

AMERICAN LITERATURE

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

Unit - I - PROSE

Emerson – ‘Self Reliance’

Unit - II - POETRY

Walt Whitman – “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”

Emily Dickinson – “Success is Counted Sweetest”

Robert Frost – “The Road Not Taken”

Sylvia Plath – “Lady Lazarus”

Maya Angelou – “When the Caged Bird Sings”

Unit - III - DRAMA

Eugene O’neil – Hairy Ape

Unit - IV - FICTION

Hemingway – Old Man and the Sea

Unit - V - PROSE

Alice Walker – In Search of My Mother’s Garden

TABLE OF CONTENTS		
UNIT	TITLE	PAGE NO.
1	Lesson 1.1 Prose : Emerson Self-Reliance	1
2	Lesson 2.1 Poetry : Walt Whitman: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry	23
	Lesson 2.2 Poetry : Emily Dickinson: Success is Counted Sweetest	57
	Lesson 2.3 Poetry : Robert Frost: The Road Not Taken	75
	Lesson 2.4 Poetry : Sylvia Plath: Lady Lazarus	89
	Lesson 2.5 Poetry : Maya Angelou: Caged Bird	121
3	Lesson 3.1 Drama : Eugene O'Neill: The Hairy Ape	145
4	Lesson 4.1 Fiction : The Old Man and the Sea	187
5	Lesson 5.1 Prose : Alice Walker: In Search of My Mothers' Gardens	219

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UNIT – I

Lesson 1.1 Prose : Emerson Self-Reliance

Structure

- Ralph Waldo Emerson – An Introduction
- Emerson's Life and Works
- Major Influences on Man.
- Self-Reliance
- Analysis of Self-Reliance
- Various Facets of Transcendentalism

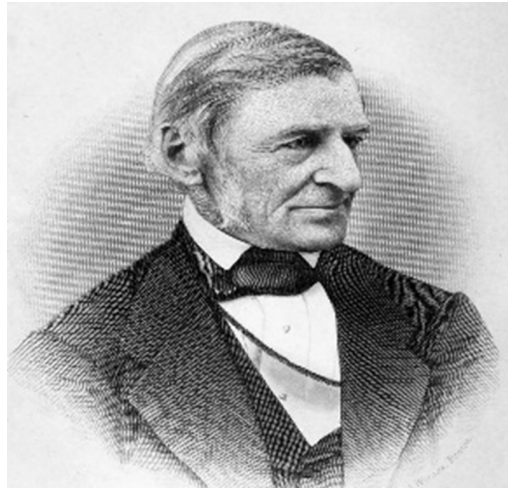
Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great literary figure of America, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The author's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of his work.
- Have an understanding of Emerson's philosophy.
- Major Influences on Man.
- Understand the concept of Transcendentalism and Emerson's practice of it.
- Have a complete comprehension of Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance."
- Self-Reliance – Important Highlights.

Introduction:**Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882):**

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), the great American poet, philosopher and literary genius was born in Boston to Ruth Haskins and the Rev. William Emerson, a Unitarian minister on May 20, 1803. He was the third of eight children and was helped by his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson for pursuing his education.



He entered Harvard College at the age of fourteen and throughout his time there engaged himself at vivacious teaching and learning activities. He was a voracious reader and was interested in philosophy, politics, religion and society.

He began writing his own poetry intensively and met writers like Thomas Carlyle, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge during his trip to Europe between 1832 and 1833.

He became acquainted with German idealism and Indian philosophies during his trips and found that slavery affected him in a deeper way. Later, in 1835 after the European tour, he returned to Concord to his mother and married Lydia Jackson.

Emerson published his first book, *Nature* in 1836 in which he brought out his belief that people should live a harmonious life with nature, totally adopting simple ways of living. The book comprises of eight chapters, with each chapter resounding and reflecting the importance of nature in man's life. He endeavours to write about his love for nature and solitude, and elucidates that commodity, beauty and language are parts of nature. He beautifully states that all the objects of nature like time, space, society, labour, climate, food, locomotion, animals and the mechanical forces teach us every day.

Nature teaches man to understand and to reason. It teaches truth to humanity and Emerson concludes the book with a strong belief that man must trust nature completely to reach God.

“The American Scholar” published in 1837 and “The Divinity School Address” in 1838 elevated Emerson to the hall of fame. “The

American Scholar” lay the foundation for both his philosophy and literary career. He formed the Transcendental Club along with his intellectual acquaintances, which included Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Alcott.

His works including *His Conduct of Life* (1860) and *Society and Solitude* (1870) became more successful from 1850 onwards. In 1841, Emerson published the first volume of *Essays*, a collection of some of his best-remembered writings like "Self-Reliance" and "The Over-Soul."

A second series of essays published in 1844 established his reputation as an authentic American voice. His collection of poems in *Poems* published in 1846 consists of an elegy, "Threnody" which was written to express his grief for Waldo, his son, who died young of scarlet fever.

Emerson led an active intellectual and social life, and during the 1850s, he vigorously supported the anti-slavery movement. He supported the Northern Cause when the American Civil War broke out and was deeply appalled by the amount of violence, bloodshed and destruction war had caused.

Emerson's Transcendentalism

The Transcendentalists are firm believers of man's individual power. They hold views similar to the Romanticism of the Victorian period. Just like the romantics who revived nature and valued individualism, so do the transcendentalists. To them, “self” is the most important one and to Emerson’s ideology, “self” was a key concept.

He stated that no other religion or social constructs are needed for the individual self. It is only nature that is needed to refine the self and nourish it. Emerson interlinks the ideas of individualism and self-reliance and states his transcendentalist belief that society tends to corrupt the individuals.

For him, an ideal society is one that allows human beings to exist as individuals in solitude, who are not carried away by the affectations of society. For Emerson, individualism was a state of bliss in which the society had little or no corrupting influence on a human.

Emerson was sceptical about the societal constructs and

institutions, and believed that childhood and youth are the phases of human life, which are made up of innocence and not corrupted by the society. He believed in inspiration and in ecstasy, and advocated a life away from the world of rules and norms and closer to the liberating nature. He believed in intuition over reason or logic and emphasized on subjectivity over objectivity, which was the hallmark of transcendentalism.

Emerson did not believe in the conventional idea of God who was living in an unreachable place but he felt that God could be found in nature. Nature had a central place in Emerson's poetry and nature was a source of emotional and spiritual content for him. Just like the Romantic poets, Emerson found extra relief and consolation in nature and saw it as a source of inspiration to live life. According to Emerson "Nature is transcendental" and had the ability to guide and lead the lives of men.

Emerson's Philosophy

Emerson was a great thinker and writer. His writings consists of his intellectual thoughts, which were simple, concrete, and easy to understand. His association with nature and the bonding he had with it made him feel deep-rooted and propagate man's individualism and self-reliance. His advocacy to be in close communion with nature is similar to that of the Romantic's philosophy in matters concerning man and his surroundings.

Emerson's philosophy to follow the natural course of mind is related to the one divine power, which is the supreme power to many. He felt that the one and the many are dependent of each other. His philosophy is that of practical idealism and he prefers idealism to materialism in philosophy.

Critics of Emerson feel that Emerson's popularity in modern times declined due to the importance he gave to materialism in Philosophy. They also stated that he is not a systemic thinker and relied on materials from different sources for his works. However, his works have a unifying factor that save the work from contradictions.

He believed in the close relationship between nature's soul and the soul of man. He believed that man is highly capable and that man can do more than what he thinks is capable of him. He believed that nature contains spiritual truth and that the material world is a reflection of the spiritual world.

In his famous speech delivered on “The American Scholar” at Cambridge in 1837, Emerson states, “that man is metamorphosed into a thing into many things.” He states that God “has divided man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself.” He utters this, as he believes that there is a common, uniting spirit present in all individual men and women. He believes that all men and women are united by metaphysical ties each contributing for the benefit of the society as a whole.

Although society has rules for each individuals like the farmer, tradesman, priest, mechanic, and so on, these individuals should not stick on to only those who have similar functions in society and thus isolate themselves. Instead of mingling only with people belonging to their professional status, human beings should be more open and should be capable of many skills. They should not confine themselves to learning or practicing or being attached to their profession alone, but should be open minded to other skills and occupations too. They should take efforts in knowing a little of other skills and occupations to develop into a more well-rounded individual that in turn will lead to a harmonious society. Society would certainly appreciate well-developed harmonious personality's role who contributes to its holistic development.

Major Influences on Man

Emerson advocates man to be “man thinking” because only a thinking man seeks truth actively, develops his own ideas, and shares it with other people in the society. There is a deep connection between the individual and the society and it is the interconnectedness between the two, which brings about goodness in society.

Men are also deeply connected with nature. Nature contributes much and acts as a main influence for the development of a scholar. The second major influence over the development of men is the mind of the past, which is specifically contained in the form of books. Emerson believes that only great minds can bring about great and meaningful books.

The “immortal thoughts” of great writers remain relevant through the generations because they disseminate truth, which a society can understand and relate to, and books have the capacity to guide the society through its valuable input.

Emerson talking about the influence of books also cautions

readers, especially, the Scholars that relying too much on books written in the past would stifle their individuality, thus stopping them from writing about ideas that would be applicable in the current age.

It is important for any writer to turn inwards to discover their self and their unique and individual thoughts on different topics. It is important for man to self-discover himself and undergo periods of solitude and inquest. It is important for man not to lose his individuality and self-reliance.

Action is the final major influence, which Emerson finds in man. Emerson believes that harmony could be achieved only when “practical men” and “speculative men” work together.

Emerson believes that a scholar should take active part in society, expose himself to new and unique experiences that provide him with many opportunities that will lead him to eloquence and wisdom.

Emerson also emphasizes on the aspect of language where it is essential that the scholar is able to read and write in a language, which is easy for individuals belonging to the different strata of society to understand.

One should not be too much restrained by society's norms but should adopt natural ways because it is “unhandselled savage nature” that educates him better. Men in isolation but in harmonious relationship with nature help one in maintaining independence of thoughts and enable him to bring out the truth.

Emerson believes that fear is born of ignorance and hence, individuals should be free and brave. They should not fall a prey to the pretensions of society. Man has been “wronged” in the concept of society, and has become too complacent with the “herd” mentality.

Man believes that he has to conform to society in order to have a place in it. Having a place in the society is more important to him than to live a life of individuality. He is not bothered whether he is living a life of satisfaction and joy, but is only eager to fulfil the norms of the society by adhering to its rules and regulations. He is not worried about losing his individuality because he has no choice when it comes to living his life. People are only too happy to have been brushed aside “like flies from the path of a great person.” They have convinced themselves that they have to conform to society since that gives them safety and security.

Emerson believes that the individual should realize that each and everyone is capable of achieving individuality and greatness regardless of the place in the existing social hierarchy. He believes that earning money or power is the natural focus of people in society but he calls them as “false good” as they are only secondary to the ability to understand one another. He states that achieving unity in a divided society is far more lasting and valuable than attaining money or power.

Emerson believes that all men and women are equal and literature that focuses on “the near, the low, the common” that have been neglected for too long will do more to unite the nation than the literature about “the rich.”

Emerson believes that there is an actual relationship between human beings, nature and the divine. All human beings are made equal by a divine soul that is common to all.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essay, "Self-Reliance:"

Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance" was first published in 1841 in his collection, *Essays: First Series*. It begins with a quote from the *Epilogue to Beaumont and Fletcher's Honest Man's Fortune*, which states man as being “his own star,” and that he could shine with all his might by being true to himself in the most perfect manner. This essay is perhaps Emerson's most well known one which lays emphasis on man's individuality and man's self-reliance.

The essay opens with Emerson's assertion of man's genius, which is to believe in one's own thoughts and to believe in what is true for oneself. He believes in the originality of thoughts and attributes the highest merit to great people like Moses, Plato and Milton who are known for their unique thinking.

Emerson states that it is to one's own original thinking that one should give importance to and that only is a mark of genius. The thoughts that had emanated from great minds had also existed in people who fail to express it, and when understanding that somebody else has expressed what we felt, then it is with shame that we will have to accept somebody else's opinion.

Emerson believes that each of us possess individuality and are capable of thoughts worthy of genius but it is with the individual to realise

the power, which resides in him. It is the individual, who has to understand that power and bring it out, for which he has to try constantly. He should understand that “envy is ignorance” and imitation, suicide. One should not be ashamed of expressing oneself and the “divine idea” (self-reliance) in us, since putting our whole heart into a work and doing our best will give us utmost happiness and satisfaction.

We must trust ourselves and be confident that the divine has a great place for us and the genius in us obeying the Almighty effort in being guides, redeemers and benefactors, advancing on chaos and darkness.

Emerson refers to the youth who are bold and unconquered. They are independent and individualistic that they conform to nobody but all conform to them. The youth are clear and emphatic and cannot be put off by anyone since God has armed them for their self-reliance and trust. They act independently and irresponsibly and are not bothered about the consequences or interests, but give independent and genuine verdict on whatever interests him. He “would utter opinions on all passing affairs,” (SR) which would put men in fear.

Contrary to the youth are men who are bounded by the chains of consciousness. They are victims of the “conspiracy” (SR) of society, which is against the non-conforming individual because society values conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. Society loves names and customs and not realities and customs. It supports people who conform and agree, surrendering their individuality, rather than people who do not.

Emerson says that the integrity of one's mind alone is sacred and no man should be obstructed or hindered by people, who advice in the name of goodness. A man should carry himself in speaking the truth always in spite of all oppositions and should not surrender to the ways of the society.

Truth is always better than affectation of love, however, rough and graceless be a greeting. As we grow older, society makes us more and more reserved. With its norms and values, it teaches us to restrain our actions and thoughts, and makes us seek the approval of others. It makes us concerned about names, reputations, and customs. It makes us conform to society's ways, to what the grown-ups call virtues. Trying to be virtuous and performing good actions are actually penance. Virtues are exception rather than the rule.

Barriers to Self-Reliance:

Life is to be lived for oneself and not for others to approve or reject. It should be genuine and equal, and not glittering and unsteady. It need not seek secondary testimony for assurance to oneself or to the others. Emerson states that it is easy to live a life of conformity in society rather than living in solitude. However, a great man is a person who keeps up his independence of solitude in the midst of the crowd.

Non-conformity is not advocated for the sake of rebelling against society but only to emphasize one's individuality and to show the world who you are and what your genius is and, thereby, reinforcing your character in your own terms. Conforming to society happens for pretensions and non-conformity is disapproved by the world with its displeasure. However, the valorisation of conformity by society is not the only barrier to self-reliance.

Another barrier is the fear of our own consistency: "a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them." (SR) We should always live in the present than act with a false consistency to a past memory. We should not be scared of speaking what we think and should not have the fear of being misunderstood, because every great men like Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Copernicus, Galileo and Newton who spoke their minds openly were misunderstood. No man can violate his nature. His will is his being. Our virtue or vice is contained within ourselves. We exist for what we are and every virtuous voice is within us and not communicated only by overt actions alone. Genuine actions will explain itself, whereas, conformity will not explain anything. Acting singly and individually will justify a person since the force of character is cumulative. Honour has always been an ancient virtue and venerable too because it is no ephemeris. Honour is loved and worshipped today because it is self-dependent and self-derived even if shown in a young person.

Self-Reliance and the Individual:

Here, Emerson states how individuals can live self-reliant lives. Emerson wishes that the words conformity and consistency are ridiculed henceforward and people act as they please without blindly imitating customs and traditions. A true man who "is a great responsible Thinker and Actor" is at the centre of things, and posterity follows his steps "and

all history resolves itself easily into the biography” of such “a few stout and earnest persons.” (SR)

He states that a man should “know his worth” and should “keep things under his feet” (SR). For that, he must trust himself. Trusting oneself alone will enable a man to live self-reliantly with genuine thought and action. Men should act with original thoughts and views and this originality comes out of self-trust. One must trust in the nature and power of our inherent capacity for independence and this trust in self, leads to “the essence of genius, of virtue and of life” itself, which is called as “Spontaneity” or “Instinct” by Emerson. This spontaneity or instinct is grounded in our intuition, our inner knowledge, rather than “tuitions” which is primary. All other learning or knowledge is secondary and are hence, tuitions.

Emerson believes that our intuition emerges from the relationship between the soul and the divine spirit, that is, God. To trust oneself also means to trust in God. Trusting oneself is more difficult than it sounds because it is easier to follow the footprints of others than to live according to some unknown or unaccustomed way. “Man is timid and apologetic” and “is no longer upright” (SR). He does not have the courage to say, “I think” “I am” but simply quotes some saint or sage. “He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose,” (SR) and understands that they exist with God. The rose “is perfect in every moment of its existence” (SR) and it lives and exists in the present, whereas, man “does not live in the present.” He “laments the past” (SR) or wishes to foresee the future. He, unlike nature, is not satisfied to live in the present.

Emerson states strongly that “man cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time” (SR). He believes new perceptions will disburden the memory of the past as old rubbish. A self-reliant life “shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience, you take the way from man, not to man” (SR). As such, one must live as courageously as a rose.

With the perception of “self-existence of Truth and Right” (SR) everything goes well and the soul which rises above the passion of worldliness and materialism experiences an elated identity and achieves a calmness where nothing else matters. This is what Emerson calls life and this is what he calls as death.

Power “resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state” (SR) and when the soul becomes one with the divinity present in him, there comes the realisation of self-existence. Emerson states that all things real are self-contained and self-reliant. The planet and all things of nature like the trees, animals, vegetables and so on, are examples of self-sufficing and self-relying souls. Divinity is there in every human being. Realising the divinity within us, the highest instinct, we must make a communion with nature.

Individual and the Society:

Our elevation should be through our spiritual isolation. Even if the whole world conspires against you to importune you with the emphatic trifles, you should keep up your individuality and originality and not give in to their conspiracies. You should keep up your highest state of self-reliance. One should resist falling a prey to the temptations of society and not be carried away with their deceiving conversations. One should not live to the expectations of the society. Obeying the eternal law is more important than conforming to the ways and means of society. One should not destroy one's individuality for the sake of conforming to society and keeping others happy.

One should not sell one's liberty and power to please others sensibilities. If people realise this truth then expectations from others will no more exist and nobody will mistake anybody else. However, the populace, instead of realising and understanding one's self-reliance will think that one's rejection of popular standards is near antinomianism (antinomianism is something that does not have any regard for law or legal things. It does not give importance to socially established morality and argues against the norms of morality, religion and society).

Emerson advocates the individual to follow the highest dictates of his mind rather than fall a prey to the rules of the society. Emerson tells the people who imagine this law to be lax (relaxed and not sufficiently strict or severe) to have its Commandment one day.

Emerson advises people to stand on their own feet without the help of the philosophy of others. And to be self-reliant one has to have the power of the highest order abiding to his own law and doctrine. Man is bound by society where he is afraid of truth, fortune, death and even of other fellow beings. He imitates the ways of society and hence, our age has

no great and perfect persons. Our age has adopted the ways that society has chosen for us, sacrificing the individuality and self-trust.

Emerson states that men who are not successful in attaining material wealth are pitied by others and by themselves, explaining that they are ruined and disheartened, and that they are failures. They fail to understand that there are innumerable opportunities for a Stoic who trusts himself and detaches himself from looking forward for the ways of the society alone. New powers appear for a man who acts from himself and who believes in the power of his self rather than go after the ways of the world. A person with self-trust has hundreds of ways which will ultimately restore his life to a life of splendour rather than be a butt of others sympathy. If so then sympathy will be replaced by reverence and gratitude.

