokoschka's *Murderer, the Hope of Women* (1909) and Walter Hasenclever's *The Son* (1914), and in the American plays of Eugene O'Neill (*The Hairy Ape*, 1922) and Elmer Rice (*The Adding Machine*, 1923).

Features of expressionist drama

➢ Expressionist drama is presented in a non-realistic manner.

➢ These plays feature characters who are one-sided and represent a single idea or attitude.

> The characters are placed in situations in which the objects of the outer world are distorted in order to reflect the tortured minds of the characters or the dramatist.

> This drama made use of distorted sets, lighting and costumes to portray disturbed psyches.

> The speeches in these plays are short and jerky, and the movements are machine-like.

xxiii) Epic Theatre

Evolved from the German term *epiches Theater*, this term denotes a kind of didactic drama in which a series of loosely connected scenes are presented in such a way that it avoids illusion. It is also characterised by the practice of interrupting the storyline in order to address the audience directly, presenting to them analysis, argument, documentation and so on. This type of theatre originated in Germany in the 1920s, founded by Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) and popularised by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), with whose dramatic theory and praxis the term is now most associated with. Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) are examples of this kind of drama. Brecht called his theatre epic to mark the distinction of his writing from the traditional theatre, which he called dramatic. He, later, used the term dialectical theatre for the kind of plays he produced.

Features of epic theatre

> It was a platform to express political ideas and ideals.

> It was a reaction against contemporary forms of theatre like the well-made play, the melodrama, surrealistic theatre and the Theatre of Cruelty.

> It spoke also against the practice of the Russian actor and director Constantin Stanislavsky who, through realistic and naturalistic portrayal of life, persuaded the audience to imagine that what they saw on the stage was real.

> The epic theatre ensured that the audience would always be conscious: they would know at all times that they were watching a play and could reflect on what they were watching.

> To achieve this end, Brecht used the technique of 'distancing' or 'alienating'. These effects would make the audience think objectively

about the play. They would also reflect on the arguments of the play, understand it and draw conclusions.

➤ The audience would thus be detached from the action of the play and would not empathise with the characters. For this purpose, Brecht would flood the theatre with bright lights, make the characters address the audience directly and moving the sets in full view of the audience.

➤ A chorus-like narrator, slide projection, music and placards were also used.

xxiv) Theatre of Cruelty

This term is the name of the project of an experimental theatre proposed by the French poet, actor, and theorist Antonin Artaud (1896-1948). It became a major influence on avant-garde 20th-century theatre. This project is founded on the premise that a play should shock the audience in order to release subconscious and hidden truths. The shock would be administered through gesture, image, sound and lighting. Artaud produced using his theory an adaptation of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Cenci* in 1935. The German playwright Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* (1963) remains an important example of this theatre. The principles of Theatre of Cruelty have been influential in the burgeoning of the 'happening', which is defined as action(s) affecting the senses. It does not require a stage and could be enacted almost anywhere and allows the audience to participate in the action.

Features of theatre of cruelty

➤ Theatre of Cruelty did away with such theatre-essentials as the stage, sets and property.

➤ Instead of being rooted on the stage, the actors performed all around an audience.

➤ It used vivid lighting effects, mime and sensational—even horrific—action in order to shock the audience.

➤ It influenced the avant-garde plays of the French writer Jean Genet (1910-86), the Polish director Jerzy Grotowsky (1933-99) and the English director Peter Brook (1925-2022).

xxv)   Absurd Drama

Albert Camus, the Existentialist philosopher, argued in an essay titled "The Myth of Sisyphus" that the human situation is entirely absurd and without any purpose. The human being is an isolated creature existing in a world that has no inherent value or meaning. The human condition is such that it is full of angst. The drama created by such European and American dramatists of the 1950s and '60s who agreed with Camus' postulate of the human condition is termed Absurd. Indeed, there was no formal Absurdist movement as such, but writers like Samuel Beckett (1906-89), Eugene Ionesco (1909-94), Jean Genet (1910-86), Arthur Adamov (1908-70) and Harold Pinter (1930-2008), among many other dramatists, shared the pessimistic view that humanity is engaged in a futile struggle to find a purpose to life and to take control of life but is left hopeless, bewildered and anxious. These ideas characterise the theme and structure of the theatre of the absurd—a term coined by the English critic Martin Esslin in the essay "Theatre of the Absurd' (1960).

The plays that belong to this theatre reject the traditional elements of drama such as a linear plot, realistic dialogue and a recognisable setting. Esslin remarked that this drama expected the viewer to draw their own conclusions and make their own errors. There is nothing akin to dramatic action and the characters may perform frantically but their exercise only serves to iterate the fact that nothing happens which can change their existence. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), for instance, the plot is eliminated, and a circularity emerges. Two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, are presented in a wasteland. They are waiting for Godot, an unidentified person whose very existence is doubtful to them. In Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* (1950), the characters sit and talk repeatedly the obvious and sound nonsensical. Their dialogue proves that verbal communication is inadequate.

Features of Absurd Drama

➢ It represents the disorientation of living in an unfriendly and hostile universe,

➢ It is a theatre of situation and not a theatre of sequential events.

➢ The action does not tell a story but presents a pattern of images which are designed to reflect the puzzlement of human existence in an incomprehensible world.

➢ There is no plot in the conventional sense, nor is any formal and conventional structure.

➢ The emptiness and nothingness of life is often depicted. For example, *Waiting for Godot* revolves around the nonappearance of Godot. In Ionesco's *The Chairs* (1952), features an 'Old Man' and an 'Old Woman', who seem to be the last human beings on earth. They arrange chairs on the stage so that 'everyone' can be seated. They are expecting a speaker but he turns out to be a deaf-mute. Sometimes, the plot focuses on something inexplicable or inconceivable. In Ionesco's *Amedee, or How to Get Rid of It* (1954), a playwright and his wife try to get rid of a corpse that is growing steadily.

➢ The play has characters who are aimless and lost in a world that they fail to understand. They cannot think rationally nor can they act according to reason. They are often automatons who speak in cliches and are usually flat characters.

➢ The characters are sometimes terrorised by some external force or some person. In Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1957), Stanley is intimidated by Goldberg and McCann.

➢ Some absurd plays show characters pitted against a world threatened by science. For example, Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (1959), Berenger finds himself the only surviving human in a world full of rhinoceroses.

➢ The dialogue is pointless at all times and funny sometimes. The dramatists make use of technological jargon, cliches, triteness and baby talk. The futility of communication is revealed through prattle. Important parts of dialogue are punctuated by ellipses or dashes.

xxvi) Kitchen Sink Drama

This is a kind of realist drama about domestic life in Britain, particularly in the 1950s and 60s. The name comes from the fact that the audience can really see a kitchen sink on the stage which was a major departure from the cosy drawing room comedies popular at the time. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) is a major specimen of kitchen sink drama. The play takes place in a small flat in the Midlands and was shocking for its time. Other plays in this mode include Bernard Kops' *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* (1957)

and Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958). The gritty social realism that this kind of drama depicts has continued to stay in the theatre ever since and has even become integral to the British cinema tradition.