Emerson wishes self-reliance to be applied in all the fields like relations of men, religion, education and pursuits of men. It should be there even in one's ways of living, their association, property and speculative views. It is easy to "see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views" (SR).

Emerson on Religion:

With regard to religion, Emerson believes a lack of self-reliance has led prayers to become "a disease of the will" and creeds "a disease of the intellect" (SR). People pray to an external source for some foreign addition to their life, whereby, prayer acts as means to a private end, such as for a desired commodity. In this way, prayer has become a form of begging rather than "the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view" (SR). Prayer has become a means to a private end which is meanness and theft instead of the soul being one with God. "The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends" (SR).

Emerson believes that "discontent is the want of self-reliance" (SR). He believes true prayer involves an avoidance of regret and discontent, which indicate a personal "infirmity of will," (SR) as well as of sympathy for the suffering of others, which only prolongs their own infirmity, and instead should be handled with truth and health to return them to their reason. Self-helping man is the celebrated one.

As for creeds, his critique focuses on how those who cling to creeds obey the beliefs of a powerful mind other than their own, rather than listen to how God speaks through their own minds. In this way, they disconnect with the universe, with God, because the creed becomes mistaken for the universe.

Emerson on Education:

On the aspect of education, Emerson asserts that our system of education fosters restlessness. It is the one of self-culture that causes people to travel away from themselves in the hope of finding something greater than what they know or have. Educated Americans desire to travel to foreign places like Italy, England and Egypt for amusement and culture. They build and decorate their houses with foreign taste, their minds to the past and the distant. Artists imitate the Doric or the Gothic model. Yet, Emerson reminds us, "They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth."

Emerson is not against "travelling for the sake of study, art and benevolence but only objects to those who travel for the sake of amusement and strongly objects to those people who travel away from themselves. Emerson believes "Travelling is a fool's Paradise" since "the rage of travelling is a symptom of" an unsound mind "affecting the whole intellectual action" (SR). When at rest, the mind travels. "Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought and quaint expression are very near us" and hence, there is no need to travel to foreign places with the intention of imitating.

One should not yearn for, or imitate that which is foreign to oneself, for "Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession" (SR).

Emerson believes that every man has a talent and that "every great man is unique" (SR). He believes that none but the Maker alone can teach man to do his best. No man knows what his best is, unless he tries and exhibits it all by himself without imitating somebody else. Emerson asks people to "abide in the simple and noble regions" of one's life and simply obey one's heart to achieve great things.

Emerson insists on the power of oneself, and does not want people to imitate because the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation enables you to perform all by yourself. Believing in oneself and in the power of God existing in yourself will teach you to become a master yourself. Every great man is unique and there was no teacher or instructor for Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon or Newton. Shakespeare's greatness was because he succumbed to his genius and listened to his intuition instead of trying to imitate others. Listening to your heart and abiding in the "simple and noble regions" (SR) of your life will make you great in the list of other great men.

Addressing "the spirit of society," (SR) Emerson states that like one religion, education and art which looks at foreign elements for imitation, so does our society. All men aim at "the improvement of society" but no man succeeds in it. "Society never advances" but only "recedes" (SR) and undergoes many changes. Society is barbarous, civilized, Christianised, rich and scientific. For everything that is acquired, something is lost. Society gets new arts, but loses old instincts.

Emerson comparing the so called civilized and uncivilized, states that there is a lot of difference between the well-dressed, reading, writing and thinking American (civilized) and the naked New Zealander (uncivilized) who has not been exposed to the sophistication of civilization. The civilized man has lost his aboriginal physical strength whereas, the uncivilized is healthy and even if he was to be struck with an axe and his flesh gets hurt, in a day or two he might recover from the situation. The same blow might send the white man to the grave. The civilized man has become a slave to machines, in the process of which he has lost his invaluable physical strength.

Emerson insists that civilization has not led to the impression of society because of the acquisition of new arts and technology, whereas, it has led to its backwardness as man has lost his old instincts and valuable physical strength. For instance, "The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun."

Emerson states that the man-made means and machinery which was great for a period would find its disuse and death at a later stage but it is the genius of man which keeps returning to essential man.

Society nearly changes and shifts like a wave, while a “wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not” (SR). As such, people are no greater than they ever were, and should not smugly rest on the laurels of past artistic and scientific achievements. They must instead actively work to achieve self-reliance, which entails a return to oneself, and liberation from the shackles of the “religious, learned, and civil institutions” (SR) that create a debilitating reliance on property (i.e., things external from the self).

Man should believe only in his self rather than on external elements like the property he has inherited. Nothing can steal away his self and he is powerful only when he puts off all foreign support and stand-alone, only by believing on his self that he is strong. A man who has realised the self and trusts it is powerful because he knows that power is inborn, and that is weak if he has failed to look inward and failed to listen to his instinct.

Emerson concludes, “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles” (SR).

Various Facets of Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is a movement, which emerged during the 1830s in American literature. A group of literary artists created a club called transcendental club, which consists of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau and Margaret Fuller. They reacted against the ideals of Puritanism and encouraged Americans away from the orthodox rigidity of Christianity. They generally believed in God as a single being, but rejected many of the miracles in the Bible and the concept of the Holy Trinity. They believed that man is born good and this conflicted with some religious doctrine of the time. They thought that the idea of God varied from person to person and hence completely depends on the notion of the individual and their experiences with God.

Transcendentalists were radical thinkers. They were non-conformists who did not conform to a generally accepted pattern of thought and action. They had a huge impact on American literature and the writers advocating transcendentalism wanted their work to closely reflect the ideals of Transcendentalism.

Characteristic Features of Transcendentalism

- i. The transcendentalists believed that God or Divinity should be understood through the power of emotions and intuitions. They rejected the ideals of Unitarianism. They rejected the rational and logical entity of mind to know God. They believed in the intuitive powers and emotions, and inner voice of the individuals. They believed that all answers and solutions could be obtained from within. They wanted to go beyond or transcend the limitations of human senses and based their knowledge of spiritual and other knowledge by their emotions and intuitions rather than sensory perceptions.
- ii. They gave high importance to individualism and believed that every individual has a universal soul and intuitive thought. They believed man should follow his intuition rather than conscious thought. They championed individualism and believed in self-reliance. They criticized society for enforcing things upon them and making the individuals conform to it. They believed that the society corrupts human soul and mind and destroys them. Hence, individuals should not fall a prey to society's conforming ways but should listen to their own mind and soul.
- iii. They believed in the power of over-soul. The soul of the individual is one with God and God is the over-soul. God is present everywhere. An understanding of Nature and living close with nature lead to having a close connection with God.
- iv. Nature is very important and the transcendentalists place Nature in the highest place just as the Romantics did. They believed that God could be understood and realised through Nature. Nature is everywhere and it is a sacred place of solitude and peace. Man should be in constant communion with Nature in order to understand life and attain peace. Nature plays an important role in the philosophy of Transcendentalists.
- v. The transcendentalists believed that man should give enough time for nature since that alone will guide him morally and spiritually. His study of nature will teach him better than any spiritual texts or being with any learned men. The transcendentalists emphasized that God could be realised and better understood by a close mingling with nature.
- vi. The transcendentalists were against the set conventions and practices of society and believed in the idea of non-conformity. They advised to refrain oneself from any social or political doctrines. They emphasized

on individuality and wanted people to detach oneself from the principles and conventions of society. Every individual listening to their inner voice and soul should be self-reliant and independent. Attaching oneself to society and its ways will make one move away from one's inner self and destroy one's individuality. Hence, one should not conform to such rules and regulations constructed by society.

- vii. The transcendentalists believed in the simplicity of life and were against the worldly and materialistic desires. They sought refuge in Nature and found solace in it. They supported rural life, which provides an opportunity to be close with nature than urban life.
- viii. They placed significant importance on imagination also. Imagination is closer to the mind and it allows the mind to be resourceful and it does not pertain to the sense. The mind with the powers of imagination makes man to move beyond his personal experience and transcend into a newer self.

Self-Reliance and Transcendentalism

Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the central figures associated with this philosophical movement. His essays on self-Reliance advocated some of his beliefs with regard to religion, God, divinity and society. He emphasized on the individuality and inner powers of man rather than conforming to society. Other champions of this movement expressing similar views favouring the soul and inner self to be of highest importance were Walt Whitman, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau. *Walt Whitman's Nature*, *Fuller's book, The Great Lawsuit: Man Vs. Men, Woman Vs. Women* and Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* emphasize on these concepts of Nature, Inner Self, Individuality and Non-conformity.

These writers believed that a reformation in religion, arts, higher education and culture is needed in society. There should be a change in all these set of beliefs and conventions. Self-Reliance is an important statement that Emerson came with in order to achieve this transformation. He states his transcendental beliefs chiefly in his essays, "Nature" and "Self-Reliance."

In Emerson's transcendentalism, the individual is the most important and he is the supreme source of truth. He believes that man is a part of the universe just as Nature is. Hence, there should be a compatibility of the two where the two should live in close union. This close union with

nature will lead him to the higher soul or the over soul that will give him ultimate joy and happiness. Emerson emphasizes on self-Reliance of every individual. He asks people to look within, listen to their intuition and be more reliant on their self rather than on society.

The individual rather than paying attention to their senses should pay attention to their close self. He sees "children, babes and brutes" as being "pretty oracles nature yields" because they do not see themselves as separate from everything else around them. Emerson calls intuition as the primary wisdom and all others to be mere tuitions. He asks the individuals to trust oneself. Individuals should find their voice within themselves. Only by "trusting thyself" can they access truth.

Truth could be found only by paying attention to one's own mind and intuition. Listening to one's own voice and hearing it alone rather than listening to the voice of the society will make a man great. Society damages the individual's personality and enforces its views and principles upon him. It destroys the individual's soul and thereby creates chaos and confusion in his life. Hence, Emerson advocates self-Reliance, insisting on intuition and individualism. According to Emerson's transcendental views, society is a force that the individual must escape from in order to gain access to truth.

Self-Reliance – Important Highlights

1. The essay, "Self-Reliance" by Ralph Waldo Emerson was first published in 1841.
2. Emerson begins the essay with a quote that states man as being "his own star," thereby emphasizing the individuality of man.
3. Emerson asserts that man is a genius and is capable of highest merit.
4. He states that man should give importance to his self and to his original thinking only, and that only is the true genius of the individual man.
5. He believes that each individual possesses an individuality that is capable of thoughts worthy of genius.
6. He states that individuals should not imitate but express their thoughts without feeling ashamed of expressing themselves, without any self-doubts.
7. We must trust ourselves and be confident.

8. Emerson believes that the youth are bold, unconquered and independent. They do not have fear.
9. Contrary to the youth are men who are conscious of society and are victims to it.
10. Emerson says that the individuals should always speak the truth and should not surrender to the ways of society, and conform to it in a blind manner.
11. Life should be lived for oneself and not for others.
12. A great man is a person who keeps up his independence of solitude even in the midst of a crowd.
13. Emerson advocates non-conformity to society not to rebel against society for the sake of rebelling, but to emphasize on one's individuality.
14. We should always live in the present and not be scared of speaking what we think, and should not have the fear of being misunderstood.
15. Emerson is unhappy with the words, "conformity" and "consistency" and wishes that people acted without blindly imitating customs and traditions.
16. Man should trust oneself and should have immense faith in oneself.
17. Man should believe in his intuition. He should act with original thoughts and views and should trust in the nature and power of one's independence and individuality.
18. Emerson believes that our intuition is the result of "the relationship between a soul and the divine spirit" (God). Trusting oneself is trusting God.
19. Emerson states that man is timid and apologetic and is no longer upright. He does not live in the present. He either laments the past or wishes to foresee the future. He is not satisfied to live in the present.
20. Emerson believes that man can be happy and satisfied only when he lives with nature, in the present. He has to live a life of self-reliance. A self-reliant life shall be new and strange.
21. He believes that all things are self-contained and self-reliant. With the perception of self- existence of Truth and Right, everything goes on well.
22. With the realization of self, the soul rises above the passion of worldliness and materialism, and the individual would experience an elated identity and a calmness, where nothing else would matter. This

- state is what Emerson calls as life and death.
23. Divinity is there in all human beings, and realizing the divinity within us, which is the highest instinct, we must make a communion with nature.
 24. Our elevation should be through our spiritual isolation.
 25. Obeying the eternal law is more important than conforming to the ways and means of society.
 26. One should not destroy one's individuality for the sake of conforming to society and keeping others happy.
 27. One should not sell one's liberty and power to please other's sensibilities.
 28. Emerson advises the individual to follow the highest dictates of his mind rather than fall a prey to the rules of the society.
 29. New powers appear for a man who acts from himself and who believes in the power of his self, rather than go after the ways of the world.
 30. Emerson wishes self-reliance to be applied in all the fields like relations of men, religion, education and pursuits of men. It should be there even in one's ways of living, their association, property and speculative views.
 31. Emerson, with regard to religion says that prayer has become a means to achieving a private end, which is meanness and theft. Instead of the soul becoming one with God, prayer has become a form of begging.
 32. Emerson views the self-helping man as the celebrated one.
 33. Emerson is against imitation and is against travelling to foreign places for the sake of imitation. One should not yearn to imitate that which is foreign to oneself. He believes that travelling is the symptom of unsound mind affecting the complete intellectual action. He believes when man is at rest, his mind travels.
 34. Listening to one's heart and mind will make one great.
 35. Emerson believes that society is barbarous, civilized, Christianised, rich and scientific. All men aim at improving the society but no one succeeds in it. Society never advances but only recedes and undergoes a lot of changes.
 36. Emerson comparing the so called civilized and uncivilized, states that the civilized has lost his invaluable physical strength and has become

a slave to machines.

37. He states that civilization has led to society's backwardness as man has lost his old instincts and valuable physical strength.
38. Emerson states that the man-made means and machinery which was great for a period would find its disuse and death at a later stage but it is the genius of man which keeps returning to essential man.
39. Emerson believes that society keeps changing and shifting, and that man should not proudly rest himself with the composed feeling of having achieved greatly in the past. He should not be idle basking in the glory of the past and be filled with the sense of contentment at his past scientific achievements. Instead, man should think about himself and his individuality and should focus on actively working towards achieving self-reliance.
40. Man is highly bound to the ways of society and leads a life of slavishness to it. His reliance on property is high and that has weakened his natural abilities. The Institutions of society like religion, education, marriage, and other civil institutions have a debilitating effect on man. In order to come out of the debilitating effect of these on him, man has to become self-reliant. He has to break himself free of all shackles that burden him and keep him bound to society. He has to become self-reliant in order to liberate himself from all these burdens and enjoy a life of independence and individuality.
41. Man should believe only in his self rather than on external elements like the property he has inherited. Nothing can steal away his self and he is powerful only when he puts off all foreign support and stand-alone, only by believing on his self that he is strong.
42. A man who has realized his self and who trusts himself alone is powerful.
43. Emerson concludes, "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles."

Questions

1. Describe Emerson's conception of God, Nature, and their relationship to one another.
2. Describe the various facets of Transcendentalism.
3. Describe Emerson's ideas about the fundamental relationship

between humanity and Nature.

4. What does Emerson mean by "self-reliance?" How does one achieve it? What stands in the way?
5. Write a short note on Emerson's Transcendentalism.
6. Bring out Emerson's philosophy.
7. What according to Emerson are the major influences on man?
8. What are the barriers to self-reliance?
9. Comment on the aspect of self-reliance and the individual.
10. Bring out Emerson's views on the individual and the society.
11. Comment on Emerson's views on education.
12. Comment on Emerson's views on religion.

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UNIT – II

Lesson 2.1 Poetry : Walt Whitman - Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

Structure

- Walt Whitman – An Introduction
- Whitman's Life and Works
- *Leaves of Grass* – Its various Editions
- Whitman's poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
- Analysis of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
- Some of the Literary Devices Explained in Brief
- Whitman's use of Literary Devices and Figurative Language in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
- The Major Themes in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

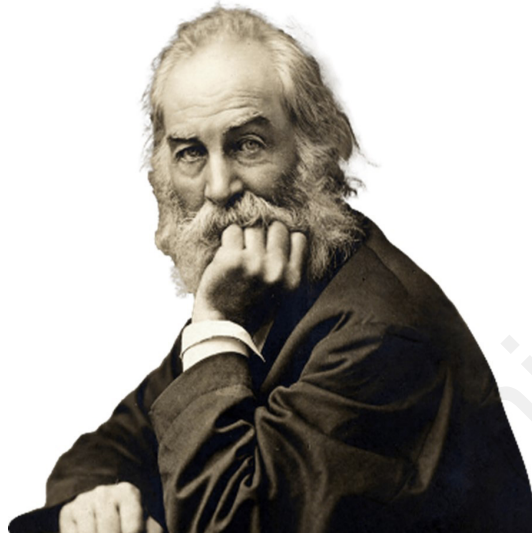
Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great American writer, Walt Whitman. The author's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of his work.
- Know Whitman's involvement in the American Civil War and the impact it had on him.
- Have an understanding of Whitman's philosophy.
- Have a complete comprehension of Whitman's poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."
- Learn the different Literary Devices.
- Come to understand Whitman's usage of Literary Devices and Figurative Language in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."
- Have an idea of the themes of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

Introduction

Walt Whitman (1819-1892):



Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is a great American poet, journalist and essayist. He was born on May 31, 1819 in West Hills, Long Island, New York, United States of America. He was born to Walter Whitman, a man of English descent and Louisa Van Velsor, a Dutch. They were people from agriculturalist background with little formal education, and they settled in North America in the first half of the 17th century. His ancestry was typical of the region of North America.

Originally, Whitman's family had a large track of land, but it was dwindled by the time Walt Whitman was born. They just had a small section on the ancestral estate to live in, and having lost their land, Walt Whitman's father started his life as a carpenter. Earning being insufficient in carpentry, Walter Whitman, Sr. moved his growing family to Brooklyn in 1823.

Brooklyn saw a sudden growth in industries and various kinds of jobs, and Walt Whitman's father was able to thrive there by speculating in real estate and building cheap houses for artisans. He was a poor manager and had difficulty in providing for his family. By this time, he had nine children.

Walt Whitman was the second child of nine and was sent to a public school in Brooklyn. When he was seventeen, he started working and

learned the trade of printing. He was employed as a printer in Brooklyn and New York City and having a passion for teaching, he also taught in country schools in Long Island. He also served as a journalist. At the age of twenty-three, he edited a daily newspaper in New York and in 1846, he became an editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, a well-reputed newspaper of the time.

In early 1848, he lost the editing job in the Eagle because of his support for the antislavery Free Soil faction of the Democratic Party. He went to New Orleans, Louisiana and worked on the *Crescent* for three months before returning to New York via the Mississippi river and the Great Lakes. He followed his father Walter Whitman in trying his hands at real estate in New York after having failed in Free Soil journalism. He also built houses in New York from about 1850 to 1855.

Whitman had spent a great part of his thirty-six years walking and observing in New York City and Long Island. He was greatly fond of the plays of William Shakespeare and had visited the theatre frequently to see the plays. He developed a strong love for music, especially, for Opera.

He also read extensively at home and in the libraries of New York during these years. All these influenced him to experiment with a new style of poetry. While a schoolteacher, printer, and journalist he had published sentimental poems and stories in newspapers and popular magazines, which did not achieve any literary promise.

Leaves of Grass

By the spring of 1855, Whitman had written many poems in his new style to publish for a smaller volume. However, he was not able to find a publisher to publish his volume of poetry. Deciding to print the first edition with his own expense, Whitman sold a house and brought out the first edition in 1855. The cover of this first edition had his portrait but had no author's name or the publisher's name in it. The book was little appreciated on its release, however, Ralph Waldo Emerson, a poet and essayist of the period, encouraged Whitman bestowing a warm praise upon it. He called Whitman's poems as "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom" America had yet contributed.

Later, commenting on the portrait of Whitman on the cover of *Leaves of Grass*, Bronson Alcott described him as "broad-shouldered,

rouge-fleshed, Bacchus-browed, bearded like a satyr," Thus Whitman made his entry into the literary sphere of America.

Whitman continued preaching his new style of writing in his private notebooks and in 1956, the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared. This collection contained revisions of the poems of the first edition and a new one, the "Sun-Down Poem." This "Sun-Down Poem" was later known as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." The second edition also did not yield him financial success and once again, Whitman edited a daily newspaper, The Brooklyn Times. However, he was without any job by the summer of 1859.

In 1860, Boston publisher brought out the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* enlarging it and rearranging it largely. However, with the outbreak of the American Civil War, the firm was bankrupted, and again Whitman found a setback in his edition. The 1860 volume contained the "Calamus" poems, which recorded a personal crisis of some intensity in Whitman's life, an apparent homosexual love affair. It is not known whether this affair is real or imagined one.

The poems that found its inclusion in this volume are "Premonition," "A Word out of the Sea," "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," "Chants Democratic," "Enfans d'Adam," "Messenger Leaves," and "Thoughts."

"Premonition" was all about how Whitman's strength was drained due to the violent emotions he possessed at times. This poem was later re-titled as "Starting from Paumanok" and this poem was said to have evoked Whitman's sombre feelings. All these poems which made the appearance in the third edition were more in the poet's earlier style.

Civil War Years

The American Civil War broke out in 1861 and had a resounding impact on the lives of almost all the American writers of the 19th century who were struggling with their lives. In 1861, Whitman's brother was wounded at Fredericksburg and Whitman had to go there in 1862 to stay in the camp for some time. He later took a temporary post in the paymaster's office in Washington.

Whitman was a benign and kind person who used to extend his magnanimous service to the people affected in war. He used to spend his spare time visiting the wounded and dying soldiers in the Washington hospitals. He spent a small amount of his salary on small gifts for

Confederate and Union soldiers alike, and offered his usual share and magnetism to try to provide some relief to the physically suffering and mentally depressed people he met in the wards.

In January 1865, Whitman became a clerk in the Department of the Interior. He was promoted in May but was dismissed in June as the secretary of the Interior felt that *Leaves of Grass* was indecent. Whitman then got a post in the Attorney General's office, largely through the efforts of his friend, the journalist, William O' Connor.

It was William O' Connor, who wrote the vindication of Whitman in *The Good Gray Poet*, published in 1866. This aroused sympathy for the victim of injustice. In May 1865, a collection of War poems entitled *Drum-Taps* appeared. It showed Whitman's readers, a new kind of poetry, in free verse. It is because of this that Whitman is called as the Father of Free Verse today.

Whitman was deeply affected by the Civil War of his country and so he started writing about the disturbing aspects of it in his poems. His poem "Beat! Beat! Drums!" echoed the bitterness of the first of the battles of Bull Run. The poem, "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night" had a new awareness of suffering that was effective.

In the autumn of 1865, the *Sequel to Drum-Taps* was published. This collection consisted of Whitman's famous poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," which was an elegy on President Abraham Lincoln's death. Moved immensely by the death of Abraham Lincoln, Whitman wrote this great elegy. It expressed Whitman's horror at the death of democracy's first "great martyr chief," Abraham Lincoln. It also brought out Whitman's hatred of the war and his revulsion at the barbarities of war.

Whitman's Specimen Days & Collect (1882–83) contains Whitman's prose descriptions of the Civil War and is known for its direct, moving simplicity.

Later Life of Whitman

Leaves of Grass appeared for the fourth time published in 1867 with a lot of revision and rearrangement. Apart from the poems collected in *Drum-Taps*, it contained eight new poems. It had also omitted some poems to accommodate the new ones. Whitman's work began to receive greater recognition in the late 1860s.

William O' Connor's *The Good Gray Poet* (1866) and John Burroughs's *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* were followed by another edition of Whitman's poems in 1868. This was brought out by the English man of letters, William Michael Rossetti.

During the rest of his life, Walt Whitman received much encouragement from leading writers in England. Whitman became ill in 1872 because of the long-experienced emotional strains. In January 1873, he had his first stroke that left him partly paralyzed. By May, he had recovered sufficiently to travel to his brother's home in Camden, New Jersey, where his mother was dying. He called his mother's death as "the great cloud" of his life and thereafter lived with his brother in Camden. His post in the Attorney General's office was taken away from him in 1874.

By 1879, Whitman recovered sufficiently enough to make a visit to the west. In 1881 James Osgood published the second Boston edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The Society for the Suppression of Vice claimed it as immoral. Osgood backed out from it for the fear of a threatened prosecution and gave the plates to Whitman, who, after he had published an author's edition, found a new publisher, Rees Welsh of Philadelphia who was shortly succeeded by David McKay.

Leaves of Grass now reached the form in which it was henceforth to be published. The sensations created around it by the newspapers gave it wide publicity and had created interest in the book. This edition sold out better than any other edition. The financial success of this enabled Whitman to buy a modest little cottage in Camden, where he spent the rest of his life.

Whitman had many new friends, Horace Traubel one among them. He recorded Whitman's talk and wrote his biography. *The Complete Poems and Prose* was published in 1888 along with the eighth edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

Whitman met his death in 1892, the year the ninth or the authorised edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared. At the time of Whitman's death, Whitman was more respected in Europe than in his own country. He found recognition as a symbol of American democracy more than as a poet and his poems won a strong fascination among English readers who found his championing of the common man as idealistic and prophetic.

Leaves of Grass

Leaves of Grass was first published by Whitman anonymously, with a group of 12 poems in 1855. Later, it was revised and reorganised, and five editions followed. In addition, three reused editions were published during the author's lifetime. An edition including the poems not published during the lifetime of Whitman was published in 1897 and achieved massive reception among the readers.

This book which was suppressed and oppressed with charges of indecency exerted a strong influence over American and foreign literature due to the unconventional and expansive language and subjects of the poems.

First Edition of Leaves of Grass

The first edition of *Leaves of Grass* included notable poems like "Songs of Myself" and "I Sing the Body Electric" that celebrated the beauty of the human body, physical health and sexual passion. In a preface that appeared in this edition, Whitman pronounced that a poet's style should be simple and natural, without orthodox meter or rhyme like an animal or tree in harmony with its environment.

Second Edition of Leaves of Grass

The second edition came out in 1856 with the inclusion of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" which was earlier called as "Sun-down Poem." This edition was a financial failure to Whitman.

Third Edition of Leaves of Grass

Whitman's third edition of *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1860 - 61 and it consisted of his 122 new poems. It also included his "Calamus" poems, which speaks about an intense homosexual love affair.

Fourth Edition of Leaves of Grass

Whitman's civil war poems *Drum-Taps* (1865) and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* (1865) were published in the fourth edition in 1867. The seventh edition (1881 to 1882) grouped the poems in their final order and the eighth edition 1889 incorporated his *November Boughs* (1888).

Whitman's ninth edition called as his deathbed edition (1891-1892) contains his buoyant poems.

The poem, "Song of Myself" consists of 52 sections and 1300 lines. It is considered as Whitman's most important work and his best-known one since it revolutionized American verse. It departed from traditional rhyme, metre, and form and introduced frank sexual imagery. Elements of repetition, exclamation, and incantatory voice are among its characteristic features. Many sections of this poem are catalogues of individuals, locations and actions that move the poet. It was first published in 1881 in *Leaves of Grass* without a title.

Another poem without a title in *Leaves of Grass* (1855) is the poem, "I Sing the Body Electric." It had its title in 1867 and appeared as a poem of the body. It celebrated the vigour of male and female youth and age and equated the body with the soul.

Walt Whitman's revolutionary poetry dealt with extreme private experience including sexuality and celebrated the collective experience of an idealised democratic American life. His *Leaves of Grass* was too frank and unconventional to win acceptance of the day and in fact, it was charged with "indecent" often. The poems "I Sing the Body Electric" and "Song of Myself" assert the beauty of the human body, physical health and sexuality.

Whitman is undoubtedly a great writer who is considered as one of the greatest of American writers. He was fortunate to have achieved fame during his lifetime itself. He was one of the most respected and influential writers of his time. His influence could be seen in the works of many poets of the times, and of the later poets. Whitman exerted a powerful influence over his contemporaries in the twentieth century, and his influence could especially be witnessed in the poetic works of Pablo Neruda, Fernando Pessoa, and Allen Ginsberg.

The original text of the poem "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" by Walt Whitman given below for the convenience of the scholars is taken from the internet source, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45470/crossing-brooklyn-ferry>.

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" - Poem

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!

Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,

And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,

The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,

The similitudes of the past and those of the future,

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,

The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,

The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,

The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,

Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,

Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,

Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,

A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,

Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,

I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,

Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,

Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,

Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,

Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,

Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,

Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,

Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south,

Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,

Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,

Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water,

Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,

Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,

Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine
pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,

The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the
frolicsome crests and glistening,

The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of
the granite storehouses by the docks,

On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd
on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,

On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys
burning high and glaringly into the night,

Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow
light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd forward
to them,

(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters
around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should
be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?
Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting,
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they
saw me approaching or passing,

Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh
against me as I sat,

Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never
told them a word,

Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,

The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,

Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,

What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in my
stores in advance,

I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?

Who knows but I am enjoying this?

Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now,
for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd
Manhattan?

River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?

The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the
belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I
love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that
looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!

Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my highest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!

Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current;

Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!

Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd schooners,
sloops, lighters!

Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall!
cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,

You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,

About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung out divinest aromas,

Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient
rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us,

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within
us,

We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,

You furnish your parts toward eternity,

Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Paraphrase of the Poem

Section I:

The Narrator of the poem begins the poem by first addressing the natural elements, the tide, the clouds and the setting sun, saying that he could see them "face to face." The sun is half an hour away from setting and the clouds are towards the west. The poet could see these as if they were standing right in front of him.

He then observes crowds of men and women in their usual clothes who evince curiosity in him. They look strange and interesting to him. The thousands of people who were crossing the river on the ferry returning home are more strange and interesting to him than they would ever imagine. The narrator also thinks of generations of people who will undertake the same journey for years and years from thence and are more significant to him, and will be in his mind for more than they would ever think of.

The poem consists of nine sections and the first section establishes the setting of the poem where the poet along with numerous other passengers travel on the ferry. He is moving from Manhattan to Brooklyn, and is describing his daily commute on this ferry running between Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Describing his surroundings, the clouds, the sunset, and the commuters around him, he says how curious he finds them to be. Although the passengers are following their daily routine, he finds them strange. This thought makes him go into meditation about the connection between the past and the future, and how all the people on the ferry are linked with nature in many ways. Whitman brings in the connection between man and nature here.

Section II:

All the men and women on the ferry become the "impalpable sustenance" of the narrator in the second section. Everything in the universe and all the time in it sustains him. He thinks of the "simple, compact, well-join'd scheme" of the universe that make some fade into existence.

The narrator feels himself as disintegrated and says that all of us fade into existence, and though we fade into existence, we are all still part of it. The past, the present and the future are alike. The narrator feels the beauty in all things small or big. He enjoys the sight of the streets and the river while walking and crossing and feels the quick flowing water carry him far away.

He thinks about all the people who will go after him, the connections between him and them. He thinks about the way he would love to see the lives and hear about people around him. Other people will get on the ferry and cross the river from one shore to another. Other people will watch the high tide coming in. Other people will see the busy ships around Northern

West Manhattan and would see the hilly terrain of Brooklyn to the south and East. Other people will see the big and small islands. Fifty years from now others will see all these things as they cross the river just half an hour before sunset. A hundred years from now, other people will see these same things, enjoy the sunset, the rising tide, and the falling tide.

In this section, the poet thinks about his role in relation to the nature of the universe. He thinks that he is so well connected with nature and environment, and that life will still be going on. He thinks that the universe is so simple, compact, harmonious and well adjusted. He is part of the multitude of men, part of the eternal process of birth, life and death.

He is able to envision the future where many hundreds of years from now there will be many people, the future generation people who will cross the river. We could thus see that Whitman is establishing a link between him and nature, and him and the future people.

Section III:

Whitman here talks about the universal experience of human beings. He says that neither time nor place makes any difference. Even distance does not make any difference. He feels he is a part of the people around him belonging to his present generation or even with people of many generations from then on. He addresses the future generations and tells them that his experience and theirs are the same and that their experience with the sky and the river is not new. He too has had the same experiences and he too had felt the same way that the others felt on looking at the river and sky.

Just like the readers of the future generation whom he is addressing feel that they are a member of the crowd, he too felt that he was a member of the crowd. Just like they feel restored by the beauty of the flowing river, he too felt restored. Just like they stand still leaning over the rail of the boat, but still move fast as the boat moves, he too stood still and moved fast. Just as they look at the countless boats in the harbour, he too looked at the boats. He too had crossed the river many times back in the day.

He had watched the December seagulls floating high in the air, dancing in the wind with motionless wings. He too has seen how they had glowed on one side because of the sunlight striking on them, and were deeply shadowed on the other. He had watched them travelling in big circles, slowly moving towards the south. He had seen the summer sky

reflected in the river and was almost blinded by the reflection of the sun. He looked at the sunlight making a halo around his reflection in the water.

He had looked at the misty hills to the south and southwest, and at the purple-tinted, woolly clouds coming in. He had looked at the entrance of the bay to see the boats coming in. He saw the boats coming nearby, and saw the people aboard nearby boats. He sees the sails of sailing boats and the anchor ships. He saw the sailors climbing in the rigging or straggling the masts.

He saw the masts, the boats' bodies, and the flags of all nations. He also saw flags all over the world lowered at sunset. He saw the steamboats with their captains steering from their cabins. He saw the white trail those boats left in the water and their paddle wheels vibrating as they turned.

He saw the lazy waves in the falling night, their curves, their playful foam and their shining. He saw things getting fainter in the distance, and the stonewalls of the warehouses beside the docks. He saw a group of boats, a tugboat between barges, hay boats, and the late cargo boat. He saw the fires from the metal-casting factories blazing in the night, sending flashes of black, red, and yellow light over the roofs and into the streets.

This third section shows the poet bringing in the universality of experience of people belonging to all generations. He is trying to transcend time, place, and distance in order to establish contact with people of the future generations. His own experience is almost the same as that of the readers generations from now.

Section IV:

In the fourth section, the poet tells that all these things, that is, whatever he spoke about in the previous section, are all the same to him as it is to the future generations. He expresses his love for these cities and tells that he loved the rivers well for their stately and rapid nature. He says that these things touched him in the same way that it would touch the people of the future.

He loved Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the grand, swift flowing river. He felt close to all the people he saw, and to the people of the future whom he knew would be thinking back to him just as he was thinking forward to them.

This section shows Whitman pronouncing his attachment and

deep love for the cities, the river and the people. It shows his emotional involvement in his relationships with other people and things. He thinks about the universality of experience, of people belonging to all generations and also thinks what will happen after his death. He anticipates and prophecies that the future people will be thinking about how Whitman would have felt centuries back in the past, just as he is now thinking forward in the future.

The poet with men in section Five, questions what separates him and the future generation people. He asks what it matters whether there are twenties or hundreds of years separating him from the people of the future. He says that whatever separates him from the future generation does not matter; it does not matter whether he is separated from them by distance or place. It only matters that he was alive.

Brooklyn with many hills was his hometown. He had also walked through the streets of Manhattan and had gone swimming in the rivers around it. He had also felt sudden questions moving inside him. Sometimes walking through a crowd he would feel those questions and sometimes he would be feeling them, walking home late at night or even while he was lying on bed.

He was also struck with sudden insights from his place floating in the eternal suspension of existence. He had also been somebody who had the body he had. He knew that he was because of his body and that he would be because of his body. He states that he had received an identity because of his body.

Section V:

In section V, the poet poses a question about the relationship between himself and the future generations to come. He feels that even if there is a gap of hundreds of years between them they are united by things, which do not change. He feels that whatever experience he had under gone like living in Brooklyn and walking in Manhattan streets, the future generation people too would feel the same. They too would live in Brooklyn and they too would be walking the streets of Manhattan.

We see that this section is the principal aspect of the poem. The poet is trying to achieve his physical and spiritual identity. In so doing, he gives importance to his body and thereby attempts at uniting his sensibility with that of the readers. His living experiences with that of Brooklyn,

Manhattan etc. are universalised. He transcends his experience and says that the future generation people too would be experiencing these things. Whitman is trying to unite spiritually with the future generation people and thereby, with all of mankind.

Section VI:

In Section VI, the poet tells the readers, who are the future people that they are not alone in going through dark times. He says that he too had gone through dark times. The very best work he had done seems empty and questionable. In reality, his grand ideas too were really pathetic. He tells that the readers are not alone in being bad sometimes. He is a person who knew what it was like to behave badly. He had also got himself into the same old messes of stubborn behaviour and he had talked too much, was embarrassed, was full of resentment, had lied, had stolen and had held grudges. He too had been cunning, angry, lustful, and wanted things that he was ashamed to talk about.

He was unmanageable, arrogant, greedy, shallow, tricky, cowardly, and cruel. He behaved like a wild wolf, a snake, or a pig. He did not lack dishonest looks, empty words, or the desire to cheat on people. He often resisted, hated, procrastinated, and was cheap and lazy. He was just like anyone else in the way they had spent that time and in what had happened to them.

Young men called him by his first name as he went past. He had felt their arms around his neck while he stood next to them, or felt them carelessly leaning against him when they sat next to each other. He saw plenty of people he loved in the street or on the ferry or gathering places but never told them that he had loved them. He had lived the same life as everyone else, laughing, messily eating and sleeping. He had played his own self-conscious part in the human drama, the same role everyone plays that can be as grand as we like or as little as we like or grand and little at once.

In section VI, the poet tells that the same "dark patches" of doubt, which angles the readers, had engulfed him. His best actions have appeared "blank" and "suspicious." He too had known what it was to be evil, but finally life is what we make it. The poet here refers to the evil influence of man, which creates a condition of contraries of moral evil and good in human life. The poet says that all human beings suffer from these evil

influences and he too is not an exception to it. He has also been under the evil influences and through this, the poet implies that the readers should not feel alone in having suffered from evil influences. He says that one must accept both the good and evil aspects of life.

Section VII:

In section VII, the poet states that he is getting even closer to the future people, that is the readers. He says that he thinks of the readers as much as they are thinking of the poet. He says that he thought of the future generation of people well ahead of time. He thought long and hard about the readers even before they were born. He says no one would have known what he was getting out of such thoughts. There is no one who knows that he was enjoying these kinds of thoughts. He says that no one knows that he was looking at the future readers transcending the matters of time and distance in space. He says that he was looking at the readers though the readers cannot see him.

In section VII, the poet addressing his reader, says that he was thinking of the readers for a long time. He was thinking of them seriously and the thought that they are yet to be born confirms that it is the future readers belonging to centuries forward that Whitman was thinking about. He says just like how the readers will be thinking of the poet while reading this poem in future, he too had been thinking of them, and in fact has been looking at them. In addition to this, he says that he may not know what was to come for him but he is sure that there is a spiritual relationship between him and his readers, inspite of the distance in time and space.