Kitchen sink drama was associated with the Angry Young Men movement in English literature. This was a movement in the 1950s wherein novelists and dramatists form middle and working classes known for their anti-establishment works expressed their dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic and political conditions of the time. They gave vent to the disillusionment and discontent with the failure of the welfare state to live up to its promises. These writers were labelled Angry Young Men because of the mood of anger and frustration in their works.

Features of Kitchen Sink Drama

➢ This kind of drama portrays the lives of the ordinary, educated, lower class youth who often did unsatisfying menial jobs and lived in cramped houses.

➢ The characters are from the poor, industrial parts of the country.

➢ The dialogues reflect the colloquial language of such regions.

➢ The protagonists often resembled the playwrights themselves— intelligent young men from the lower-middle or working class who rail at the established social order.

➢ The plays attack the stifling traditions and attitudes of the rigid class system of their time.

xxvii) Poor Theatre

Also known as Laboratory Theatre, this theatre is associated with the Polish director Jerzy Grotowsky (See also "Theatre of Cruelty"). This style of theatre is referred to as poor because of the avoidance of the usual trappings and expensive technology of regular theatre, which Grotowsky called rich. Poor theatre is experimental and non-commercial in nature. This fiercely dedicated acting ensemble cut through the bones of the polite literary tradition.

Poor theatre was very influential in art theatre and in alternative theatre, and paved the way for the third theatre—street plays which were performed without much emphasis on lighting, costumes or make-up.

Features of Poor Theatre

➢ It does not require a traditional stage and can be performed in any bare space.

➢ It is dependent heavily on the actors' voice, body movement and skill.

➢ The actors perform in and around the audience with minimum space between the two to facilitate maximum communication.

➢ Properties are limited to the minimum. The lights were stationery and the costumes plain. Where conventional theatre would use instrumental music, vocal effects are used here.

xxviii) Bread and Puppet Theatre

This is a form of puppet theatre founded by the Polish puppeteer Peter Schumann (1934 -). This theatre was inaugurated in 1963 in New York and is currently based in Vermont. The performances are common during parades including Fourth of July celebrations. Two notable shows of this troupe are *Nativity 1992* and *The Divine Reality Comedy.*

Features of bread and puppet theatre

➢ It is a politically radical activist theatre.

➢ It features enormous puppets which may sometimes stand ten or fifteen feet tall.

➢ It observes the custom of sharing bread with dripping sauce with the audience. This practice, done in order to create a sense of community and to assert the notion that art was as basic a need as bread, gave the form its name.

➢ It has played a politically active part in many demonstrations, noted chiefly for its anti-war protests during the Vietnam War (1955-75).

xxix) One-act Play

The One-act Play is to drama what the short story is to the novel. It is a dramatic performance with only one act. Its origins may be traced to the religious plays of medieval England. Mystery, miracle and morality plays, and interludes were all short plays dealing with a single theme. These plays eventually gave way to the more elaborate five-act play but re-appeared in the 18th century as after-

pieces and grew enormously in the 19th century with the upsurge in experimental theatre. It was often used as a curtain-raiser before the commencement of the main play. At present, it has become popular in its own right. Anton Chekhov's *A Marriage Proposal* (1890) and Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) are two popular one-act plays. The one-act play may be shorter than a full-length drama but in the hands of a good dramatist it can be profound and greatly complex, as are W.B. Yeats' *The Pot of Broth* (1902) and J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1904).

Features of a one-act play

➢ It has only one act—which may or may not be divided into short scenes.

➢ Though it has all the elements of a full-length drama—like plot, dialogue, characters and setting—it focuses on a single episode or situation.

➢ The subject matter may be serious or comic.

➢ The number of characters is limited.

➢ It has an exposition and rising action but there is great economy in the delineation of characters and the development of the plot. The climax is often the conclusion.

➢ The effect of a one-act play lies on a twist or a surprise ending. For example, Stanley Houghton's *The Dear Departed* (1908) shows the daughters of a supposedly-dead man quarrelling over his possessions. Then the father himself appears on the scene and announces that he plans to marry.

4.7 Origin and growth of drama in England

The altar is said to be the cradle of British drama. The priests, who wanted to reach out to their congregations, began to perform plays in Latin. These plays were called **mystery plays** and **miracle plays**. This form of religious drama was popular in the Middle Ages. The mystery plays dramatized biblical events. The miracle plays depicted the lives of the saints. These plays were presented as a part of the Roman Catholic church service. When these lost the approval of the church, they were gradually moved out of the precincts of the church. From there they were taken up by various guilds of tradesmen who performed the plays on the streets on in public squares. Once out of the church premises, the plays could
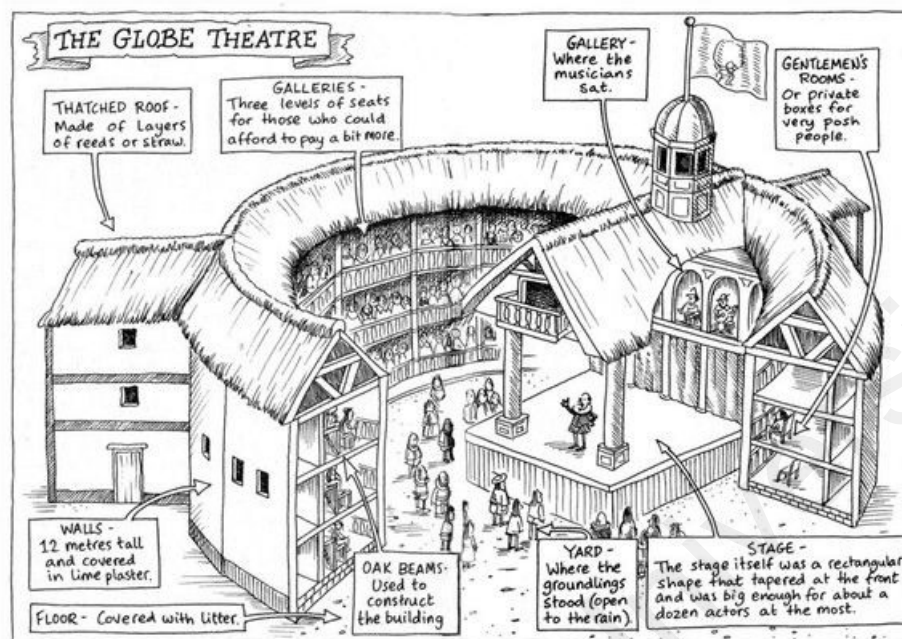
be written in English and the verses used became rough and vigorous. By the fourteenth century, these plays were developed into elaborate cycles representing various biblical episodes—from the creation of the world to the Crucifixion. At times comic scenes like exchanges between Noah and his wife were included.