He says though he could not be seen by his readers, he was watching them and that he has the privilege of seeing them even before they were born. The poet thus was trying to bring about a connection between him and his future readers, a connection that was meant to be on the spiritual line. It was the thought processes of the poet and the readers that were getting connected, thereby, bringing about a link between the poet and the readers. The connection or the link is not only of location but also on a mental and emotional level. Whitman believes that this connection on spiritual lane will ultimately result in the unison and fusion of the poet and the reader, and thus there would be the spiritual unity of the two. The poet is here trying to transcend the concepts of time and place, both spiritually and physically.

Section VIII:

Section VIII brings out the poet's love for Manhattan. He says that nothing could be possibly more grand and pleasing to him than the beauty of Manhattan, all surrounded by the masts of boats, the river, the sunset, and the cresting waves of high tide, the seagulls moving their bodies, the hay-boat in the darkening evening and the late cargo boat. He states that no Gods could be more powerful than the ones he feels holding his hand, calling him by his name in their beloved voices as he gets closer. He says he gets connected to the person who looks into his eyes with a delicate and mysterious thing. He says that the reader understands what he was trying to say. Whatever he was telling wordlessly was true and what truths he cannot study or learn from a sermon, he would have studied through the spiritual communion with Whitman.

In Section VIII, Whitman describes the beauty of the Manhattan harbour, the sunset on the river, the seagulls, and the twilight. He understands the spiritual bonding between himself and the other people, and understands this bonding to be subtle but enduring. He says that the union between himself and others cannot be understood in ordinary terms, by teaching, or by preaching, but it is more intuitive and mystical. It is a spiritual bond that links him with his fellow men and this union is beyond the bounds of rational thoughts or philosophy.

Section IX:

In Section XI, the poet asks the river to keep on flowing. He tells it to swell up at high tide and sink down at low tide. He asks the lazy aged waves to keep dancing playfully along. Addressing the beautiful sunset clouds, he tells them to soak him in their glory and also to soak the people who come generations after. He asks the numberless travellers to cross from one side of the river to the other. He orders the masts of the boat around Manhattan and the lovely hills of Brooklyn to stand up. He asks the confused and questioning brain to throb with energy and throw out questions and answers. He asks the external float of solution to float here and everywhere. He asks the affectionate and desiring eyes to look at the street, the house and the gathering-place.

He asks the young men to call him loudly by his first name. He asks people to keep on living life, to play the self-conscious role that lets people know that they are acting. He asks them to play the role that is as

grand or as little as one chooses to make it. He asks the readers to think whether he might just be looking back at them. He tells the ferryboat railing to stand firmly, to hold up the people who casually lean on it. He also tells it that it should speed up along with the river's pace.

He tells the seagulls to keep flying in either sideways or in wide circles, high up in the air. He asks people to reflect upon the summer sky, river water, and hold it there until everyone who looks down to appreciate it. He asks the halo on the people's head including on himself to shoot out in the reflections of the water.

He tells the ships to come along, from further down the bay. He asks the sailboat and barges to go up or down the river to sow themselves off, flags from around the world that are ceremonially lowered at sunset. He tells metal-factory chimneys to shoot their flames high and cast dark shadows in the night. He tells the rooftops to throw red and yellow light over the rooftops. He asks the appearances of things to reveal what they really are from then on.

Skin on things is needed to keep up wrapping of his soul. He wishes that there should be glorious smells hanging around his body and the bodies of the others. He asks the cities to flourish by bringing on its goods, its displays and the generous and sufficient rivers. He asks the cities to expand and grow in its existence because he feels that the cities and places in general are more lasting and permanent. Existence is perhaps the most sacred thing of all. He asks the city to stay right where it is, and feels that the objects are immortal than anything else does.

Here, Whitman addresses himself to material objects, which are also part of the life processes because they are useful to man. He calls them as silent, lovely caretakers. He says that we human beings accept them with our senses. Physical objects, like "dumb, beautiful minsters," wait for their union with the poet's soul.

Whitman says that the material objects around us will not be able to outwit human beings or evade them any longer. Human beings use objects, but do not discard them. We make sure they take root inside us. He tells that though human beings understand them less, they love them. He states that they are perfect and that they themselves connect to the eternal. He tells that they, either grand or little, offer themselves up to the collective soul.

In section IX, the poet invokes the natural objects around him like the sun, the river, the clouds and all other things. He asks the river to flow and the clouds to shower upon him and the other passengers. He asks the tall masts of Manhattan to stand up. He calls on everything — the bird, the sky, and the water — to keep on fulfilling their function with splendour, for everything is part of the universal life flow.

The poet desires that the "eternal float of solution" should suspend itself everywhere. Physical objects, like "dumb, beautiful ministers," wait for their union with the poet's soul. Thus, at the end of the poem, Whitman addresses himself to material objects, which are also part of the life process because they are useful to man.

This section is significant in that it uses the language of incantation. The poet invokes the images of his experiences to suggest the flowing of time. The physical existence of man is like a ferry plying between the two shores of mortality and immortality. He and his fancy (his imagination) use objects to express the idea of the search for the eternal beyond the transient. This search, or the function of fancy, is exemplified by the ferry ride, which moves from a point in the physical world to a destination in the spiritual world. This journey of the spirit can take place easily in a universe, which is harmonious and well adjusted.

Analysis of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1856) by Walt Whitman is one of his best known and best loved poems as it unites all human beings despite the differences in time and space with their common experience of life. It was originally published in the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* as "Sun-Down Poem" in 1856 and was substantially revised in 1881. It has been highly lauded by the critics for its spiritual and philosophical contents without sacrificing the importance to the physical self.

Whitman is conscious of the readers of this poem, his contemporary readers as well as his future readers whom he will not be able to see but could envision them in his mind's eye. He addresses his future readers, belonging to the future generation and, thereby, attains a spiritual union with them. The closeness with which he talks with them and the experience that is so common between them make the writer and the reader unite, despite the gap of time and space, and the limitations of physical existence. The gap between them is bridged on the spiritual plane.

The poem is a long narrative poem, written in free verse and consists of nine sections with 147 lines. It explores the connection between man and nature and the central theme of it is the shared human experience. The poem opens with descriptions of nature by the poet who is sailing back home in a Brooklyn ferry from Manhattan at the end of a working day. He addresses nature first and then observing groups of men and women who are in their usual costume, his curiosity turns around them.

He also thinks about people who made a regular journey in the past and the people who will undertake the same journey thousands of years from now. By thinking about the people of the past and of the future, Whitman brings about an imaginative link between himself and the reader. He makes a union of people belonging to different generations irrespective of the time and space they occupy.

Whitman states that no matter what the period is, the travellers on this ferry route will experience the same timeless view: "the round masts, the steamer ships in motion and the seagulls flying by." The poet feels that all these shared experiences can unite people across different spatial and temporal periods. He asserts that all humans are connected across time and space.

To him, the universe seems compact, harmonious and well adjusted. He is a part of the crowd and identifies himself with people who will be crossing this river in future. Whitman thus establishes a connection between himself and the future generation readers. He transcends time, place and distance and tries to establish that all human beings are one on the basis of the common shared experience they have with nature.

Whitman giving vivid descriptions of the journey on the river, the movement of the day from morning to midnight simultaneously hints upon the movement from one side of the river to the other. On a philosophical plane, the movement is from the physical to the spiritual. Whitman professes his love for the natural and material world. He expresses his deep love for the cities, the river and the people.

His emotional relationship with men and objects is brought out well here. He identifies himself as being a part of the world and seeks his own physical and spiritual identity. By questioning about the relationship between himself and the generations of people yet to come, he feels that he will be united with them through their sharing of the environment and experience similar kind of physical space. He believes that his experience transcends the limits of the Brooklyn ferry and is universalised.

He is no more emotional but his quest gets more intellectual. Whitman brings in the metaphor of a chemical solution "the float forever held in solution," the solution being the spiritual solution, which is the source of one's being. Whitman understands that he is united with future generations and with all of humankind spiritually.

Whitman in the next section goes on to confess that he too like anybody else, experienced moments of weakness and evil thoughts crossing his mind. He too had been engulfed in "dark patches" of doubts that might engulf the reader also. His best actions have appeared to be blank and suspicious. He too had lied, blushed, resented, stole and have gone through anger, lust, hot wishes of which he was ashamed.

He has suffered from evil influences of life as have all men, belonging to the past, present and future. He advises his readers not to feel alone or dejected of having held these feelings as these are all feelings commonly shared by humanity and one must learn to accept both the good and evil elements of life. They must learn to subdue their desires to sin and must pass on.

Describing the beauty of the Manhattan harbour, Whitman understands the spiritual bond between himself and the other people, and understands this bonding to be subtle yet enduring.

In the concluding section of the poem, Whitman asks the environment and nature to continue performing their duty. He says that it is the physical world that binds all of us together and allows us to know our own. We must revel in our physical surroundings because our relationship with our environment is what would enable us to attain spirituality and fulfilment in life.

Literary Devices

Literary devices are devices that are used in a work of art to beautify it and ornament it. They are used by the writers to express themselves in an attractive way and make their compositions more appealing to the readers. These literary devices portray the writers' feelings, emotions and ideas.

Poets use many poetic devices that are made up of structural, rhythmic, metrical, verbal and visual elements. These are essential tools for a poet to create rhythm, addition of meaning, improvement of tone, enhancement of mood and atmosphere of a poem. Figurative language adds beauty and greater appeal to the works of art.

All the poets and writers prescribed for our study have used a number of literary devices and figurative language to make their works of art interesting and appealing. These literary devices coexist with plot and characters to give a heightened effect to a story and to hint at larger themes, ideas and meaning in a piece of writing. Some of the literary devices are given below for an understanding and better appreciation of the poetry and fiction prescribed for the present study.

1. **Allegory:** Allegory is a narrative that is used to express a hidden meaning in a character, place or event that contains moral or political significance. Writers use allegory to convey hidden or complex meanings through symbols, images etc. Personification (a thing or inanimate object given human qualities) of abstract ideas could also be called as allegory.

Allegories are similar to metaphors in that both illustrate an idea by making a comparison to something else. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a great example of political allegory where animals living in a society are divided into two factions. This is an allegory to reflect the rise of the Russian Revolution.

2. **Anaphora:** Anaphora is a literary device in which a word or an expression is repeated at the beginning of a number of sentences, clauses or phrases to create a rhetorical or poetic effect.
3. **Assonance:** Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line. Assonance is used in a creative work of art to create rhythm, add meaning and tone and to emphasize on the themes.
4. **Alliteration:** Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line. Alliteration is used to give ornamental beauty to words with a musical, lyrical or emotional effect.
5. **Enjambment:** Enjambment is a literary device where a phrase or a sentence does not stop in a line but continues to the next in poetry. It lacks punctuation at its line break and carries the reader without interruption to the next line of the poem.
6. **Imagery:** Imagery is a literary device used in novels, poetry or in any other form of writing to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. It appeals to the sense of sight, smell, sound, internal and external feelings to evoke a sensory experience in the reader, which in turn brings life to the work of art. It uses vivid descriptions that appeals to the readers' sense to create an idea or image in the minds

of the readers. Imagery can be created using other literary devices like similes, metaphors or onomatopoeia.

7. **Simile:** Simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the words "like" or "as." Simile is used commonly in everyday language and it is used with the aim of bringing out interesting comparisons for the readers. Example: Love is like a red rose, where love is compared to a red rose.
8. **Metaphor:** Metaphor is similar to simile as the two are involved in making comparisons. Simile makes use of the words "like" or "as" while comparing, whereas, metaphor simply compares two things that are not alike without using the words "as" and "like." It simply states a thing. For instance, the sentence, "She is a lion while fighting her enemies." Here, without using the words "like" or "as" it is stated that she is like a lion when it comes to fighting with her enemies.
9. **Extended Metaphors:** This literary device is aimed at building evocative images in a piece of creative writing. Extended Metaphor is also known as Conceit where a single Metaphor or analogy is used at length in a work of literature. For example, in the poem, "Caged Bird" the images of the free and the caged birds are used as extended metaphors. They are used to bring out the contrary situations of the whites and the blacks respectively in America.
10. **Symbolism:** Symbolism is a literary device that uses symbols to signify ideas and meanings that are different from literal meaning. For example, a rose used in a symbolic way does not stand for the flower but for love. Symbols convey deeper meaning and significance to what the writer intends to say.
11. **Rhetorical Question:** Rhetorical Question is a literary device used to create a dramatic effect to make a point. This question is asked not to get an answer but to emphasize the author's opinion on a topic, to create a desired effect.
12. **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole is a figure of speech where certain things are told in an exaggerated manner to emphasize a point. The exaggeration is so extreme it becomes too hard to believe. Hyperbole should not be taken literally as they are not exactly true. For example, "I have a million things to do." This million thing is a hyperbole.
13. **Allusion:** Allusion is a literary device that is used to develop characters and storylines by referring to an object or circumstance in an indirect

manner. It is an implied or indirect reference to a person, event or thing.

14. **Irony:** Irony is a linguistic and literary device in which real meaning is hidden or contradicted.
15. **Dramatic Irony:** Dramatic Irony is a form of irony. It is a literary device where the readers are aware of certain situations, which the characters themselves are not. For example, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience know that the lovers are alive but the characters do not know that. Dramatic irony creates tension and suspense in the readers.
16. **Motif:** A motif is a repeated element that bears a symbolic significance to a story. Sometimes it is a repeated word or phrase or topic. Through its repetition it causes a desired effect upon the readers, helps to enhance the central ideas, themes in a work, and gives a deeper meaning to a story in which it occurs.
17. **Paradox:** Paradox is a literary device that brings out a contradiction that questions logic in literature. Paradox is used to provoke the readers to think critically.
18. **Personification:** Personification is a literary device where human qualities are attributed to non-living objects or things. For example, "April is the cruellest month of the year." Here cruelty is attributed to April, a non-living object. This literary device is used in poetry to bring about an interest in the readers for the subject spoken about.
19. **Synecdoche:** Synecdoche is a figurative language where a part is used for a whole and a whole is used for a part. For example, a suit can be used to refer to a businessman. Bread can be used to refer to food in general.
20. **Onomatopoeia:** This literary device is used to refer to the use of a word that phonetically imitates or resembles the sound that it describes. For example, the animal sound, "meow," the bird's sound "chirp" are Onomatopoeic sounds.
21. **Satire:** Satire is the use of irony, humour, exaggeration or hyperbole or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity. It is a device used by writers to bring out the vices of the society, thereby, seeking reformation.

Walt Whitman's Use of Literary Devices

Walt Whitman, the great American poet and philosopher has used a number of literary devices and figurative language in his poetry that has made his poems achieve greater appeal to his readers. "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," is a poem about spirituality and one, which abounds in symbols and imagery.

The journey of the poet on the ferry, showing a movement back and forth of Brooklyn itself stands as a symbol for the life on earth that keeps moving. The central theme of the poem, which is the shared experience of people ignoring the limits of the temporal and moving beyond time and place, is put forth by Whitman with the use of a number of literary devices and figurative language. The poem is filled with similes, metaphors, anaphora (repetition of words), personification and rhetorical questions. It is written in free verse, which has no regular meter or rhyme scheme. Walt Whitman is a pioneer writer in the use of free verse in poetry, and is also known as "Father of Free Verse."

Whitman has used these literary devices to make the central theme of the poem effective. The experience of the human beings transcend both time and space, and the poet feels oneness with the human beings he meets during his time, and with the future generation readers.

He uses symbolism to explore this theme of connectivity with himself and with the rest of humanity. Nature acts as a predominant symbol in the poem. He uses nature to symbolise common human habits. The tide, the clouds and the sun are all curious to him. They are important characters to Whitman in this spiritual drama. The crowds of men and women on the ferryboats who are crossing the shore for years are expanded to symbolise the large united self of humankind. They become the "impalpable sustenance" of the poet.

They are part of "the simple, compact, well-join'd scheme" of the universe and he believes himself to be "disintegrated yet part of the scheme." The poet thinking of his role in relation to the nature of the universe feels that he is part of the multitude of men, part of the eternal processes of birth, life, and death. To Whitman, land symbolises the physical, and water symbolises the spiritual, where both are important for physical existence.

The ferry that makes a constant movement backward and forward, forms a major image in the poem and thereby, serves as an important symbol

in the poem. The ferry symbolises the spatial (of space) and temporal (of time) movement. Whitman shows man trying to transcend the boundaries of time and space. Whitman thinks about the future travellers also who will travel on the ferry and would be crossing from shore to shore. He tries to bring about a connection between himself and the future generation people. To him, neither time nor space matters. It is the experience shared along with nature's permanent existence, which provides meaning. He feels himself to be a part of this generation as well as of many generations from thence.

The movement of the ferry from one shore to another, from morning to midnight is to him a symbol of the movement from the physical plane to the spiritual. Whitman, seeking his own physical and spiritual identity attempts at unifying his sensibility with that of the others.

When talking about the evil influences on man, Whitman tells the future generation people that they are not alone in suffering from the bad influences and that he too had experienced such things in his life. He too had had his "dark patches" of doubts that had engulfed the readers and his actions too have been "blank" and "suspicious." He too had known "what it was to be" and he too "blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd, / Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak." In saying so Whitman tells the future generation people that one must accept both the pure and impure elements of life.

Whitman describes nature in beautiful terms. He calls them as "dumb and beautiful ministers." Enthralled at the beauty of the sunset on the river, the Manhattan harbour, the seagull and the twilight, he feels a bonding with nature as well as with other people. This bonding is intuitive and cannot be understood in ordinary terms.

The seagulls form an important symbol in the poem, where the flight of the seagulls symbolises the spiritual flight of the poet to the future generation people. The movement of the seagulls are symbols of the repetitive nature of human experiences such as commuting.

Apart from the usage of images and symbols, Whitman has also used other literary devices like assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm etc. in this poem, all of which add beauty and appeal to it.

The Themes of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

The poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" by Walt Whitman is a spiritual poem that transcends the boundaries of time and space, and establishes a bond between the poet and the readers. It is philosophical in bringing about a union between man and nature, and in propounding concepts of human identity, spirituality, hope and unity. This poem could also be read as a transcendental poem, which brings out elements of transcendentalism in it.

It is a nature poem, which focuses on the spiritual unity of human beings and the elements surrounding the universe. The themes of human identity, spirituality, hope and unity pervades all through the poem. Whitman depicting the journey on the ferry, showing the movement from one shore to another universalises the experience. He brings about a connection between nature and mankind to showcase the fact that there is a spiritual force underlying the natural world.

The poet begins the poem with a description of nature, where nature is portrayed in all its magnificence. The poet is sailing back home from Manhattan on a Brooklyn ferry at the end of a working day. He addresses the flood-tide below him, the clouds of the west and the setting sun which were all right in front of him. He also looks at the crowd of men and women who looks strange and interesting to him.

The sight of the beauty of nature and the multitudes of people belonging to the contemporary times as well as to that of future forges a link and bond with him, nature and the people, belonging to even a later generation of people, thus moving beyond the boundaries of time and space.

The narrator of the poem goes into a meditation about the connection between the past and the future, and how human beings and the "dumb beautiful ministers" (natural elements like the sun, river, tide, trees, mountains etc.) wait for their union with the poet's soul. Whitman feels the material objects of the world to be a part of the life process as they are helpful to man. The narrator feels himself as disintegrated and says that all elements in the universe including him fade into existence. He says that although all of us fade into existence, we are all still a part of it. Everything in the universe and all the time in it sustains.

The poet thinks that he is so well connected with nature and the

environment and that the universe is simple, compact, harmonious and well adjusted. He is part of the multitude of men, part of the eternal process of birth, life, and death. He establishes a link between him and nature, and between him and the future people. He believes that whatever sights he sees now will also be seen and experienced by the future generation people. Whatever emotions and feelings he felt on looking at nature would be felt by those people too. The seagulls floating in the air, the dancing of the wind, the sun, its reflection, the river, its waters, the sailing boats, and the anchored ships, the waves, the fires all are his experience as well as the experience of the people of the future generations.

The poet expresses his deep love and attachment to the cities, rivers and people. He universalises the experience of the ferry and believes that his physical existence and spiritual quest have become the ferry and this ultimately connects him to mankind. He says that man is capable of both good and evil and so he should accept both the pure and impure elements of life. The material objects of nature is as important as man himself, as they are useful to man. The material objects coexist with men, and men are highly dependent on these material objects.

Whitman highlights the importance of these "dumb beautiful ministers" in man's life and says no matter how far we go, our basic needs and desires are always the same. We may belong to different generations, different locations, different era but the experiences are the same. What experiences we felt today have already been experienced by the previous generations and the same will be experienced by future generations. The poet by telling this is trying to transcend the time, space, distance, and is forging a unity among himself, nature and future generation people.

Existence is perhaps the most sacred thing of all. The physical existence of man is the key to our true identity. Man's physical body is as important as man's spirituality.

We thus see that Whitman propagates a spiritual union between man and nature and believes that our relationship with our environment alone will enable us to attain spirituality and fulfilment in life. We must revel in our physical surroundings.

Questions

1. How does the poet bring about the themes of life and death in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry?"
2. Comment on the evolution of thought in Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."
3. Comment on the kinds of landscapes that are observed in Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." What role does the ferry play? What role does nature play?
4. How has Whitman brought out the unity and connection of the human experience in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry?"
5. How does Whitman invent himself in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry?"
6. Symbolism in Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"
7. What are the literary devices that Whitman has used in his poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry?"
8. Would you consider "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as a transcendental poem? Give reasons for your answer.

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Lesson 2.2 Poetry : Emily Dickinson - Success Is Counted Sweetest

Structure

- Emily Dickinson – An Introduction
- Emily Dickinson's Life and Works.
- Dickinson's poem, "Success is Counted Sweetest."
- Paraphrase of "Success is Counted Sweetest."
- Analysis of the poem.
- Themes employed in the poem.
- Literary devices used in the poem.
- Characteristic Features of Emily Dickinson's Poetry.

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the well-known American writer, Emily Dickinson. The poet's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of her work.
- Have an idea of Dickinson's poetry.
- Have a complete comprehension of Dickinson's poem, "Success is Counted Sweetest."
- Have an idea of the themes employed in the poem.
- Have an idea of the literary devices used in the poem.
- Enumerate the Characteristic Features of Emily Dickinson's Poetry.

Introduction**Emily Dickinson (1832-86):**

Emily Dickinson (1832-86) is a well-known American poet. She was a prolific writer who has written around 1800 poems, which were all published in bulk after her death.



Dickinson is a prolific writer who is best known for her eccentric personality and non-traditional style of writing. The frequent themes of her poetry were death and mortality and though she did not achieve popularity for poetry writing while living, her poetry published posthumously had wide reception and had found a prime place in the history of American literature. Her life and works are interesting and has had a captivating interest among scholars and readers.

Emily Dickinson's Early Life

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her parents belonged to a prominent family in Amherst. Her father, Edward Dickinson, was a lawyer, a politician, and a trustee of Amherst College. He was also the founder of this college. Emily Dickinson was the second child and eldest daughter to her parents. She had an older brother, William Austin and a younger sister, Lavinia. Dickinson was a pleasant, well-behaved and well-mannered daughter who had a liking for music and flair for poetry. She was a sensitive soul who was deeply affected by the sadness and suffering of the people around her.

Dickinson's father gave compulsory education to his children and saw to it that they were well educated. Dickinson had the fortune of receiving a more rigorous and more classical education than many other girls of her period. She attended Amherst Academy along with her sister Lavinia when she was ten years old. Amherst Academy was initially for boys but later began admitting female students to which Emily Dickinson started going.

Studies at Amherst Academy was rigorous and challenging but despite this, Dickinson excelled in her studies. She studied Literature, Philosophy, History, Science and Latin. Occasionally, Dickinson had to take time off from school due to her intermittent illnesses. It was her repeated illnesses and the loss of her loved ones when she was a teenager that led to the melancholic nature of the Dickinson. This was the reason for her preoccupation with death too. Her absorption with death began at her young age itself.

When Emily Dickinson was 14, she lost her dear friend and cousin, Sofia Holland to typhus. Holland's death was a big blow to her and she suffered her first major loss. Holland's death made her experience deep melancholy that nothing in her hometown could make her recover from. She was sent to Boston to recover herself from this unbearable loss.

On returning to Amherst after her recovery, she was made to continue her studies there. It was then she became an acquaintance of Susan Huntington Gilbert, her life long friend and future sister-in-law. They continued their studies in Amherst and she met a few more friends there who became her lifelong friends.

After completing her education at Amherst Academy, Dickinson joined Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. She did not enjoy the full term there and discontinued it in less than a year. Surmising at the fact of her leaving the place so early, no clear reason was attributed to it. It was felt that she might have returned from there because she did not like the intense Evangelical religious atmosphere or because her family wanted her to return or because she was feeling lonely and did not like the teaching style there. Whatever reasons she returned home for, after discontinuing from there, she was still a bright and intelligent scholar. When she returned home she was eighteen years old.

Emily Dickinson's reading practices became wide and intense with her friendship with her family friend, a young attorney named Benjamin Franklin Newton. He was a mentor to her and it was believed that he only would have introduced William Wordsworth and Ralph Waldo Emerson to her, whose writings became an inspiring source to her. She was influenced by these writers to write her own poetry. Dickinson was a voracious reader who read extensively. Her reading was encouraged and developed by her family and friends who gifted her more books. She was well influenced by the work of William Shakespeare and Charlotte Bronte.

Another friend of Dickinson, the Amherst Academy Principal, Leonard Humphrey too met his death in 1850 when he was only 25 years old. All these sudden deaths due to illnesses at young age affected Dickinson and filled her with sorrow. Her writings of the time including her letters were filled with deep melancholy showing her suffering from despair and despondency.

Dickinson's closest friend and confidant, Susan Gilbert was courted by Dickinson's brother Austin during this time and they married in 1856. It was generally an unhappy marriage but still Gilbert was much closer with Dickinson and they shared an intense and passionate correspondence and friendship. This formed an important relationship in either of the women's lives and in the view of many contemporary scholars, it was also likely to have been a romantic one. Gilbert, apart from being a great friend to Dickinson was also a quasi-editor and advisor to Dickinson during her writing career.

Dickinson was much caring for her family and did not show a passion for travelling. She did not travel much outside Amherst and was slowly developing into a recluse and eccentric for which she had a name later.

From 1850 onwards, Dickinson involved herself in taking care of her mother who was home stuck and suffering from chronic illnesses. Due to this, Dickinson became cut off from the outside world, and even after her mother's death she still kept all to herself and avoided people. She turned inwards more to her inner self and thus came out with her enormous literary output.

Emily Dickinson's Poetry:

The poetic genius of Emily Dickinson which earned her a distinct place in the annals of American literature saw the creative output of more than 1800 poems, majority of which were published posthumously. Although it is not known when she started writing, it could well be stated that it would have been around the 1850s. It was Thomas H. Johnson who helped her in the publication of the collection of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. He was of the view that five of her poems could be definitely fixed to the period before 1858.

Dickinson's poetry written during that time showed an adherence

to the conventions of time. A few of Dickinson's poems were published in the *Springfield Republican* between 1858 and 1868 anonymously. All the poems published in this were edited heavily removing Dickinson's unique style of writing poetry using unusual punctuation, stylisation and syntax.

Most of her poems written before 1858 were witty, satirical and melancholic in tone. She mourned the loss of her brother, Austin in a few of her poems containing the melancholic strain. The poem "I have a bird in Spring" that was published in a 1894 collection of her letters, was a friendship poem which was written for Gilbert. It was a lament about the grief of fearing the loss of friendship.

Dickinson's first poem "Nobody Knows this Little Rose" came into publication without obtaining the permission of Dickinson. Her another poem, "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers," was published after retitling it as "The Sleeping."

Writing more poems Dickinson started organising them. She revised and made fresh copies of her poetry in 1858 putting together Manuscripts books. She produced forty manuscripts with just under 800 poems between 1858 and 1865.

Dickinson had also drafted the trio of letters, which were later known as the "Master Letters" during the period from 1858 to 1865. These letters which were not sent but preserved as drafts among her papers, were addressed to an unknown man, whom she calls "Master." Dickinson's scholars guess that they may not have been intended for a real person at all and they were poetic in a strange way. These "Letters" remain one of the major mysteries of Emily Dickinson's life and writings.

Emily Dickinson's early thirties were by far the most productive of her literary period. She was the most prolific during the 1860s and it was during this time she started living like a recluse. She was wearing white always and shied away from social gatherings. Although she kept herself away from society and was in solitude, she actively involved in sending correspondences to friends and associates.

The poems she produced during this period mark the high standard of a creative work. She had a unique style of writing, adopting unusual and specific syntax, line breaks, and punctuations. Though her earlier works touched upon themes of fear, loss, and grief, this period is best known for the theme of death which started appearing in her poems more often.

It is noted that Dickinson wrote more than 700 poems between 1861 and 1865. It was during this time that she had sent her poems to a literary critic, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who was also her family friend. Higginson recognised her talent but attempted at improving it which made Dickinson lose interest in publishing her work.

It was from this time that Dickinson took up to a little bit of melodrama alongside of expressing deeply felt sentiments and observations.

Later work:

After 1866, there was a decline in the productivity of Dickinson's poetry as she suffered from personal losses. Around 1867, Dickinson's sense of loneliness and solitude increased to an extreme level that she began refusing to see visitors and rarely went out in public. She lost her father to a stroke in 1874 and even refused to come out of her self-imposed seclusion for his memorial or funeral services. It is said that she may have had a brief romantic correspondence with Otis Philips Lord, a judge and a widower who was her long-time friend.

They used to write to each other though very little of their correspondence survives. Lord died in 1884, two years after Dickinson's old mentor, Charles Wadworth had died after a long illness.

Her mother also died in 1882, all of which made her health degenerate. Emily Dickinson became extremely ill during May 1886, and died of a disease of the kidneys. Dickinson kept writing until nearly the end of her life, but did not have the energy or interest to edit or organise her poems. Susan Gilbert wrote her obituary and she was buried in her family's plot at west cemetery in Amherst.

Success is Counted Sweetest (112) - Poem

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host

Who took the Flag today
 Can tell the definition
 So clear of victory

As he defeated – dying –
 On whose forbidden ear
 The distant strains of triumph
 Burst agonized and clear!

Paraphrase

Lines 1-4:

The poem, "Success is Counted Sweetest" begins speaking about the importance of success and clarifies to whom success is most important. The first two lines say that success is more valued and cherished by those who have never succeeded in their lives. It says that those who are a failure in their lives and those who have failed many times only know the true value of success, and, thereby, enjoy the true happiness of achieving it.

It then says that to understand the joy of the sweetness of nectar, there should be a real longing for it and a longing pain for it. To get something a person desires there should be a strong liking for it. The value of the thing needed most should be known and realised by the person, because, only knowing the actual value will make the need stronger.

It also means that only when somebody does not have what he or she wants, will it be more desirable for him or her to possess it. They can understand the true worth of achieving something only when they have been longing for it.

Lines 5-8:

The second stanza speaks about the victorious army on the battlefield. It says that not one person in the army belonging to the winning side, and who have won the flag of victory will (purple Host) be able to define victory in so clear a term than the person in the defeated team would.

The team which won the battle might celebrate and enjoy the

victory but they cannot define victory as well, and will not feel it as desirable and heavenly, as it would be to a defeated, dying person who lost and failed.

Those who have emerged victorious have achieved victory but they do not understand its significance. They are the winners but they cannot truly relish or appreciate the victory because it seems normal to them and they cannot understand the sweetness of it anymore.

They have success and there ends the matter with any meaning or significance lost to them after that.

Lines 9-12:

The third stanza shows a dying soldier lying on the war field, able to hear the cheerful noises that the victorious soldiers were giving on. He hears the victorious soldiers celebrating victory and though he is defeated by them, he actually knows the real value of victory because he was undergoing the pain and agony of being defeated. He knows the real value of victory and understands how significant and sweet victory is.

Although a loser, he understands the value of victory more than the celebrating winners do. Hence, the noise of the celebrations brings forth pain to his forbidden ear.

The poet wishes to emphasize here that the true worth of victory is better known and appreciated by a person who has failed rather than by the person who is victorious. It is the person who has failed that knows the pain of failure. Hence, it is the person who has lost victory that appreciates it more than the person who had secured it. The poet seems to be commenting that one must go through the pain of failure in order to well understand the value of success. The soldier who had lost the battle and is lying defeated has experienced loss, and it is he who knows the worth of the success that the opponent has achieved. It is he who would know and appreciate better the joy of success more than the soldiers who won because it is he who is in dire need of it.

Analysis of "Success Is Counted Sweetest"

Emily Dickinson, the great American poet of the 19th century talks about success in her short and witty poem, "Success is Counted Sweetest" written in 1859. It is an early poem written by her, where she talks about success valued by people.

It is a war poem, which has the battlefield as its setting. The narrator of the poem has no role in the battle, but is only a mere observer. She simply narrates a scene from there in the third person narrative without participating in it. She observes on the one side an army, which had won the battle celebrating their success and on the other side, a soldier belonging to the other army that had lost, filled with agony and pain hearing the distant cheerful noises of victory.

The poem opens with the generalising statement about people who never succeed. It is the people who have never succeeded that attach more importance to success than any other thing in the world. It is the defeated person, who fully well realises the real value of success in life than the person who achieves success.

Dickinson gives more importance to the people who tried but failed to succeed, because it is these people, who will really understand the true value of success. The people who achieved success easily without much yearning or longing for it never truly enjoy success or know the valuable worth of it.

An easily attained victory never gives fulfilment to those who are accustomed to it. It holds no greatness of achievement for them. Similarly, the taste of Nectar can be best relished and enjoyed not by people who get it easily but only by those who feel a dire need for it.

An easily attained victory never gives fulfilment to those who are accustomed to it. It holds no greatness of achievement for them. Similarly, the taste of nectar can best be relished and enjoyed not by people who get it easily but only by those who feel the dire need for it and have a longing for it.

Dickinson states that only a longing for the thing, which we desire, will give us fulfilment and joy. Anything attained easily without much need or desire belittles the real worth of it.

Likewise, it is only those who long to win, but meet with failure that are increasingly thirsty for success. Dickinson brings in the instance of the victorious army that won the battle and the soldier who was defeated.

She says in the second stanza that though those who gained success in the battle and got the flag of victory, celebrate and enjoy their success, they still cannot define success so well, because it is people who did not succeed that know its true value and have a longing desire for it.

The victorious who achieved success do not understand its significance and hence, their victory seems normal to them. Since they have tasted success, they do not understand the sweetness of it anymore. Whereas, the defeated people know what it is to not achieve success that lead their minds and hearts to great agony.

The third stanza focusing its attention on the "defeated - dying" soldier of the lost army, states that the cries and noise of the army that won celebrating their victory reaches the ears of the dying soldier. He hears the victorious soldiers celebrating their victory, and though he is defeated, he actually knows the real value of victory because he is going through the pain and agony of not having won, and thus knows how significant and sweet the victory is. Though a loser, he understands the value of victory more than the celebrating winners do.

Through this poem, Emily Dickinson defines the value attached to success and beautifully illustrates its importance. It states that true worth of success is known to those who do not achieve it. Dickinson compares success to nectar. She says to understand and enjoy the sweetness of nectar, one should have a yearning for it. One must have a passion for what one longs for.

Thus with the simple and short poem written in a lucid style, Emily Dickinson brings in the simple yet universal truth that only hard earned success matters in life. Though it is paradoxical in nature, the way it is narrated, with a small scene from the battlefield makes it convincing. For Dickinson, it is failure and not success that leads to a better understanding of life.

Themes and Poetic Devices Used in "Success is Counted Sweetest"

The poem "Success is Counted Sweetest" by Emily Dickinson is termed by some critics as a "Definition Poem" where Dickinson defines who enjoys success more, and brings out the importance of success in a beautiful way. It is a short poem which has the first line as its title and suggests in the opening itself the great truth of life. It says that success is regarded as sweetest and of high value, only by those who never succeed.

The very first stanza, which is independent of the other two stanzas, clearly hit at this truth. The third and fourth lines of the first stanza brings out a metaphor, where success is compared to nectar. Nectar

symbolizes success and it states that to taste and enjoy the sweetness of nectar, one should have a dire need for it and should not have had it in the first place. Only a person who had not tasted nectar will truly find the "sorest need" for it.

Thus, the opening of the poem itself brings out the themes of the poem, which are variously described as positivity related to failure, need, and true worth of success. Though short in composition, the poem consists of great meaning. It is philosophical and conveys a complicated moral lesson that has roots in psychological truth. It brings out the general truths of human desire where the mentality of human beings during situations of achieving success and not achieving success is brought out.

The main point that the poem propagates is the positivity associated to failure. As is always said, "failure is a stepping stone to success," so does Dickinson writes for "those who ne'er succeed." She states it is those who fail or do not succeed that appreciate success more.

Failure motivates people to achieve success. Achieving success after being failed, has more value and gives true happiness. Only people who fail know the true worth of success. The success got without experiencing failure is shallow, and will not give the taste of true success. The person who succeeds without experiencing failure may not know the true worth of it. Only the pain and bitterness of failure will make a person appreciate the joy and sweetness of success.

The poem brings about the element of need or lack also. The third line states that to understand the taste of nectar, there should be the need for it, where it is indirectly said, that only the lack of something would in it turn produce a need for it.

The poet seems to be telling that there should be a great need and desire to get something that a person wishes to get. There should be an aching need for it, only then achieving it would give true happiness.

The second and third stanzas, move away from the generalising statements of the first stanza and is set in a battlefield. Giving an example for the earlier stated statements, Dickinson brings in the reactions of the winning team and the losers on a battlefield in the second and third stanzas respectively. However, this concept of winning and losing need not be confined to the battlefield alone but can be applied to anything that involves success and failure.

The second and third stanzas are interdependent and talk about two opposite parties, the victorious and the defeated on the Warfield in a paradoxical manner. The victorious team, having defeated their opponents are celebrating their success. The "purple Host" refers to the victorious army. However, the poet says that those who won on the day may not be able to define victory in clear terms, as they did not taste failure. Their happiness in winning is only shallow and they will not experience the true value of their success, as might the opposite army, which lay defeated. The poet says so because the victorious army did not experience the pain or agony of failure. According to the poet, only those who undergo the pain and agony of failure will appreciate the overwhelming truest joy of success.

The soldier lying defeated belonging to the opponent army in the battlefield, and who is dying knows the value of success better. He hears the victorious soldiers celebrating their victory and he who has tasted the sorrow and bitterness of failure would better appreciate the joy of success. It is he who knows what it cost to achieve success. He understands the importance of winning and knows the agony of losing a battle.