Yet another type of didactic drama that reflected medieval philosophy was the **morality play**. This kind of drama was essentially dramatized sermons and the common theme was the conflict between good and evil. The theme was abstract and therefore the treatment was allegorical. The characters represented Virtue, Poverty, Knowledge or Ignorance. The best surviving example of the morality play is the late fifteenth-century play *Everyman* in which the character Everyman is summoned by Death and is deserted by his friends Goods, Knowledge, Strength and Beauty. Only one friend, Good Deeds, is prepared to take the journey with him.

The **interlude** was a short piece of entertainment inserted between the courses of a feast or between the acts of a longer play. These were mostly non-religious sketches. They were popular in England in the medieval and early modern periods. A well-known example is John Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* (1533).

i. Features of Elizabethan Theatre and Drama

The unique features and qualities of the Elizabethan theatre affected the drama of its time. Before we discuss the features of the theatre during Elizabethan times, take a look at the diagram of the Globe Theatre (courtesy tadshakespeare.weebly.com):

THE GLOBE THEATRE

THATCHED ROOF - Made of layers of reeds or straw.

GALLERIES - Three levels of seats for those who could afford to pay a bit more.

GALLERY - Where the musicians sat.

GENTLEMEN'S ROOMS - Or private boxes for very posh people.

WALLS - 12 metres tall and covered in lime plaster.

FLOOR - Covered with litter.

OAK BEAMS - Used to construct the building

YARD - Where the groundlings stood (open to the rain).

STAGE - The stage itself was a rectangular shape that tapered at the front and was big enough for about a dozen actors at the most.

- The typical Elizabethan theatre consisted of a large unroofed area called the 'yard', which was enclosed by a three-storied, gallery type structure, which was usually round, square or octagonal in shape.

- An elevated platform performed the function of the stage. It projected into the yard. This platform was divided into three parts: front stage, back stage and upper stage. The front stage was used for depicting open spaces—a street, for example. Tha back stage, which would also have a few pieces of furniture, would represent an interior space—a room in a palace, for example. The upper stage was used for enacting a scene on a balcony or the battlements.

- There was no movable scenery. This was both a blessing and a hurdle for the dramatist. The absence of scenery gave the playwright a lot of freedom to set the plays wherever they wanted. The characters could be placed on stormy seas or in the dungeon of a caste. Similarly, one scene could be in Venice and the next could be Belmont.

- There was no drop curtain. This posed certain difficulties. For instance, the audience would not know when a scene was completed. This hurdle was usually overcome by using the device of a rhyming couplet to mark the end of a scene. Similarly, the disposal of the characters at the end of a scene was tricky. In Elizabethan drama, you would find characters often instructing one another where they should go or meet again, so that their exit from the stage did not

appear clumsy. When there was a death shown on the stage, the actors would carry the 'corpse' away at the end of the scene.

➢ There were no women actors because acting was not considered a respectable profession. Further, it was considered immoral for a woman to be performing before men. Female characters were played by boys whose voices had not broken. This, again, was a limitation used to advantage by some dramatists by showing female characters who disguised themselves as men.

➢ The main characters belonged to the upper class and the themes of the plays reflected upper class concerns—class mobility, wealth, war, religion, sex, and universal emotions like love, hate, greed, ambition and jealousy.

➢ Most of the plays were written in blank verse. Prose lines were also used but they were reserved for commoners, servants, etc.

➢ The performances were during the day with sunlight as the major source of lighting. Night was indicated using simple props like torches or indicated in the dialogue.

➢ Most commoners stood surrounding the front and sides of the stage while the rich and the noble sat in reserved seats in the gallery. And the privileged few could also sit on the stage! Uneducated folk comprised the majority of the audience. They would boo or respond loudly to show appreciation or displeasure. Drunken brawls were also frequent among the audience.

➢ The scripts of the plays did not have stage directions. Actors could freely improvise, adjust their performance or even change the dramatist's lines based on the reaction of the audience.

➢ The companies of actors may have multiple plays lined up concurrently with a different play being stage on different days. Plays ran in a cyclical manner sometimes for months together.

4.8 Let us sum up

In this Unit we have discussed the dramatic genre and found out the characteristic features of many different forms of drama. You have also read about the origin and growth of drama in the west generally and in England particularly. You have also understood that the dramatic form in English shares quite a lot with drama in Europe and the United States of America.

4.9 Glossary

bawdy:	containing humorous remarks about sex
character:	a personage, that is a person as represented in a film, story or dramatic work
declamatory:	expressing something with strong feeling, especially in a loud voice or with forceful language
drawing room play:	a form of comedy of manners that existed during the Victorian times which is based in a middle-class domestic setting
dumb show:	the use of hand movements and not speech in order to communicate
Horace:	**Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BCE to 8 BCE), Latin lyric poet and satirist**
plot:	The pattern of events and situations in a play, as presented to the reader or audience. To Aristotle, plot is more than just the arrangement of incidents: it is the most important element in a drama and the other elements must be subordinated to it. It should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and that its events should form a coherent whole.
pun:	an expression that achieves emphasis being suggested either by the same world or by two similar-sounding words
repartee:	the quick give and take of witty dialogue that is sometimes mildly insulting
stereotype:	a person or thing used to represent an idea