Although the poem is short and consists of only three stanzas, with four lines each, Emily Dickinson has used a number of poetic devices that has made her effectively convey her message. Narrating the poem in a third person narrative, Emily Dickinson has set the poem in a battlefield where the second stanza shows the victorious army celebrating their victory on one side and the third stanza showing the dying defeated soldier, on the other side.

The narrator takes an objective stance in the first stanza attempting at defining success, and in the second and third stanzas, which are interdependent on each other, she illustrates her view posted on the first. She simply states what goes on in the battlefield in an impersonal and unemotional tone. She shows the victorious army celebrating their success in the second stanza and the dying defeated soldier hearing the sound of victory distantly in the third stanza. She does not take any sides by either feeling proud about the victorious army or sympathetic towards the defeated one.

Dickinson has used a number of literary devices in the poem, a few of which are given below:

Symbolism:

Defining success and focussing on those who never succeed in the first stanza, Emily Dickinson brings in the symbol of "nectar" in the third line. The third line says that

to comprehend a nectar

Requires sorest need

which means that there should be a passion for a thing which someone needs and there should be a lack of it in order for that to be appreciated the most. The sweetness of getting what one needs depends on the intensity of the need.

Dickinson brings in the symbol of the "purple Host" in the fifth line. "Purple Host" symbolises the victorious army. In the battlefield, one army wins and the other loses. The army that emerged victorious gets the "Flag" of victory after winning the battle. Here, the "Flag" stands as a symbol for victory. According to the poet, not one person belonging to the victorious army would be able to define victory in as clear terms as would a person that lie dying in the defeated army. The distant sounds of victory and triumph would cause him great sorrow and agony, and it is this person who is fatally affected by his loss that would better know and appreciate the joys of victory. It is he who lacks victory, and it is he who is in dire need of it, as it is life to him, will fully well appreciate victory.

The victorious army, though have won and celebrate their victory do not really understand the true meaning of victory.

Metaphor:

Metaphor is a literary device that is involved in making comparisons. Metaphor simply compares two things that are not alike, without using the words "as" and "like". It simply states a thing. For instance, the sentence, "She is a lion while fighting her enemies." Here, without using the words "like" or "as" it is stated that she is a lion when it comes to fighting with her enemies. The metaphor that Dickinson uses in this poem is "nectar."

The first stanza of the poem says that:

Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne'er succeed

To comprehend a nectar

Requires sorest need

“Nectar” is used here to symbolize success. The sweetness of a nectar is compared to the sweetness of achieving success.

Imagery:

The poet has used the image of the battlefield in the poem. The descriptions of the "purple Host, "Flag" and the defeated soldier make the readers imagine the scene and setting of the poem.

Aphorism:

Aphorism is a short clever saying that is intended to express a general truth in a literary piece of work. Dickinson has used aphorism in this short and compact poem. She has conveyed a great message in a few words,

Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne'er succeed (lines 1 & 2)

Enjambment:

When a line in a poem does not end in that line itself, but is carried to the next line as a continuation of the first (without a break), then it is called Enjambment.

Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne'er succeed (lines 1 & 2)

Here the meaning of the first line is incomplete and is continued to the next one. The second line completes the meaning of the first line. The two lines are incomplete on their own and are dependent on each other for arriving at a meaning.

Paradox:

Paradox is something that appears to be false, yet would be true; sometimes it appears to be true but would turn out to be false. It seems to be self-contradictory and often appears to be difficult to accept. It is a statement that is opposed to normal expectation and often seems to be logically unacceptable.

Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne'er succeed (lines 1 & 2)

This is a self-contradictory statement. It states that success is best appreciated by the person who has not succeeded or who has failed. The two contradictory things here are “success” and “failure” that are two opposite concepts.

Capitalisation:

In the poem, certain words are capitalised like "H" in "Host", "F" in "Flag." This is to lay emphasis on the concept, which the poet wants to convey. The point emphasized here is that though the "purple Host" (the victorious army) has got the “Flag” of victory, they cannot tell the definition of victory in clear terms.

Alliteration:

Alliteration is the repetition of the same initial sounds in closely connected words.

Success is counted sweetest (line 1)

As he defeated – dying - (line 9)

Assonance:

Assonance is a figure of speech where the same vowel sounds get repeated in closely connected words. For example, in the sentence, the vowel sounds in the words, "who" and "took" and "Flag" and "today" are repeated.

Who took the Flag today (line 6)

Consonance:

Consonance is a figure of speech where a similar sound gets repeated either in the middle or end of the closely connected words.

Example:

The distant strains of triumph (line 11)

Meter:

The poem consists of meters, iambic trimeter, and iambic tetrameter.

Rhyme Scheme:

The poem consists of unconventional rhyme pattern where the pattern "abcb" is observed in the first stanza. In each stanza of the poem, the last syllable in the second line rhymes with the last syllable of the fourth line.

Syncope:

Syncope is the omission of letters from within a word.

Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne'er succeed (lines 1 & 2)

Here the example of syncope is "ne'er" where the letter 'v' is omitted from the original word, "never."

Thus, Emily Dickinson has used a number of literary devices to convey her message of appreciation of success in an effective manner.

Characteristic Features of Emily Dickinson's Poetry

1. Dickinson's poems usually exhibit a calm and reflective mood. They are usually short and are written in a style that is simple and lucid, easy for understanding.
2. They are usually made up of short stanzas mostly quatrains, with short lines, and rhymes found on second and fourth lines.
3. In some stanzas, Dickinson employs couplets or triplets.
4. Some poems employ longer, looser and more complicated stanzas.
5. Dickinson's poetry is known for their unconventional rhyme patterns like partial rhymes, slant rhymes or off-rhymes.
6. There is random capitalisation and unconventional punctuation.
7. Her poems consists of images and metaphors drawn from different sources.
8. Nature finds a prominent place in her poetry.
9. Apart from picking from nature, she relies upon industry and

warfare, law and economics and domestic activities for her sources.

10. Dickinson's poetry has an evocative power, and her style is unique and personal.
11. Usually there are no titles given to her poetry and the first line of the poem itself is used as the title.
12. Added to this, a lot of dashes are used in her poetry.
13. Her poetry consists of scenes from nature, society and psychological landscapes.
14. A blending of symbolism and allegory is found in her poetry.
15. She exhibits a striking style of language where there is the blending of the homely and the exalted, trivial and the precious.
16. Her poetry communicates her doubts and need to find faith.
17. There is always a third person narrator in her poems.
18. Most of Dickinson's writings reflect her resistance of the norms of society. She is against social authority that imposed restrictions against the freedom of the individuals. Her writings follow unusual metrical style, and is often seen as going against established metre and rhyme scheme of the time.
19. Elements of love and hope, added to the themes of mortality are found in Dickinson's poetry. She has an unusual and mystical way of representing them in her poetry.
20. There is a sense of humour and scepticism found in her poetry.

Questions

1. What is the idea that Dickinson is trying to put forth in "Success is Counted Sweetest?"
2. Make a critical appreciation of Emily Dickinson's "Success is Counted Sweetest."
3. Bring out the characteristic features of Emily Dickinson's poetry.
4. Do you agree with the speaker's central argument? State reasons.
5. Comment on the theme of the poem.
6. Bring out the literary devices employed in the poem.

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Lesson 2.3 Poetry : Robert Frost - The Road Not Taken

Structure

- Robert Frost – An Introduction
- Life and Works of Robert Frost
- Frost's poem, "The Road not Taken"
- Paraphrase of the poem
- Analysis of "The Road not Taken"
- Robert Frost as a Nature Poet
- Robert Frost's Poetic Style

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great American poet, Robert Frost. The poet's personal and academic background is given to have a better understanding of his work.
- Understand the philosophy of Robert Frost.
- See Frost as a Nature Poet.
- Have an understanding of Frost's poetic style.
- Have a complete comprehension of Frost's poem, "The Road not Taken."

Introduction:

Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)

Robert Lee Frost (1874 to 1963), commonly known as Robert Frost was the most renowned and acclaimed poet during his period. He was born on March 26, 1874 in San Francisco, California, USA to William Prescott Frost, Jr. and Isabelle Moodie Frost.

Frost's father, William Prescott Jr. was a journalist who wanted to establish a career in California and so moved to San Francisco along with his wife in 1873. However, he met his sudden death due to tuberculosis in 1885. Left in Greece, Isabelle Moodie Frost took her two children, Robert and Jeanie to Lawrence, Massachusetts to their paternal grandparents'

place, where they were taken care of well. She took up a career in teaching in different schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, while Robert and Jeanie grew up in Lawrence.



Robert Frost graduated in high school in 1892. He was always an outstanding student in his class who performed well in academics. He had fallen in love with a co-student Elinor White. He shared valedictorian honours with Elinor White, and found that both had a deep interest in poetry. They continued their education, and Elinor White left to Saint Lawrence University for it and Frost to Dartmouth College.

Frost began writing poems even while in school and started working on his poetic career in a small way during his education at Dartmouth College. His first professional publication began in 1894 when his poem, "My Butterfly: An Elegy" got published in a weekly literary journal, *The Independence*.

Frost left Dartmouth College in less than a year, unable to have patience with the academic routine. In 1895, he got married to Elinor but found life difficult. He did not gain materialistic success and was low in his financial position. His writings also did not have a decent reach and he failed as a poet during that time. He took up teaching and farming but was less successful in both. By the time, his family widened up with six children born to them, two of whom died in Derry. With one son and three daughters surviving, Frost returned to his college education at Howard University in 1897, but left it after two years of study there.

For a time, from 1900 to 1909, Frost and his family raised poultry on a farm near Derry, New Hampshire. He also was engaged in teaching

at the Pinkerton Academy in Derry. It was during his time spent with family in Derry that Frost became an enthusiastic botanist and became well versed in life at the rural side. The farm at Derry gave him input for his literary endeavours and thus he acquired his poetic persona of a New England rural sage.

He kept writing poems all the while, however, few publishing units showed interest in them. At the age of 40, Frost felt discouraged that he was unable to find a publisher to publish his works, but his will power and determination never let him down.

In 1911, Frost came into the ownership of the Derry farm. The thought of not having published even a single book of poems, but only a few having appeared in magazines, Frost now had to take a steadfast decision. He believed that publishers were more receptive to new talents in London, Britain, and so decided to sell their farm and move to London with family.

Accordingly, he moved to London in August 1912 carrying with him the handwritten manuscripts of the verses, which were not in print. He made continuous efforts in meeting publishers in London who were more open to innovative verse. With his undaunted will and with a little help from Ezra Pound, an expatriate American poet, Frost was able to publish his first book of poems, *A Boy's Will* in 1913. This is a book which consists of some of his masterpiece works like "Storm Fear," "The Tuft Flowers," and "Mowing."

His second collection, *North of Boston* appeared in 1914, following *The Boy's Will*. This collection is famous for introducing some of the most popular poems of Frost. It included "Mending Wall," "The Death of the Hired Man," "Home Burial," and "After Apple-Picking."

London that laid the path of fame and success to Frost found his name being mentioned in the British Academia by those who pursued courses in modern literature. Soon American visitors returning from London started talking about Frost. They were impressed by the writings of this unknown poet who was popular in the English land.

Amy Lowell, a Boston poet, played a great role in taking Frost's work to America and initiating his fame there. Travelling to England in 1914, she came across books of Frost in the bookstores and interested in them, she took them to America. Apart from finding American publisher

for the works of Frost, she also came out with her own acclaimed review of North of Boston. This appeared in *The New Republic* and by the time, Frost reached America, his name as a writer with great abilities reached there. Frost returned to America in 1915 as the world was sizzling with the depressing effects of World War I.

In 1915, the outbreak of World War I made Frost return to the United States with his family and he was surprised to find that an edition of *North of Boston* was brought to America by the American publishing house of Henry Holt in 1914.

It was a best-seller and the same publishing house came out with the American edition of "The Boy's Will." Soon after his arrival in the United States, Frost was surrounded by magazines seeking to publish his poems. He saw himself rising to rapid fame and from that moment to the present times, Frost enjoys persistent fame as a great poet.

Although he rose to heights of fame in poetry, Frost found it difficult to support his family from the meagre income he received from publishing. Even the income from a small farm he bought at Franconia, New Hampshire in 1915 was not sufficient for him to run his family. Therefore, he took up teaching and taught part-time at Amherst College and at the University of Michigan from 1916 to 1938.

The collection of poems in 1916 published as *Mountain Internal* continued to establish his high proficiency as a poet. His reputation reached the pinnacle when he received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry four times, including for works like *New Hampshire* (1923) and for a few more collections like the *Collected Poems* (1930), *A Further Range* (1936) and *A Witness Tree* (1942). His other poetry volumes include *West-Running Brook* (1928), *Steeple Bush* (1947), and *In the Clearing* (1962).

Frost's role in academia was also noteworthy where he held position as a poet-in-residence at Harvard from 1939 to 1943, in Dartmouth from 1943 to 1949 and in Amherst College from 1949 to 1963. He was the poetry consultant to *The Library of Congress* for a year from 1958 to 1959. Frost began receiving awards and honours from various quarters during his old age. He had the honour of reciting his poem "The Gift of Outright" at the Inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961, which was an occasion to be remembered forever.

Works of Robert Frost

Robert Frost, the famous American poet of the mid-twentieth century has written a number of poems, many of which often contain realistic descriptions of rural settings in New England, where Frost spent most of his life. He has published more than eight collections of poetry with a total of 256 poems and all during his lifetime. He is the only poet to have received four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry during his lifetime.

Frost's early collection of poems written before 1913 was published in his first collection of poems, *The Boy's Will* (1913). It is a collection of thirty-three lyrical and autobiographical poems of Frost's early life with descriptions of nature and rural settings.

Nature is portrayed as being grim at times in a few poems like, "Storm Fear," and in poems like "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and "The Hill Wife," Frost shows nature hiding potential dangers under its benign surface, and also death lurking behind dark, mysterious trees.

In his second collection of poems, *North of Boston* (1914) which consists of 17 poems, Frost's interest in portraying New England characters and Yankee farms, and his departure from old tradition is seen. Amy Lowell called this book a sad one, since it contained portraits of the lives of psychologically isolated and troubled New-Englanders like Silas of "The Death of the Hired Man." "Home Burial," "Mending Wall" and "A Hundred Collars" are a few poems in this collection.

Frost's third volume of poetry, *Mountain Interval* published in 1916 consists of thirty-six poems altogether. The opening poem of this collection, "The Road not Taken" is the poem prescribed for our study. It presents the dilemma of the narrator who makes a journey through woods. His conflict in the mind was to decide which of the two diverging roads he has to choose in his travel. This collection brings in the sense of the future being limited to the choices of the past as the first poem in the collection explores.

New Hampshire (1923) is the first collection of poetry to have received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Containing forty-four poems, this volume consists of some the most well-known poems like "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Nothing Gold Can Stay," "Fire and Ice," and so on.

West Running Brook (1928), the fourth volume of poems by Frost

is often confusing and intimidating to the readers because of Frost's engagement with the rural world with its plenty of resources to help understand the behaviour of the twentieth century.

These poems abound in themes of alienation, hostility and anxiety, which Frost explores. Some of the poems anthologised in this collection are "Acquainted with the Night," "Devotion," "Spring Pools" and so on.

The collection *A Further Range* (1937) along with the famous poem, "Two Tramps in the Mud Time" is divided into six parts and consists of thirty-four poems. It contains a range of poems exploring the themes of poverty as the urban or rural divide, with Frost taking the side of the rural as is usual of him.

The seventh collection of poems published in 1942 consisting of as many as forty-four poems, looks at nature as a guide. It believes that Mother Nature is there for us to rely upon in moments of need. This volume consists of a number of religious poems with strong Christian overtones and imagery.

The Clearing published in 1962 is the final poetry collection of Frost. It contains around thirty-four poems of which the poem, "For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration" is one. The book is also known for "Kitty Hawk" the book's longest poem, which is about the Wright Brothers' accomplishment in manned flight.

The Steeple Bush in 1947 consists of seven poems and is a dedication to Frost's six grandchildren. This collection with spiritual themes portrays Frost's religion in an ambiguous way.

The original text of the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost given below for the convenience of the scholars is taken from the internet source, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>.

"The Road Not Taken" - Poem

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the difference.

Paraphrase

Stanza I:

The poet or the narrator of the poem had been to a forest in the autumn season when the leaves had turned yellow. He reached a point where the two roads separated in two different directions. He regretted that being one person he could not travel both the roads. Been in a fix, he stood there for a long time and looked down on both the roads. He saw the first road, observing it for a long time, and looking at to where it bent in the undergrowth (small plants and bushes) he decided against it.

The two roads with symbolic perspective presents the two ways of life. Our life abounds in choice making and decision making where many a times we will be put to a state of fix to make correct decisions. Just like how the poet stood transfixed, looking down at the roads, so will we have to take a look at the choices spread before us, analyse them and make a correct choice.

Stanza II:

The poet then took the other road and thought it equally fair to the one not taken. According to him, this road seemed better and more impressive since it had more grass and had been less used. It seemed that many people had not walked over it. The second road seemed to have been used less. However, as the poet walked on the second road, he realised that both the roads have been walked over equally, and that many people would have chosen the other road too.

Stanza III:

The poet then states in the third stanza that both the roads were similar on that morning since no one had then walked on any of the roads. There were not any footsteps on the path and the leaves were still green and fresh, as they have not been trampled upon by anyone who had been walking on it. Having decided to travel on the second road, the poet kept the first one for some other day. However, knowing well how one way would lead to another, he had a doubt if he would ever be able to come back again and walk on the first road he did not choose. He knew that once the choice was made, it would be difficult to go back on it.

Stanza IV:

In the fourth stanza, the poet talks about the consequences of the choice he had made. He states that in future, he would be talking about the choice he had made with a sigh, reflecting either his regret, or relief. He would regret if he had made the wrong choice, and would give out sigh of relief for having chosen the correct one. He would tell that the two roads separated in a forest and he took the one, which was not travelled much, and that choice had made a significant impact in his life.

Summary

The poem, "The Road not Taken" written in 1915 in England is the opening poem of the collection *Mountain Interval* published in the year 1916. It is one of Robert Frost's most well-known poems, and contains multiple meanings. At a superficial reading, it is simply about the dilemma that the poet or the narrator of the poem faces while standing at two diverging roads. An in-depth reading imposes meaning into this divergence. This divergence symbolises real-life situations where we are

caught up in a mode of fix at compulsorily making decisions. We might make decisions we would either regret or relish.

In the same way here, the poet Robert Frost narrates an incident, where he was walking through a forest way during autumn. As he was walking down a road, he came to a point where there was a divergence of two roads in different directions. He has to choose one between the two roads for his further travel. A close look at one road revealed a bend at some point further, which he was unable to see, as it was covered with small plants and bushes. He saw that it was hidden with the undergrowth, which disabled him to study it any further.

Then he looked at the second road and trying to understand the advantages and disadvantages of both the roads, he chose the second one. He took the path, which was less travelled and feels that the path, which he chose, was better for him. It was grassy and showed signs of it of not having had much travellers on it. It showed that the path was unused.

However, as he walks on the path for some distance, he realises that both the paths were similarly worn out. They looked as if no one walked over it, since it was morning and with fresh fallen leaves. This happens in life also. When we are fixed with situations to making decisions, we choose one decision and keep moving on in that direction. Likewise, the poet moving on in the direction of the road he had chosen, thinks that he would one day come back to travel on the road he had not taken. However, he also understands that he will never be able to do it since one road will lead on to another and so on.