4.10   Let us check your progress

31. How is drama distinguished from prose and poetry?

32. Name four elements of drama.

33. Does drama always require a stage for being appreciated?

34. How is drama in the west related to religious practices?

35. What were the contests featured in the Great Dionysian Festival?

36. Name the three most famous tragedians of early western drama.

37. Name their comic counterparts.

38. What are the two broad categories of drama?

39. Attempt to define drama in your own words.

40. What book by Aristotle remains the earliest source of information on western tragedy?

41. How does Aristotle define tragedy?

42. Who, according to Aristotle, is a tragic hero?

43. What is hamartia?

44. How are *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* significant in the outcome of a tragic play?

45. Define catharsis.

46. Name the important dramatists of the three distinct periods of Classical Greek Comedy.

47. Name the earliest known English comedy.

48. Who wrote *Ars Poetica*?

49. What do you understand by Freytag's Pyramid?

50. Explain the structure of a typical dramatic piece.

51. What led to the creation of stereotypes in Classical Greek theatre?

52. What was the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy?

53. Explain the three unities.

54. What are the features of a revenge tragedy?

55. What is 'stichomythia'?

56. Who wrote *Gorboduc*?

57. What was new about neoclassical tragedy?

58. Why was the chorus dropped form neoclassical drama?

59. Give examples from Shakespeare of romantic tragedy.

60. How does romantic drama combine the idealistic and the realistic?

61. How was the unity of action observed in romantic tragedy?

62. What are stock characters?

63. What was the major source for chronicle plays in England?

64. List the features of a masque.

65. Explain the theory of Humours.

66. What is the main concern of a heroic tragedy?

67. What purpose was the comedy of manners put to use?

68. Identify the features of a genteel comedy.

69. How is sentimental comedy opposed to traditional comedy?

70. Why is sentimental comedy called a comedy?

71. What is the most important difference between a domestic tragedy and a classical tragedy?

72. What was the reason for the popularity of closet drama in 19th-century Europe?

73. How did the farce originate?

74. What are the features of a melodrama?

75. Give examples for cup-and-saucer drama.

76. What are the other names of a problem play?

77. What are the features of a well-made play?

78. What is expressionism?

79. What are the premises of the epic theatre?

80. What is a 'happening'?

81. Why is the theatre of the Absurd called so?

82. Explain the association of kitchen sink drama with the Angry Young Men.

83. What are the features of Poor Theatre?

84. Who founded the Bread and Puppet Theatre?

85. What are the salient features of a One-act Play?

86. What are mystery, miracle and morality plays? How did thy contribute to the development of drama in England?

87. What is an interlude?

88. Describe the structure of a typical Elizabethan theatre.

89. Why was the absence of movable scenery in the Elizabethan theatre a blessing as well as a hurdle for the dramatist?

90. How were the female characters played in the Elizabethan theatre in the absence of women actors?

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UNIT - V

Lesson 5.1 - Fiction

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Structure

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 What is Fiction?

5.4 Classification of Fiction

5.5 Elements of Fiction

5.1 Objectives

After learning this Unit, you will be able to

> ➢ Know the features of prose fiction

> ➢ Distinguish the different types of prose fiction

5.2 Introduction

You have learnt in Unit 3 of this Learning Material the salient features of prose and the classification of prose writing into two distinct categories: fictional and non-fictional. Unit 3 dealt with non-fictional prose. This unit deals with fictional prose. As you read through this unit, you will realise that fictional prose writing—like novel and short story—is prose inasmuch as it is written in the prosaic form of the language. However, it has a number of features that make it akin to drama. These features include plot, characters, dialogue and setting. This similarity between fiction and drama earned for the novel the name "pocket theatre", a name given to it by the American writer Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909). In spite of being so, it can certainly be seen that the novel and the short story are pure literary forms. They are not dependent on the conditions of the stage and performance of the actors for their reception and appreciation.

5.3 What is Fiction?

Fiction is the geral term for stories that are of invention, rather than of true events and characters. The word fiction has been derived from

the Latin word "fictus", which means "to form." In literature, the word is usually applied to novels, shorts stories, novellas, romances, fables, etc. The term is applied to narrative prose works although most drama and narrative poems are also fictional. Whereas these latter are moulded or contrived, fiction is usually more-or-less realistic and is relevant to the real world in some way.

Please do note that we have used the word "fictional" and not "fictitious" because the latter word suggests the sense of being false. The former term, on the contrary, is more neutral. The poet Wallace Stevens revived the old-fashioned word "fictive', which is considered more positive and is closer in sense to "imaginative" or "inventive".

5.4 Classification of Fiction

Fiction is a term generally applied now to the novel, the short story, the novella and related genres. We shall see each of them in some detail below.

Novel

A novel can be defined as a long prose fictional work which has characters, incidents and plots. (These terms are discussed later in this Unit, in the section "Elements of Fiction"). The word derives from the Italian word "novella", which means a "piece of news" or "tale". It was first applied to tales which were popular in the fourteenth century, like Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The novel originated much after genres like poetry and drama but it one of the most popular forms of literature.

Origin and growth of the novel

One can trace the origin of the novel to ancient Greece and Rome. The Greeks had a tradition of writing stories which were called "romances". The first century CE Latin works *Satyricon* by Gaius Petronius and *Metamorphoses* by Lucius Apuleius are Roman examples of the romance.

In England, romances like Tomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485), Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (late 16th century), Thomas Nash's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) and Miguel de Cervantes's Spanish work *Don Quixote* (early 17th century) were forerunners of the novel.

There is in fact no unanimity as to which work has to be credited as the first novel in English. If some critics say Daniel Defoe's *Robinson*

Crusoe (1719) was the first novel, many others dismiss the claim because, according to them, this work is not a proper novel but is only a collection of a number of episodes. Defoe's next work *Moll Flanders* (1722) also is in the same format. But Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) is more like a novel than Defoe's works because it has a well-developed plot. So, it has more right to the claim of the first novel in English. The popularity of this work made many persons in England to take to writing novels. The eighteenth century had a number of novelists, the great among them include Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollet and Laurence Sterne. With every passing century, the novel continued to garner popularity. Many great novels written in the nineteenth century by such writers as Walter Scott, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters—Charlotte, Anne and Emily, George Eliot, W.M. Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy and Henry James. The novel form underwent many changes in the twentieth century and became a highly sophisticated art form in the hands of writers like Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, John Fowles, Graham Greene and William Golding. Novels are written in every corner of the globe in the twenty-first century and novelists everywhere are experimenting with differing styles, plots and techniques.

Features of the novel

It is not easy to pin down the features of the novel as there are a number of different kinds and genres of novels. Still the following four features are distinguished as characteristic of a novel.

The novel is narrative. That is, it tells a story as narrated by one of the characters or by an omniscient narrator. Here it differs from the drama in which it is through the dialogue among the characters that the story is revealed.

Novels are normally written in prose rather than in verse, although there are exceptions, like Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* (1986), which is a novel written in verse.

Novels are works of fiction. This single fact distinguishes it from other prose forms such as biographies, autobiographies and travelogues.

Novels are extended prose narratives. A typical novel can run into several hundred pages and covers a long period of time.

Types of novels

Picaresque Novel

The word picaresque is derived from the Spanish 'picaro' which means "rogue" or "rascal". This type of novel originated in the sixteenth century and became very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Examples of picaresque novels include Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953).

Features of a picaresque novel

➢ A travelling hero finds himself/herself in different kinds of situations, meets a variety of characters and has several extraordinary experiences.

➢ There is little or nothing by way of plot. The novel has a simple, loose, episodic structure.

➢ The protagonist is from the middle or lower class and is clever and likeable. Several ups and downs in the life of the hero are depicted in the novel.

➢ Characters are prominently drawn but there is not much of character development. That means, the story is given more importance than the character.

➢ The narration is satirical and humorous and is usually in the first person.

Epistolary Novel

Very popular in the eighteenth century, the epistolary novel was one of the earliest forms of the novel. Here the story is told entirely through letters sent by the characters involved in the action and by the characters who are observing the action. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) are good examples of the epistolary novel. The eighteenth-century genre of epistolary novel was revived in the twentieth century by writers who realised its potential. Prominent examples include Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912), C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964), Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008). The epistolary novel has had parodies as well, most notably in Henry Fielding's *Shamela* (1741), which mocks Richardson's *Pamela*.

Features of an epistolary novel

- ➢ The plot unfolds as the characters writer letters to one another or to the reader to narrate the events that have taken place.

- ➢ Multiple points of view can be revealed directly to the reader without any third-person authorial intervention.

- ➢ The letters also help in reflecting the psychological and moral conflicts of their writers.

- ➢ The letters provide an intimate look into the characters' thoughts and feelings. So, the epistolary novel is seen as the forerunner of the psychological novel.

- ➢ Other than letters, diary entries, telegrams and newspaper clippings can also help in the development of the plot. An example of this is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

- ➢ Notwithstanding its popularity, this type of novel has the drawback of being artificial. Further, some sense of immediacy that one has to feel for the action is lost in the description of it.

Historical Novel

This is a form of fiction in which the writer attempts to reconstruct history imaginatively, and sometimes romantically. Some of the best novels in this genre are Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1817) and *Ivanhoe* (1820). Other memorable examples are Alexandre Dumas's *Three Musketeers* (1844), Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869). Some more modern historical novels including Rober Graves's *I, Claudius* (1934), George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman* (1969), Philipp Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001) and Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize-winning *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012) indicate the popularity of the historical novel even in the present day.

Features of the historical novel

- ➢ Set in a past historical period, the novel describes the events and manners of that period. The imaginative reconstruction of a bygone era adds colour to the events of the past and brings them to life.

- ➢ The novel may feature both real and imaginary characters with historical personages playing major or minor roles in the action.

- ➢ The novel is written after extensive research of the period depicted, paying attention to minute details regarding dress, manner of

speaking, food habits, customs and other social aspects prevalent during that age.

➢ Historical events of the time which are woven into the plot are carefully investigated.

➢ Although writers try to avoid anachronisms, they may sometimes creep into the text of the novel.

Sentimental Novel

Also known as the novel of sensibility, the sentimental novel is a genre that gives rise to refined or elevated feelings, keeping with the eighteenth-century meaning of the word "sentimental". Important examples of the sentimental novel include Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's German novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774).

Features of a sentimental novel

It celebrates the intellectual and emotional aspects of sentimentalism (that is, giving importance to feeling than reason) and sensibility (that is, being acutely aware of, and responsive towards, stimuli and emotions). These were fashionable attitudes in the poetry and fiction of the eighteenth century. This trend may be seen as a reaction to the rationalism of the Augustan Age.

➢ The scenes of suffering and tenderness are depicted to arouse emotional responses from both the characters and the readers.

➢ Furthering emotional feelings, and not giving importance to the action, seems to be the aim of the sentimental novel. To this end, the novels feature characters who are models of patience and endurance.

➢ The suffering of the weaker sections of the society (such as the orphans and the poor, and the terrible conditions of housing and prisons) are the focus of the treatment in the sentimental novel.

➢ The novels were successful in creating awareness among the readers of the downtrodden sections of the society and helped the ushering in of 18th-century humanitarian movements.

Domestic Novel

This subgenre of the sentimental novel is also known as the conduct novel. It made use of sentimentalism to convey its message and became popular in the early nineteenth century. Examples of this kind are Catherine Sedgwick's *A New England Tale* (1822), Maria Cummins's *The Lamplighter* (1854) and Ann Stephens's The Old Homestead (1855).

Features of a domestic novel

➢ The plot centres on a female protagonist who is the embodiment of either the sacrificing angel or the simple practical woman. This woman is contrasted with a passive or an ignorant woman.

➢ The heroine goes through several trials and tribulations. She suffers abuse form powerful people but she discovers herself and gains some measure of independence or self-sufficiency.

➢ She has to strike a balance between society's expectations of sacrifice from a woman and the fulfilment of her own desires. She tries her best not to succumb to the pressures on her.

➢ The novel usually ends with a wedding. The heroine either reforms the rakish male or marries a dependable man who is equal to her.

➢ In order to evoke the sympathy of the reader, the language is kept sentimental.

Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel is a type of romance popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is a very distinct form with interesting features and has been a great influence upon fiction. The term Gothic originally referred to the Goths, an early medieval Germanic tribe. It later came to signify 'Germanic' and 'medieval'.

Gothic fiction was made popular by Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764). Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) were important formative influences on the genre. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is a popular example of the form. Edgar Allan Poe developed this style in the United States. Other famous Gothic novels include R.L. Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1909-10).

Features of a Gothic novel

> These novels tell tales of mystery and horror aimed at startling the readers.

> Haunted castles with secret passages, winding staircases, dungeons and caves are the usual settings. American writers often set the story in far-off places and in a bygone age—such as medieval Europe.

> A threatening or gloomy atmosphere is set up with the evocation of a fear of the unknown.

> Supernatural elements such as ghosts and vampires, and strange eerie happenings are featured in Gothic novels.

> Disturbing visions, frightening dreams and foreboding omens are the fare of such novels.

> The beautiful and virtuous heroine is oppressed by a powerful male figure.

> The mode of narration is sentimental or melodramatic, and the characters often display strong emotions.

> These novels evoke the feelings of pity and terror but they do not have the cathartic effect that a tragedy arouses. But these feelings are to be enjoyed for what they are, for their own sake.

Science Fiction Novel

Frequently shortened to "Sci-Fi" and "SF", this is a genre in which elements of science and technology play an integral part in the story. There is a blend of fantasy with science that creates a sense of alternate reality which seems quite plausible. May Shelley's *Frankenstein* is one of the earliest novels of this genre. The French writer Jules Verne and the English writer H.G. Wells made this form of novel hugely popular. Verne's books *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1869), and Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) remain the classic examples of science fiction. Other prominent writers of Sci-Fi are Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Robert A. Heinlein, Philip K. Dick and Arthur C. Clarke.

Features of a science fiction novel

> Science fiction creates an illusion of reality by basing the plot and other story elements on actual scientific facts, principles and technology.

> ➢ The setting will usually be in the future, in space, on a different planet, in a different universe, in an alternate dimension, or in an alternate history.

> ➢ The situations depicted are different from the present or from the known past or the conceivable future.

> ➢ Dystopia, advanced technology, time travel, space travel and extraterrestrial life are all elements in the narrative of Sci-Fi.

> ➢ These novels depict the effect of new scientific discoveries and inventions, and advances in technology upon human beings.

> ➢ The genre is often a vehicle for making comments on social and cultural issues like class inequality, greed, war, authoritarianism, the abuse of technology, environmental exploitation, the ill effects of acquiring knowledge without caring about consequences, etc.