So too is life and having made decisions in life, especially decisions taken in matters of education, career, marriage etc., we will never be able to go back on the decision we have taken.

Thus, the poet says that sometimes in future he will take a deep breath and tell about this incident where he had to take a tough decision. Similarly, in the future, when we grow up then situations would come up where we would talk about the time when we had to make tough decisions.

Through this poem, the poet has given a powerful message that people should decide wisely in life because the decision they take will have a lasting impact on the rest of the life.

Critical Analysis

The poem "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost written in 1915 in England is one of the well-known poems. It appeared in the collection, *Mount Interval* published in 1916. It is more than a poem, which simply discusses about the Persona in the poem deciding on which road he has to choose while arriving at a fix in a divergence of two roads. The poem is read as one celebrating rugged individualism. It concentrates on the themes of uncertainty and ambiguity.

It is about choice and chance and about the insecurity people in general feel when it comes to making choices, especially, when it comes to life-making choices that would decide their fate. The poem presents an archetypal dilemma of which one to choose, and what will be the impact of choosing one, and neglecting the other. Using the metaphor of two diverging roads, Robert Frost has presented a poem of four stanzas that wonderfully symbolises the journey of life. The two roads diverging in a yellow wood stands as a symbol for a person's life. The person has to take a decision to move on with his travel and he cannot be travelling on both the roads being a single person.

The diverging roads could be read as an extended metaphor for two kinds of life choices in general: the conventional and the unconventional. By choosing the less-travelled path over the well-travelled path, the narrator suggests that he values individualism over conformity. He presents non-conformity as a positive trait by applying that the second less-travelled road, which he chose, was grassy, which made it even more attractive.

Likewise, it could be seen that Frost is making a connection between life and travelling. He features the uncertainty about making decisions and our natural inclination to know what will happen because of the decisions we make, in the first stanza of the poem.

Here, Frost uses the bend in the road as a metaphor for what the narrator wishes to see, but could not because the plants and bushes shroud the place beyond his view. The poet after some time of introspection and uncertainty takes the other road because whichever road he was going to choose, there was no way of knowing what the road would look like and where it would be taking him.

He has decided to seize the day and express himself as an individual by choosing the road that was less travelled by. The poet's choice of decision

of choosing the less-travelled path shows his courage. He proves himself to be an individual who would lay a path for others to follow. He does not choose the road that is frequently travelled upon, thereby, emphasizing his interest in newness and creative spirit.

In terms of beauty, both the paths were equally fair but it is only after years of having selected one, and been travelling on that one, that the poet distinguishes the path from one another.

The poem is written in four stanzas in a simple, clear and lucid style. It is evocative of rural images where realistic pictures of the roads and autumn season are brought to our minds. The poem is also philosophical where it presents the unbiased philosophy of life. It has the rhyme scheme, “abaab.”

Robert Frost as a Nature Poet

Robert Frost, one of the most prominent and leading literary figures of the twentieth century American literature is undoubtedly a great lover of nature. His poems are abundantly filled with imagery of nature, natural scenes and sounds.

His vivid descriptions of nature like the rivers, flowers, plants, trees, valley, mountains, animals and birds, scenes of days and nights are all precise and energetic. He is considered as a pastoral poet who is interested in portraying the life of the humble countryside dwellers along with their work.

Pictures of nature form the background and setting of his poems, with man at the centre stage. Man and nature are interlinked in his poems. There is always an element of tension, struggle and a point of contact between man and nature in his works. The sun, moon, stars, day and night, clouds, snow and rain, the seasons, woods, trees, brooks, fruits, flowers, insects and more from nature find a place in his poetry.

Nature is presented as symbols and metaphors in his poetry for representing human emotions, actions and passion. They are presented as being both beautiful and cruel, and creative and destructive.

Nature appears in its multifaceted manifestations in the poems of Frost and he frequently uses nature as a metaphor to propagate his ideas and views. Frost is fond of using the themes of human renewal,

transformation and mortality. For this, he uses symbols and metaphors from the natural world. He compares human experience with that of the elements from Nature. Frost was deeply attached with nature that the natural world acted as metaphors to human experience. His exploration of the various themes presented in his poems, reveal his awe and respect for nature. His attitude towards nature was one with that of love and fear, and he was greatly interested in bringing out the connection between man and the natural world. He brings out the interconnectedness of human beings with nature and always emphasized that man has to achieve oneness with nature and has to live in harmony with nature.

Frost often contemplated about how human beings interact with nature and how our actions affect the environment around us. He believed that the deep appreciation of nature was essential to our understanding of ourselves, and our place in the world.

In the poem, "The Road not Taken," Frost presents a picture of a forest where the Narrator of the poem is presented with a choice between choosing two roads. It is important to take a decision for which Nature plays a significant role. The natural setting helps in the choice making of the Narrator, and highlights the importance of this choice.

Frost describes the woods as "yellow" and "fair," and the road which the Narrator does not choose, seeing the first road, "where it went in the undergrowth." It was the undergrowth present in the first road, which made the narrator feel a little uncertain about it, and made him choose the second one. Nature is used as imagery and symbol here and there lies the beauty of the natural world.

Nature plays an important role in the narrator's decision of the choice of the road that will lead him to new and different experiences.

Similar to this, Frost's other poems too exhibit the role of nature in human life. Nature makes its appearance in Frost's poems through his extensive use of vivid imagery and powerful symbolism.

Frost was the most loved and respected poet during his period and remains so even today, with a universal appeal due to his vivid descriptions of the New England landscape and his profound insights into human condition.

Robert Frost's Poetic Style

Robert Frost is one of the greatest of American writers. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry four times, all for his simple, lucid and attractive style of writing poetry.

Frost's wide critical acclaim can be attributed to the following:

1. His poems are extremely simple in style and easy for comprehension.
2. He writes with simple themes using man and nature.
3. Although Frost is known for his simple style, a careful reading of his poems reveals his extraordinary, subtle and intricate style that has rich texture and profound philosophical truths.
4. Frost is an adept at his choice of words and expresses himself with utmost economy. His poems apart from being simple and clear are also terse, condensed and epigrammatic. They could be easily memorized and quoted.
5. Frost is not obscure and difficult to understand.
6. His imagery and symbols are usually taken from the most common place elements of nature. These pictures portrayed by Frost are common sights of nature that at once evokes familiarity in the readers.
7. His language is highly suggestive and evocative.
8. Frost's works are conversational in tone and his choice of words are capable of bringing in all kinds of humour like fear, pathos, anger and the like.
9. Frost's use of punctuations, parenthesis, ellipsis, unfinished sentences, repetitions, abrupt openings all contribute to the meaning of his poems. There is a regional quality to his diction and often wrote in the natural everyday language of New Englanders.
10. Frost writes poetry in the traditional iambic metre, and his handling of the rhythm is distinctive. He writes well using the informal rhythmic pattern of the spoken language.
11. Frost is a great metrical artist who experiments with stanza forms and verse forms.
12. Frost has experimented with different forms of literary writing like odes, eclogues, satires, dramatic monologues and dialogues. He has employed ballad metre, sonnets, terza rima, heroic couplets, blank verse and free invented forms.

13. Frost has adopted traditional way of writing and has avoided the formlessness and eccentricity of modern free verse. He maintains the appropriate form and shape.

Frost is a great artisan and a great metrical artist skilled at words. His contribution to American poetry is remarkable.

Questions

1. Comment on the title of the poem, "The Road not Taken."
2. Bring out the themes of the poem, "The Road not Taken."
3. Enumerate your views on Robert Frost as a Nature poet.
4. Comment on the poetic style of Robert Frost.
5. Bring out the philosophical elements of the poem, "The Road not Taken."
6. Bring out the symbolism in the poem, "The Road not Taken."
7. Bring out the contrast and similarities between the two roads mentioned in the poem.

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Lesson 2.4 Poetry : Sylvia Plath - Lady Lazarus

Structure

- Sylvia Plath – An Introduction
- Plath's Life and Works
- Major Themes in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath
- “Lady Lazarus” – the Poem
- Paraphrase of “Lady Lazarus”
- Death and Suicide in “Lady Lazarus”
- “Lady Lazarus” as a Confessional Poem
- The feminist concerns of Sylvia Plath

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great poet, Sylvia Plath. The poet's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of her work.
- Suicidal and death instinct dominating Sylvia Plath.
- Major themes in the poetry of Sylvia Plath.
- Sylvia Plath's feminist concerns.
- Have a complete comprehension of Plath's “Lady Lazarus”
- Have an idea of Death and Suicide expressed in “Lady Lazarus”
- Read “Lady Lazarus” as a Confessional Poet.

Introduction

Sylvia Plath (1932 - 1963)

Sylvia Plath (1932 to 1963), one of the most influential writers of America was born on October 27, 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. She wrote under the pen name, Victoria Lucas. She was born to parents having a strong academic background. Her father, Otto Plath, a German immigrant, was an entomologist and a professor of Biology at Boston University. Her mother, Aurelia Schober was one of her father's students and was a shorthand teacher.



Hailing from a family of good academic credentials, Sylvia Plath had a flair for writing from a young age. She lived a socially normal life up to the age of eight and grew up in a strong academic family environment in Winthrop, Massachusetts.

Plath's family moved to a place called Shirley Point, in Winthrop in 1935 when her brother Warren was born. Winthrop and its surrounding areas exerted a considerable influence on Plath and Plath has written about it in her poetry.

Plath has a reputation of being an artist with literary skill even at a very young age. She published her first poem in 1920 in the Boston Herald when she was only eight and was living in Winthrop. This probably marked the beginning of her literary career or her career as a poet.

Sylvia Plath's father was suffering from ill health because of diabetes. It led to a lot of complications in his health and he had to undergo intense treatment for it. Unsuccessful in all the health measures taken, Plath's father died in November, 1920. Brought up with religious faith, the sudden death of her father made her lose faith in God and she remained ambivalent about religion throughout her life.

The poet's relationship with her father appears in many of the poems like "The Colossus," "The Bookkeeper's Daughter" and "Daddy" where Sylvia Plath expresses that she had always been scared of her father. She did not even attend his funeral and it was only once that she visited his grave. It was after nineteen years of his father's death that she visited his grave and that prompted her to write "Electra at Azalea Path" (1959).

Sylvia Plath's mother Aurelia Plath moved her family, including her parents to Boston after Otto Plath's death. They moved inland to

Wellesley, Massachusetts. During this period, America entered World War II. The war had lasting effects on Sylvia Plath's writing. She makes mention of World War II in her later poems. For instance, in the poem "The Thin People" (1959), she describes scenes from war propaganda at the time saying that "only in a war making headlines when we / were small."

Plath was much aware of the political happenings of her time and played a witness to much of the political and media output of the time, particularly the increase of war films that took place in the early 1940s. During this time, she had entered high school and avidly participated in many of the literary contests. She brought in laurels to the school as well as to herself by winning many such contests. Her first poem and her short story were published in *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Seventeen* magazine respectively in the year 1950 and thus Plath began to establish her role as a poet. She graduated from high school as valedictorian and entered Smith College in Massachusetts on a scholarship in 1951.

Smith College was a private women's liberal college which believed in educating women, "so their children would be educated children." She excelled academically there and during the 1950s, the students of Smith were stuck at an awkward juncture between "women having re-entered the labour force and at the end of the war when men returned to fill the workforce." Many women opted into working for a short period after school, then marrying, settling back into the pre-war role of the housewife.

Sylvia Plath was conscious right from her period at school of the injustice of society in its partial treatment of men and women. She was against women locked up in the houses playing the different roles of daughter, wife and mother. She was against the machinations of patriarchy that controlled the lives of women.

Plath's life was marked with indecision as the poet was swept away with the changing society, questioning her abilities to work and marry. She wondered if marriage would sap her creative energy or would she attain a fuller expression in arts, as well as, in the creation of children. Sylvia Plath was different from the typical Smith girl of the time and she describes her own feelings while comparing herself to her peers. She says that she did not plan to fill a 'role' or would not change for marriage but would go on living as an intellectual, mature human being. She was disturbed by the lifestyle of marriage of the women of her times.

She won a fiction contest of the *Mademoiselle* magazine in 1952

for her short story, "Sunday at the Montons." At Smith, Plath achieved considerable artistic, academic, and social success, but she also suffered from severe depression. On returning home after New York, Plath received the news that she had not been selected for the Harvard summer course for which she had applied. It was at this time that her mother Aurelia Plath noticed the healing cuts on Sylvia's legs and questioned her daughter about it. Plath admitted, "I wanted to see if I had the guts."

Aurelia Plath understanding the depression her daughter was suffering from, immediately sent her to a psychiatrist, where Plath was exposed to electroshock therapy for the first of many times. Sylvia Plath later writes of this experience in her only published novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963). "The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick," writes the poet on her experiences vicariously.

After months of shock treatment, on August 24, 1953, Sylvia Plath made her first suicide attempt. The event is portrayed in a frightening manner in *The Bell Jar*. Plath later justifies her first suicide attempt with thoughts that would be locked in a mental hospital for the rest of her life, suffering from the badly performed shock treatment and all at the large expense of her family.

Plath was hospitalised in McLean hospital for about six months where she continued to undergo electroshock therapy. Plath returned to Smith for the spring semester, eventually graduating with highest honours in 1955 and went to Newnham College in Cambridge, England, on a Fulbright fellowship.

Within her first year in England, Plath met her future husband, Ted Hughes at a party. Plath remembers the night where the two drunk, Hughes tried to kiss her. Plath eventually bites him so hard that "blood was running down his face." Plath writes about the incident almost immediately in her poem, "Pursuit" in which she predicts "One day I'll have my death."

By June 1956, the two poets, Plath and Hughes married. Plath returned to Cambridge while Hughes began teaching. During the summer of 1957, both moved to the U.S. and settled in a Boston home where Plath had a short-lived job, teaching at Smith. After one semester, they decided to give up teaching and focus on their writing.

Plath took job at Massachusetts State hospital where she helped to record dreams of patients. This experience led her to write about a book of

short stories, *Journey Panic* and the *Bible of Dreams*. When Plath became pregnant with their first child, Frieda, Hughes decided to have the child born in England. Therefore, they moved into a flat in London.

In October, Plath's first book of poetry, *The Colossus* was published in England and the book achieved an overall success. Plath also started working on her first draft of *The Bell Jar*. In February 1961, Plath had a miscarriage with her second pregnancy, and wrote a slew of poems, one in particular called, "Barren Woman." The family soon moved to Devon, and Plath became pregnant in the summer of 1961 with her second child Nicholas.

In 1962, Plath had a car accident, which she described as one of the many suicide attempts. During the same year, in June, Plath had a shocking revelation about Ted Hughes's illegal affair with Assia Wevill. This discovery of her husband's infidelity was too much for her to bear and their marriage ended in divorce. At that time Plath had two children and separation from Ted Hughes forced her to live alone, an estranged life in London. It was a new flat in London and the worst time of winter, all of which added to the depressed condition of Sylvia Plath. She was forced to live a life of pain and loneliness that had aggravated her feelings of suicide. Extremely depressed and totally lost, her inner world sizzled with bitter feelings and emotions. She felt lonely and isolated and deprived of love, care and affection. Feelings of alienation and lost identity find a place in many of her poems.

It was during this period that her life was ripe with creativity and she wrote most of the poems of her posthumous collection, *Ariel* during the period. It was all written in confessional style, a style for which Sylvia Plath is widely known.

Death was the predominant theme of the later works of the poet, which she wrote during the last months of her life. Her most active period of writing began in the last year of her life. Some of the more notable works of this period are "Daddy," "Lady Lazarus" and "Aerial." In October alone, Plath had written more than twenty-five poems. "Lady Lazarus" (1962) stands hauntingly in the poet's posthumously published collection, *Ariel* (1965) stating, "Dying is not like everything else. I do it excellently well."

On February 11, 1963, Sylvia Plath killed herself by putting her head into a gas oven. The last full poem of Plath, "Edge" can be considered as the poet's suicide note. It flows with the sense of being finished with

phrases like "we have come so far, it is over" and the entire poem gives the impression of having been written by a dead poet.

Unfortunately, Sylvia Plath is more often recognised for her suicide than for her work. Sylvia Plath's work as a poet and the expansion on the style of confessional poetry led her to become a major poet of American literature. She brought to the fore the many injustices caused to women in society and highlighted the imperfect practices of psychiatric care.

Plath wrote during the twentieth century, a period characterised by modern techniques following less formal and unconventional style of writing. The period focused on individualism, self-expression, emotionalism, isolation, alienation and self-identity. It was a period, which gave importance to the inner self of the characters, recording the emotional and inner struggles.

Plath's poems clearly express inner feelings and struggles, and the mental depression and anguish she faced. Her writings encompass the spirit of modernity and she wrote with honesty and transparency revealing her inner thoughts and emotions without any reservations. Sylvia Plath received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1982 for her collection, *The Collected Poems*, published posthumously in 1981.

Sylvia Plath's Life in Short (1932–1963)

- i. Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) is an American novelist, poet, and short story writer.
- ii. Her writings are highly autobiographical and confessional in style.
- iii. She is one of the most influential in modern feminist discourses.
- iv. Her poems explore her own mental anguish, her troubled marriage to fellow poet Ted Hughes, her unresolved conflicts with her parents, and her own vision of herself.
- v. Plath was influenced by writers like D. H. Lawrence, Emily Dickinson, and later by Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton.
- vi. Plath created new ways to portray various issues.
- vii. Some of her works include the collection of poems entitled *Ariel* (1966), *The Bell Jar* (1971) *The Collected Poems*, edited by Ted Hughes (1981), *The Colossus and Other Poems* (1962), *Crossing the Water* (1971), *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, (1980), *The Journals of*

Sylvia Plath, edited by Frances McCullough (1982), Letters Home by Sylvia Plath, edited by Aurelia Schober Plath (1975) and Winter Trees (1972).

viii. In the short span of her life of just 30 years, Plath faced death by suicide.

Major Themes in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath is known for using the prominent themes of death, destruction, mental violence and disillusionment in her poetry. Most of her works present gloomy and depressed situations leading to mental violence. Seldom do readers find physical violence in her poetry. She presents conflicting situations of the mind and heart, and has voiced out the problems of women in society. She is a feminist who exposes the double standards of society and speaks about the insecurity of women.

Apart from writing about fear, uncertainty, insecurity and death, she has also written on aspects of loneliness, lack of communication, isolation, alienation and emotional pain. For a majority of her life she had been so close with herself, and had suffered from disturbance of mental harmony and was disillusioned with life. She did not care much for the conventions and restraints that had bound much of her early work, and she wrote with open confession and bold revelation. The anxiety, confusion and doubt that were her companions throughout her life were transformed into verses of great power and pathos.

Death is one of the major themes of Sylvia Plath. She has felt it closely when she attempted suicide. Knowing well that death is the universal truth accepted by everyone, Plath conceptualises it. She has the ability to describe death in her poems as reflected in poems like "The Bee Meeting" and "Lady Lazarus." These poems deal with fear and death, and abound in images concerning death.

Plath remained unprotected in her whole life. Her father died at her early age leaving her with feelings of fear and insecurity. She never visited the grave of her father except for one time only, and that too after nineteen years of his death.

After her father's death, her mother was with her, catering well to her physical needs, but did not care well enough for her to make her feel secure enough in her life. Her marriage life also did not give her the security that might have served her well. Her depressions grew larger and the point

of insanity increased greater when Ted Hughes left her estranged, with her two children in a new place in London. Her psychological breakdown is the reason behind her insecurity. However, these feelings of her insecurity, isolation and death have found good expression in her poetry.