New Wave Science Fiction

This is a term applied to certain works of science fiction written in the 1960s ands '70s. The term was borrowed from the French film movement called the 'nouvelle vague". The New Wave was a reaction against traditional science fiction, which the critics called "pulp fiction". The New Wave writers deliberately broke away with the traditions of popular science fiction and gave importance to a higher degree of stylistic experimentation and artistic merit. But in the process, they gave the go-by to scientific accuracy. The writers tried to "elevate" science fiction as a literary genre by focusing on literary experimentation with regard to form and content. Much of this genre appeared in the English magazine *New Worlds*, edited by Michael Moorcock. J.G. Ballard (*The Drowned World,* 1962), Philip Jose Farmer ("World of Tiers" series, 1965-93) and Jon Brunner (*Stand on Zanzibar*, 1968) are some of the prominent writers of this form. A number of female writers also joined the ranks of the New Wave. Some of them are Ursula K. Le Guin (*The Left Hand of Darkness*, 1969) and Joanna Russ (*The Female Man*, 1975).

Regional Novel

A regional novel is one that is set in a particular geographical area and uses the locale and the people there as the basis for the plot. Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) is considered the first regional novel in English. Thomas Hardy recreated western England in many of his novels and revived the name "Wessex". The American novelist William Faulkner

based his novels in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County on the American South. Similarly, the Indian wrier R.K. Narayan set almost all his work in the imaginary town of Malgudi. The Canadian writer Margaret Laurence set her stories in the fictional town of Manawaka.

Features of a regional novel

> The setting is an important feature of this novel type. A rural or provincial area is usually chosen and it will be shown to have a distinguishable lifestyle.

> The region is not a mere background for the action but its culture, history, customs and speech are emphasised and documented.

Detective Novel

This has been a popular genre right from the nineteenth century. It is a distinct subgenre of crime fiction, that is, stories that deal with crime, criminals, and how they are apprehended. The hardboiled novel, the police procedural and the courtroom thriller are other subgenres of the crime novel. The detective of a detective novel is presented with an apparently insoluble crime. The crime is slowly cracked once the detective gets to work. The readers too get to know of the perpetrator of the crime only after the detective cracks the case. In the crime novel, but, the reader knows the identity of the criminal right at the beginning of the story. The interest is built up and sustained only in following the detective's progress in identifying the culprit and in the culprit's attempts at evading the detective.

The American writer Edgar Allan Poe is thought of as the pioneer of this genre of the novel. His short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) is counted as the first modern detective story. Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) is usually considered as the first detective novel in English. Arthur Conan Doyle created perhaps the most famous detective of fiction in Sherlock Holmes who appeared for the first time in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Very famous indeed is Hercule Poirot, the detective created by Agatha Christie, who wrote several novels in this genre. One of her most-read books is *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934).

Features of a detective novel

> The police are shown as baffled by an apparently perfect murder or some such grievous crime. The reader is immediately drawn to

the story by the unsolvable nature of the crime. The writer creates a sense of mystery, and it is sometimes accompanied by tension or a sense of danger.

➤ The reader is taken through the process of the investigation and the protagonist eventually identifies the culprit.

➤ The protagonist may be a professional investigator, or an amateur. In either case, the protagonist is sometimes depicted as an eccentric character with idiosyncrasies.

➤ The detective may have a confidant (Sherlock Holmes has Watson), who acts as a sounding board and who stands in for the reader.

➤ The police and other investigating agencies are sometimes portrayed as dim-witted, uncooperative or sometimes colluding with the criminal(s).

➤ Common features of such novels include multiple suspects, red herrings and unsavoury characters.

➤ The ending is usually startling or unexpected with the detective explaining how the right solution of the mystery was logically reached.

Social Novel

Also referred to as the sociological novel, thesis novel, propaganda novel or problem novel, the social novel is one in which the focus is on a social, political or religious problem. Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850) is one of the earliest examples of such a novel. In it, the spotlight is turned on the nineteenth-century sweatshops where clothes were manufactured. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) attracted people's attention to the practice of slavery. The novel was so successful that it lay the road to the American Civil War. Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) are some other famous social novels.

Features of a social novel

➤ The social novel is a didactic novel. Its aim is to draw the public's attention to the issue being discussed.

➤ The issues discussed may include social inequality, poverty, industrialisation, child labour, violence against women, etc.

> ➤ The protagonists are from the oppressed classes and are portrayed sympathetically.

> ➤ The novelist may dramatize the effects of the above-mentioned issues on the characters.

Proletarian Novel

The proletarian novel is also known as the working-class novel. It is a type of social novel which focuses on the problems of the proletarian, that is people of the working class. It is usually written by authors who themselves are working class. The features of this novel are similar to those of the sociological novel, written by authors with socialist, communist or anarchist leanings, the proletarian novel has a strong anti-capitalist, political bent and is often regarded as advocating political revolution. This kind of fiction has been very prominent in Russian and Japanese literature. The best English example of this genre may probably be Water Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933). Robert Cantwell's *Land of Plenty* (1934) is an American example of the form.

Psychological Novel

This novel is primarily concerned with the analysis of the spiritual, emotional and mental lives of the characters rather than with the plot. The work in Psychology of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung led to the popularity of this novel among writers. Henry James is a novelist whose works display an ultrasensitive flair for analysing complex personalities. *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) is a psychological novel about a spirited American woman.

Features of a psychological novel

> ➤ The novelist makes an in-depth study of human relationships and this gives a psychological slant to the story.

> ➤ The focus is on the analysis of the characters' motives which drive the action forward.

> ➤ Interior monologues, and flashbacks and such other devices are used to explain the inner workings of the minds of the characters.

Stream of Consciousness Novel

The stream of consciousness is the name given to a narrative technique which attempts to capture all the emotions and thoughts which flow through a character's mind in a random manner. The American

psychologist William James first used the term in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). The term is used in literature interchangeably with the term interior monologues. Many modernist novels use this device to present before the reader the unfiltered thought processes of a character. Dorothy Richardson was one of the earliest modernist writers to use this technique. Some well-known examples of this kind of novel are James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).

Features of a stream of consciousness novel

- ➢ The traditional concepts of plot and characterisation are overhauled.
- ➢ Interior monologue replaces the standard techniques of description, narrative and dialogue.
- ➢ Memory, intuition, sense perceptions and feelings, along with a character's thoughts are emphasised.
- ➢ The fluidity of the characters' inner life is captured, and the myriad feelings and thoughts passing through their minds are depicted.
- ➢ These novels are often anti-romantic, featuring an unsure or indifferent protagonist who fails in a quest or journey.
- ➢ The writer is artistically aloof and impersonal in such novels.

Antinovel

It was the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who coined the term. This is a kind of experimental novel in which the traditional methods of storytelling are abandoned. Here the author has no pretension of creating the illusion of realism. The reader is not able to identify with the characters in the manner he/she would with the characters of a conventional novel.

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) is considered a precursor to the antinovel. Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942), Philip Toynbee's *Tea with Mrs Goodman* (1947) and Alin Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* (1957) are notable examples of the antinovel.

Features of an antinovel

- ➢ Instead of a well-defined plot, a number of diffused episodes are strung together.
- ➢ The writer is not interested in developing a character; abrupt changes can happen to the personality of a character.

- ➢ Detailed descriptions of objects are given.
- ➢ Experimentations with vocabulary, punctuation and syntax are common and so are repetitions.
- ➢ The sequence of time is varied and incidents do not happen chronologically.
- ➢ There are multiple beginnings and endings.
- ➢ There are extreme examples of this form in which pages can be detached and shuffled like a pack of cards, blank pages and coloured pages.

Nouveau Roman

French for "new novel", this is a French genre that emerged in the 1950s. It is not very different from the antinovel; in fact, many specimens of this kind are antinovels. The term became part of critical vocabulary in the 1950s-France when Alain Robbe-Grillet published in periodicals and reviews his essays on the nature and future of the novel form. Some consider the new novel as a movement, and if it is indeed so, it can be seen that it destroys or mutilates the very concept of books. This is because it rejected much that had gone before. Robbe-Grillet regarded many earlier novelists as old-fashioned. In his scheme of things, plot, action, narrative, ideas, the delineation and analysis of character no place in the novel. On the contrary, the novel should be about things: a systematized and analytical record of objects. And so, many of the nouveau romans are concentrated presentations of precise, condensed physical descriptions of their subjects, avoiding metaphors and similes. It is the readers' job to interpret the story from the descriptions. These novels do not have any fixed or consistent style: each new novel is created in a new style. Michel Butor's novel *La Modification* (1957) is considered to be the most characteristic of this genre. Other prominent exponents of the *nouveau roman* included Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon and Philippe Sollers. The only thing common to these writers was an interest in avant-garde experimentation and the antipathy towards conventional modes of literary expression.

Bildungsroman

This form of the novel is known by other names, like the novel of education or the novel of formation. As these names testify, this genre a kind of coming-of-age story with the plot revolving around the moral

and psychological growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. The term was coined by the philologist Karl Morgenstern in 1819. In all probability, this genre has evolved from folk tales that tell the story of a simple young man who goes out into the world to seek fortune. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96) inaugurated this genre and sprang many imitations in Europe and the rest of the world. Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Dickens's *Great Expectations*, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) are examples of this genre.

Features of a *bildungsroman*

- ➢ The novel tells the story of the development of a sensitive person who goes in search of the meaning of life and of one's place in society.

- ➢ The protagonist sets off on a journey consequent to an emotional loss.

- ➢ He/she faces several hurdles and failures along the way, and is often shown in conflict with the values of society.

- ➢ Gradually, a transformation happens to the protagonist who eventually becomes emotionally mature.

- ➢ The protagonist finally accepts the values of society and the society accepts him/her into it.

    Künstlerroman

This is a variation of the *Bildungsroman* and it traces the development of an artist or a writer. Examples of this subgenre are Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).

Short Story

The short story may be defined as a fictional prose tale with no specified length; but it is too short to be published as a volume of its own. It will normally concentrate on a single event, has only one or two characters and creates a single effect or impression. Brevity is the defining factor of a short story. Marked by an economy of expression and tightness of form, it can normally be read in one sitting. The short story became the most widely read form with the growth of various periodicals.

One of the oldest forms of literature, the short story has its earliest examples in the tales written in ancient Egypt, about 3000 BCE. The parables of the Bible which impart moral lessons are also early examples of short fiction. Other examples include the Sanskrit collection *Panchatantra* (c. 3rd century BCE) from India, the Arabic collections *Thousand and One Nights* (from 8th century BCE onwards) and *The Book of Sindbad* (c. 10th century CE). Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a collection of a hundred tales, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of twenty-four stories, are two of the most well-known collections of early short stories in the West. Both were published in the fourteenth century.

The short story had several early forms like the fable, the fabliau and the folktale. The fable is a short story in which the characters are animals that display human qualities. It conveys a moral lesson to the reader. Examples of fables are the Greek fables of Aesop and the Sanskrit collection titled *Hitopadesha*. The fabliau is a short, satirical or comic tale in verse. It is known for its bawdiness. Examples are the medieval French tales "Gombert and the Two Clerks" and "The Snow Baby". The folktale comprises short stories of unknown origin that exist mostly in the oral form. Examples include English folklore of Robi Hood and Indian tales of Birbal or Tenali Raman. The Middle Ages also had books of exempla (that is, anecdotes with moral, which priests made use of in their sermons. Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" is an exemplum.

It was in the nineteenth century that the short story came of age as a major literary form. It became popular first in America where the term was used in the 1880s. Edgar Allan Poe analysed this form and outlined the various effects it can have, fear and surprise for instance. Apart from Poe, there were many popular short story writers, the most famous of them were Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, O. Henry, Guy de Maupassant and James Thurber.

In the twentieth century, the short story is quite popular as a literary form all over the world and is written in almost every language. A short list of popular short story writers will include Anton Chekhov, Arthur Conan Doyle, D.H. Lawrence, Leo Tolstoy, Ernest Hemingway, Flannery O'Connor, Franz Kafka, R.K. Narayan, Ray Bradbury, Saadat Hasan Manto, Isaac Asimov, Khushwant Singh and Alice Munroe.

Features of a short story

- ➢ It is a distinct literary form and is by no means a merely shortened novel.

- ➢ It contains all the major elements of fiction—plot, characters, action, dialogue, etc.

- ➢ The short story has a single plot, one character or a very small number of characters, usually a single setting and a short period over which the action takes place.

- ➢ While it has a plot that is not as complicated as that of a novel, the short story can handle a variety of themes—light or heavy.

- ➢ It is a concentrated form of prose narrative in which the writing is dense and economical. Unless there is a specific purpose, there will not be any room for leisurely descriptions. Everything mentioned or described should necessarily contribute to the overall effect of the story.

- ➢ The ending is often abrupt and can be interpreted in many ways. The story can end in suspense, surprise, anticlimax, epiphany and so on.

Novella

This fictional tale in prose is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. It concentrates on a single event or a chain of events and has a surprising turning point. The term comes from the Italian word *novella*, which means novelty. The term was originally applied to the very short stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Goethe and other German writers borrowed it in the eighteenth century when the form was getting established in the sense in which it is used now. It is known as the *nouvelle* in France. A good example of a novella can be found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Writers like Henry James and D.H. Lawrence also wrote fine novellas. Some examples of famous novellas include Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* (1852) and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kroger and Tod in Venedig* (1913); Aldous Huxley's *Two or Three Graces* (1926); Alberto Moravia's *Conjuga*l *Love* (1951); Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952); and H. E. Bates's trilogy *The Nature of Love* (1953).

- ➤ Features of a novella
- ➤ It is a fictional narrative of indeterminate length. It can be two pages long or even two-hundred.
- ➤ It is restricted to a single situation, event or conflict.
- ➤ It produces an element of suspense and leads to an unexpected turning point.
- ➤ The ending may be logical still it may surprise the reader.
- ➤ A concrete symbol will be a steady point at the heart of the narrative.

Elements of Fiction

All fictional writings have the following elements:

Plot

Plot may be defined as a series of events developed in a meaningful manner. That is, it is the way the writer arranges events to develop the basic idea of the story. It is planned as a series of events logically arranged to have a beginning, middle and end.

Plots can be classified into two types based on their structure. These are loose plot and organic plot. A loose plot is one in which a series of disparate incidents are strung together. Picaresque novels usually have a loose plot. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* and W.M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* are novels with loose plots. The incidents in an organic plot are connected to each other and the story develops gradually. The short stories of P.G. Wodehouse have organic plots. Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Dickens's *Bleak House* are examples of novels with organic plots.

Plots can be classified as simple or compound based on the unity of their structure. A simple plot has only one story whereas a compound plot has multiple stories which are woven together. Chetan Bhagat's *Two States* (2009) has a simple plot while Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995) has a compound plot.

Setting

Setting is the time and place of action that provides the context and the background for the characters and the plot. It is the combination of place, historical time and social milieu. The attractiveness and literary value of a work owes much to its setting. While there will be a general setting for the work, individual scenes or events may have different settings.

The setting of a literary work can be real or imaginary. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is set in the real city of Dublin. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) has imaginary settings like Lilliput and Brobdingnag.

A literary work may be set in the past, present of future. It can also be set in an alternate history. Saalman Rushdie set his *Midnight's Children* (1981) in the Indian subcontinent immediately before and after the Independence and Partition of India. Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008) is set in a dystopian North America of the future.

Character

A character in a literary work is a person or animal that takes part in the action. A character that plays an important role in the action is called a major character and a character that does not have a significant role to play is called a minor character. In Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom and Injun Joe are major characters while Widow Douglas and Judge Thatcher are minor characters.

Again, a character who has the central role in a story is its protagonist and the one who is opposed to the protagonist is the antagonist. For example, in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), Dorothy is the protagonist and the Wicked Witch of the West is the antagonist. Some stories, like J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) have more than one protagonist or antagonist.

E.M. Forster distinguished between flat and round characters, based on their complexity. A flat or static character is one who remains uncomplicated and unchanging from the beginning to the end of the work. They are predictable and display no development or growth in their behaviour. Mrs Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Mrs Micawber in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) are flat. A round or dynamic character is one who changes and develops during the course of the literary work. Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and David in *David Copperfield* are round characters.

Narration

Also known as point of view, narration is the manner of presenting the story. It is the angle from which the story is told. There are three modes of narration—first-person, second-person.

In a first-person narrative, the story is told by the protagonist or a character who closely interacts with the protagonist or other characters. This narrator refers to himself/herself as "I". For example, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) has a first-person narrative said by Ishmael. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is narrated as seen from the point of view of Nellie Dean. In a first-person narrative, the entire story is unfolded to the reader from what this character chooses to tell us, or what she has personal knowledge of.

A second-person narrative has a narrator who addresses the reader or the protagonist as "you". This mode of narration is used in Jay McInerney's Bright Lights, Big City (1984), Michel Butor's Second Thoughts (1957) Italo Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveller (1979). This point of view is rare when compared to the first-person and third-person narrative. It is more commonly used in lyrics or self-help books, cookery books, etc. which are non-fictional writings.

In a third-person narrative the story is told by someone who sees all of the action and who uses proper names or the pronouns "he", "she', "it", they", "his", "hers", "its", and "theirs". This narrator may or may not be a character in the story. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) uses a third person narrative where the narrator is not a character.

Sometimes the story is told through the Innocent Eye or a Naïve Narrator. Here the story unfolds through the eyes of a narrator whose judgement is different from that of a normal adult.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an important element in a work of fiction because it can serve many functions. It can be used instead of narration for telling the story. It can advance the story by taking the plot forward. When dialogues are inserted into the narrative, it gives dramatic interest to the narrative. A skilful writer can use dialogue to provide exposition, create conflict, change the pace of the narrative, establish mood, indicate the passage of time, illuminate the themes, and so on. Characters reveal themselves through dialogue—their emotions, motivations, social situations, etc. can be established through the words the author makes them speak. For example, Charles Dickens used the characters' manner of speaking to reveal their socioeconomic background.

Let us sum up

In this Unit, we have discussed the nature and forms of fictional prose writing. We saw the major types of fiction—novel, short story and novella, discussed their important features. We learnt how they can be classified into subgenres and we saw the characteristics of each of them. Now you will be able to distinguish each of the kinds of fiction.

Glossary

avant-garde: artists, writers and musicians whose ideas, styles and methods are highly original or modern in the period in which they live/ lived

Decameron: **a** collection of tales by Giovanni Boccaccio, probably composed between 1349 and 1353. The work is regarded as a masterpiece of classical Italian prose.

Dystopia: **a very bad or unfair society in which there is a lot of suffering; a totalitarian or post-apocalyptic society**

Romance: a prose narrative dealing with events remote from everyday life

Let us check your progress

1. Why is the novel called "pocket theatre"?

2. Attempt a definition of fiction.

3. Write down the names of five different types of fiction.

4. Give any three names of early English romances.

5. Why do critics refuse to count *Robinson Crusoe* as the first English novel?

6. Why is the novel called a narrative?

7. Give an example of a novel written in verse.

8. What kind of a protagonist does a picaresque novel have?

9. What drawback does an epistolary novel have?

10. What category of the novel would you include Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*?

11. What was the sentimental novel a reaction to?

12. How did the sentimental novel contribute to the humanitarian movements of the eighteenth century?

13. Give your views on the protagonist of a domestic novel.

14. What type of novel did *Castle of Otranto* make popular?

15. Pity and terror evoked by a Gothic novel is different from those evoked in a tragedy. How?

16. What are the main concerns of science fiction?

17. How is New Wave science fiction different from usual science fiction?

18. What is a regional novel?

19. Comment on the protagonist of a detective novel.

20. What is the theme of Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke*?

21. Why is the proletarian novel called so?

22. What is the focus of a psychological novel?

23. What are the features of a stream of consciousness novel?

24. How did the n*ouveau roman* come into being?

25. Distinguish between a bildungsroman and a kunstlerroman.

26. What are the important features of a short story?

27. What are fable, fabliau and folktale?

28. What is a novella?

29. How does a loose plot differ from an organic plot?

30. What are the different types of plot according to the unity of structure?

31. How is setting important in a fictional work?

32. What are flat characters?

33. Who is an antagonist?

34. What are the different types of point-of-view?

35. What functions does dialogue play in a fictional work?

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