Sylvia Plath is generally known as a poet who committed suicide. Her poems are famous for dealing with the macabre themes of death and suicide. "Lady Lazarus" is one such poem, which is commonly understood as a poem about suicide. It is narrated by a woman and is mostly addressed to a person whose identity is not given. It could be the readers also who find a place in the poem.

The narrator begins the poem on a personal note that "she had done it again." She says she manages to do this unnamed act once in ten years. She considers herself as a "walking miracle" with skin as bright as "Nazi lampshade." Her right foot is a "paperweight" and her face is fine and her features are like "Jewish linen."

She addresses an unnamed enemy here and calls him to "Peel off the napkin" from her face. He enquires whether she scares him off by the features he sees there. She asks him whether her "nose, the eye pits and the full set of teeth" terrify him. She assures him that her "sour breath will vanish in a day."

She is certain that her flesh which had been sacrificed to the grave will soon be restored to her face and that she will then be a smiling thirty year old woman. She will then be able to die nine times like a cat and has just completed her third death. She finds it a waste to destroy each ten years and that she will die once in each decade.

Plath talks about the reaction of the "peanut-crunching crowd" after her death. She tells that the crowd would be interested in seeing her body shoved in, where hand and foot would be unwrapped. She would be a big strip tease to the men and women there.

Now Plath addresses the crowd directly, shows them her knees and hands, and then shows the skin and bone that remains, unchanged from the person she was before. She is still the same identical woman who attempted to kill herself some ten years ago. The first death occurred was ten years ago but then it was an accident.

The second time it was intentional and she wanted to be successful in her attempt of killing herself and did not want to come back to life.

Instead, she was "as shut as a shell" until she was called back by people who picked the worms off her corpse like sticky pearls. Here Plath does not specify how death occurred to her these two times.

Plath calls "Dying" an art like everything else meaning to say it needs to be practiced well to attain perfection. She believes she does it exceptionally well. Each time, "it feels real and easy for her like hell." What is difficult is the dramatic comeback, the return to the same place and body occurring as it does in broad daylight before a crowd's excited cry, "A miracle."

It is this that knocks her out. She believes that people should be charged for looking at her scars, for hearing her heart pound or to have a word or touch or for even a bit of blood or for a piece of her hair or clothes. She tells this to the listener whom she finally identifies as the "Doktor" and her enemy.

In the final stanza, as the narrator addresses the listener as "Herr Doctor" and "Herr enemy" mocking at him for considering her as his crowning achievement, an opus, a "pure gold baby" that melts to a shriek. The narrator does not understand the concern of the doctor but is bothered by how she picks through her ashes. She insists that there is nothing there but soap, a wedding ring, and a gold filling.

She warns both God and the devil "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash, with her red hair and "eat men like air." We could understand from the final stanza that she is angry against the society, especially against men for whom she is a spectacle and who do not allow her to live in peaceful isolation.

Sylvia Plath is best known as a confessional poet and has written a number of poems confessional in tone. "Lady Lazarus" is one such poem, which contains elements of her personal anguish and despair. Plath committed suicide at the age of thirty and died in 1963. She had tried to kill herself many times but was somehow saved by the people around her.

Her life was full of pain and turmoil and she was a highly sensitive person. Losing her father at the age of eight left a lasting depressed impression upon her and her depiction of this incident showed itself in many poems. Ted Hughes, her husband was not faithful to her, which left her soul scarred and tarnished.

The society's unfair treatment of women in the public sphere angered her and she did not want to give up on her individuality for the necessity of marriage. She did not want to sacrifice her individuality as the peers of her period did.

It seemed that this world was not enough for Plath or that she was a perfect mismatch for this world. Her life was full of stress and mental agonies. We could find traces of her anger and distress against society in "Lady Lazarus" which talks about her attempts at suicide and is much confessional in tone. It is regarded as one of her confessional poems.

The original text of the poem "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath given below for the convenience of the scholars is taken from the internet source, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49000/lady-lazarus>.

"Lady Lazarus" – The Poem

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it——

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin

O my enemy.

Do I terrify?——

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath

Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.

It's easy enough to do it and stay put.

It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

'A miracle!'

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart——

It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge

For a word or a touch

Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

So, so, Herr Doktor.

So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,

I am your valuable,

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.
 I turn and burn.
 Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash—
 You poke and stir.
 Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—

A cake of soap,
 A wedding ring,
 A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
 Beware
 Beware.

Out of the ash
 I rise with my red hair
 And I eat men like air.

Paraphrase of "Lady Lazarus"

The poem's abrupt opening, "I have done it again" does not enable the reader to understand what the narrator is talking about until the entire poem is read. Only the complete reading of the poem will make the readers understand that Sylvia Plath is referring to suicide.

Lines 1-3:

The opening lines of the poem "I have done it again" refers to Plath's reference to suicide. She confesses that she has attempted suicide once in every ten years of her life. The first three lines suggest that she was not happy in her life and that she tried to put her life at stake. She manages to experiment with death but every time the people around her, save her.

Lines 4-9:

After comparing her personal suffering to that of the Jewish

people's sufferings, Sylvia Plath starts explaining to the readers why she has attempted suicide so frequently. She compares her skin to a "Nazi lampshade" in the second stanza.

She brings out the macabre fact that the skin of the Jews was used by the Nazis to produce lampshades. Plath has used the imagery of Nazi lampshades to compare her own pain with that of the others in the Nazi concentration camps. She uses this dreadful symbolism to explain the dreadful plight of her life.

She compares her right foot to a "paperweight" to demonstrate the depth of her pain. This analogy explains to the readers, Sylvia Plath's sufferings heavily weighing upon her. She lacks a sense of identity and feels like a nameless, featureless face that no one would spot in a crowd. She is unfit in society and people notice the strangeness in her.

She also says that her face is like "fine Jew linen." Here the attention is to the mythical Lazarus who was wrapped in Jewish linens before being placed in the tomb. These linens were also used to wrap Jesus's body before he was laid in the tomb. Plath here reaffirms that she already feels dead or she must be referring to her spiritual death. She has undergone death because of the pain and sufferings in her life.

Plath continues the use of the imagery of death in the next lines to show her deepest feelings.

Lines 10-15:

She challenges her audience to "peel off the napkin" to see the real her. She does not think that anyone would want to really know her, who would go well beyond her soul. She thinks they would be terrified if they tried to probe into her soul. We see that the poet perhaps refers to society as her enemy. She asks the society to look at her face to uncover the mask or the napkin, which keeps her face hiding from the society. She seems to ask the society whether her identity is a threat to it.

From a feminist perspective, these lines could be read as women struggling for identity. The poet says that nothing or nobody is permanent in life and that "the sour breath will vanish" in a day. Here, she really talks about death and decay.

Lines 16-21:

Plath now switches pictures from describing herself as already dead to admitting that she is still surviving. The tone of the poet suggests that she is dissatisfied with her state of existence. Instead of the smiling woman of barely thirty that she is looking in the mirror, she sees herself as a decaying corpse. She makes the contrast between herself and the cat, and tries to say that she will have to take many more efforts to attain death. She is very unhappy that she is not able to pass away.

Lines 22 to 23:

The poet here says that she had been very close to death every decade. She admits that she had attempted suicide several times and she says that this was her third attempt of committing suicide but this also proved to be trash. She is so obsessed with death that she wants to destroy herself. She tries to annihilate herself once in every ten years.

Then Plath starts to focus on herself and her personal sufferings while criticizing those around. She refers to them as the "peanut-crunching crowd" making implication that now that she has been fragmented into filaments where people have come to see her strangeness, only with the intention of making fun of her and ridiculing her.

She does not contrast herself to Lazarus who is already buried this time, but she compares herself and the person who has risen and is emerging from the tomb still wearing the funeral garment. She refers to her release from the tomb as "a big strip tease" making it clear that when she was on the verge of death but was saved, those present around her were not there to celebrate with her, or comfort her but are there only to be amused by her.

The crowd watch her clothes being removed, and people are watching her hand and foot. The poet is frustrated and disappointed that she was unable to stay dead.

Lines 34-39:

She is still the same person she was before her death experience according to this stanza. The first time was an accident, and Plath was only ten years old at that time. It is clear here that Plath's first unintentional near death experience agonised her but it also made her long for it again.

The poem describes how Plath was so close to death that she thought that she had truly died. The words “meant to last it out,” means that she truly does not have a wish to live.

Lines 40-42:

Plath considers dying as an art like everything else and she claims that she is very good at it. She claims that she is constantly practicing the art of dying in the first few lines. It implies that she is always worried by thoughts of death and suicide and says that it makes her thoughts feel like hell. When she says that dying is her call it means that to die is the only purpose in her life.

She admits that the only respite she found from pain, emptiness and numbness came from her close meeting with death. Each time she was at the back of death, she ultimately survives only to return to the previous moment.

Lines 55-56:

Plath here feels that returning from death and addressing the crowd is the challenging part. She sees it as a theatrical procedure. When others refer to her life as “a miracle,” she feels like they are putting her on stage.

Plath becomes sarcastic when she says that people need to pay a charge in order to see her, and take pleasure in her pain. They need to pay a fee for gazing at her or touching her. She is so frustrated, that she invites them to examine her injuries and her state of mind. She makes a comparison between herself and a thing that is on display for everyone to see.

The reference to the doctor takes us to the Nazis brutally handling the Jews. Doctors used to kill the Jews by locking them in gas chambers and the Jews were killed by brutal forces applied by doctors. So here, there can be references to such cruel doctors. In this line, Plath uses the word “Herr” twice, indicating that men are her enemies and the source of her pain.

Lines 67-72:

Plath starts to explain why male members of the society are the

enemy. This reflects her idea that men simply value her as an object, finding her attractive but lifeless. She acknowledges that some people value her, especially males, but only as a cold, inanimate object of attractiveness, not as a human. According to Plath, dying would be like simply enjoying a wonderful work of art.

Lines 73-78:

They merely poke and stir the ashes of her thoughts while trying to provoke physical responses from her. However, when she declares, "Flesh, bone, there is nothing there," their effort will be in vain. It indicates that she is already independent of her physical form. Only her wounded mind is left after all has been said and done.

The remains of the charred Jewish victims were reportedly used by the Nazis to produce soap. They searched through piles of human ashes for jewellery and gold fillings.

Lines 79-84:

She goes on to blame God, the Devil, and men, highlighting the fact that both God and Lucifer (the Devil) are males. This demonstrates her feelings of helplessness with men. She warns everyone to "beware." She might decide to quit trying to kill herself and seek vengeance on men rather than on herself.

Else, she might avenge men by returning in the afterlife as an immortal. The "red hair" hints at the mythical bird known as the phoenix, which has the ability to burn up and then rise from its ashes. In any case, Plath reminds men worldwide that she is no longer their helpless victim and that she is prepared to take on any.

Death and Suicide:

Sylvia Plath wrote "Lady Lazarus" in 1962 during a spurt of creativity in the months before her death by suicide. This poem was published in *Aerial* that contains many poems with the themes of fear, death and despondency.

"Lady Lazarus" is a poem of death where the poet uses extended metaphors of death and resurrection to express her painful personal sufferings. The very title referring to Lazarus refers to the mythical

character Lazarus whom Jesus resurrected. Like how Jesus miraculously resurrected Lazarus, the mythical hero, so is here the resurrection of Lady Lazarus.

The speaker compares herself to Lazarus telling the reader that she has died a multiple times. Even at the beginning of the poem, the poet is almost dead, however, has been brought back to life by the people around her. She is saved by the external forces time and again. The mythical Lazarus was saved and was brought back to Life by Jesus, and he was happy that he was saved, but Sylvia Plath does not find any happiness or comfort in having been saved to life. Her wish and desire is to die as she feels uncertain about life and she feels she does not belong to it. She is not comfortable with the society that has imposed many restrictions on women and she feels she is a perfect mismatch to the society.

She feels existential angst and has no wish to live. She feels that all those who attempted to save her are her enemies. We see that Sylvia Plath subverts the original myth here. If the mythical Lazarus was happy to have been resurrected, lady Lazarus is unhappy about it and considers them as her enemies.

For Sylvia Plath death is an agent for attaining freedom, escape from suffering and attainment of peace. Throughout the poem, the poet has used images to subvert the reader's expectations. She contrasts life and death with various images, symbols and metaphors. However, these symbols and images are so disturbing that it evokes a sense of fear.

For instance, the poet compares her skin to the Nazi lampshade. It is a macabre one where the Nazis make use of the skin of the Jews to make lampshades. Again, she describes her resurrection "...flesh/ the grave cave ate will at home on me." This image of grave and death is surprisingly applied to the speaker's living body after it is resurrected. The poet experiences death and life situation and describes her experience of living as a kind of torture, almost as a kind of death. When she is brought back to life, her skin is like the dead skin of someone killed in a Holocaust, it is the skin of a dead woman forced back onto her living self.

For Sylvia Plath life is like what many people feel death is. If the normal people are so scared and worried about dying, Sylvia Plath is worried about living. She does not have a passion for life and it is only death that will give her peacefulness and tranquillity, that will make her escape from the tortures of life. The poet describes the worms that invade

a decaying dead body and calls them as "pearls." For the poet, death offers a blissful solitude and protection.

The speaker has a hatred for the flesh, which symbolises life. To Sylvia Plath, skin is the receptacle of pain and sufferings in life and so she wishes the death of the skin and flesh, which would ultimately lead to her death.

When the poet begins the poem, she says that she is currently dead. However, she tells the reader that she will be reborn as the woman she was. The poet brings in the image of phoenix at the end of the poem showing that she is caught in a cycle of dying and being reborn that she can neither control nor escape.

Plath expresses the intolerable side of her life and feels death to be so desirable. She finds death to be the only solution to all her ailments in life. Lady Lazarus, from the point of view of a woman in a male dominated society directly blames men for all the sufferings and tortures in their world. Men are seen as oppressive forces in women's lives.

The poem showing the "Doktor" bringing her back to life when she does not wish to live shows men as the controlling forces of women. They do not allow women to live in autonomy. Women cannot live with freedom in a male dominated patriarchal society.

The images of death and resurrection come to show how men dominate the lives and bodies of women. The poet wants to die as a way of exercising her power over her body. She opposes to the fact of our body taking the form of objectification. She hates when her body is a thing of spectacle for the "peanut-crunching crowd" to view.

While addressing her enemies, she says, "I am your valuable/ the pure gold baby." Sylvia Plath has an aversion of men treating women as objects. She condemns the view that men take a macabre interest in other people's pain. By expressing her wish to die, we see that the poet wishes to put an end to all kinds of oppression that the society has imposed upon her.

"Lady Lazarus" as a Confessional Poem:

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer known for her highly autobiographical, confessional

style. She is one of the most influential in modern feminist discourses. In the short span of her life of just thirty years, she faced death by suicide. Like Keats who died an early death, Sylvia Plath also died an early death and rose to great heights in her career as a literary icon.

The close relationship between her poetry and biography moved her to the status of a feminist icon. Right from the beginning of her life, she was driven with suicidal instinct, an instinct that is attributed by the feminist literary critics to the men in her life. She was married to the fellow poet, Ted Hughes and had a troubled life with him. She was also not happy with her authoritarian father, which is expressed, in her poem, "Daddy" where she feels betrayed by his death.

The poem, "Lady Lazarus" is a posthumous publication of Sylvia Plath and is assumed to have been written around the 1960s just a few years before her suicide in 1963. It was published in her poetry collection Ariel (1966) after her death.

Lady Lazarus is an autobiographical poem, confessional in tone and expresses the angst of Sylvia Plath in living her life. It is an exceptional piece describing her tortured soul, which faced failure in her previous suicidal attempts, and at last discovering her new self in the last attempt.

The main theme of the poem is suicidal thoughts and death, although there are feminist underscores lining it. Sylvia Plath is known for expressing her agony and anguish in the most beautiful way, which at once intrigues the readers and captures her sense of loneliness and despair.

Beginning the poem directly with the theme of suicide and confessing her attempt at it once in every ten years, Sylvia Plath depicts her mental state of anguish. Her first meet with death was an accident, whereas, the second time made her determined to succeed in her attempt of self-destruction. She explains to the readers why she has to die many times.

She compares her own misery with that of the captivated Jewish people who were imprisoned in concentration camps. She compares her skin to "Nazi lampshade" which is a horrifying metaphor as it was based on the idea that the Nazi people used the skin of the Jews to make lamp Shades. She compares her right foot to a "paperweight" thereby conveying the nature of her emotional pain. The imagery of a "featureless face" shows that she experiences a loss of identity, with herself lost in the crowd.

The words, "fine Jew linens" reaffirms that she already feels dead and numb since the Jew linens were used to wrap the body of Lazarus before they laid him in the tomb. Plath's use of the imagery of death constantly affirms that though she is alive in flesh, her soul is already dead. She continuously talks about the effect of death and uses imageries and symbols that emphasize on the emptiness and numbness that torture her soul.

The tone of "Lady Lazarus" is one that of existential angst that reveals that she is disappointed at being alive. She identifies more of herself with death than with life and thinks of herself as a rotting corpse and not the "smiling woman" of only thirty that she sees when she looks in the mirror. She reveals an obvious disappointment in not being able to die when she compares herself to a cat concluding that it will probably take many more attempts to reach death.

She feels that each decade of her life is wasted living and focuses on her miseries and sufferings. She criticizes the people around her calling them "peanut-crunching crowd" who are there only to scoff at her and see her as a "strip tease."

Facing near death has not changed her in anyway and she only compares herself to Lazarus who has risen from the tomb still wrapped in burial cloth. Looking at her hands, knees, flesh, and realising she is still alive physically, she wishes that she were still in the tomb.

Her experiences with near death has been traumatizing for her but somehow the urge to triumph in her attempt to die did not leave her. She calls dying an art in which she is skilled although she had failed at it two times earlier. Plath identifies herself with death more than life or anything in life.

Her second encounter with death was meant to be final where she kept herself confined like a "seashell," the seashell being a symbolic reference to the body, which kept her soul caged. She somehow tried to release her soul from her decaying self. The call of the people who found her, made her come out of that suffocating chamber though, she imagines that if she had died they would have picked worms off her like "sticky pearls."

The thought of death haunts her all the time and turns her mind into hell. Hence, she believes that hell is real and that it exists in her mind.

She believes that death is her "call" and that only death could provide relief to her from the emptiness, miseries and depressed feelings she suffers from. Every time she escapes death, there is only more desire for it, as life keeps on bringing back the miseries and sufferings.

Her come back to life appears theatrical to her as the same brute faces stare at her in contempt and amusement. They call it a "miracle" which Plath disdains and so invites them sarcastically to look at her wounds and how she was feeling. She hates the way she was compared to an object that was publicly displayed where she wishes to charge for every word or touch they give her. There is a charge for her scars and the beating of a heart too and the last thing is shocking when she talks of blood.

Plath reveals that men are her enemies and the cause of her suffering. She is valuable to men only as an object, beautiful but hard and lifeless. She feels that her death would be nothing more than a beautiful piece of jewellery burn to ashes. Plath insists that she is only an object to the men in her life and that she has already undergone a death and no flesh or bones exist. What remains is only her body and a mind that is heavily traumatized.

The Nazis used to make soaps using the burned Jewish bodies. They also search for jewellery and gold fillings in the heaps of human ashes. This is how Plath envisions people and hence, blames men, God and the devil specifically pointing out that both God and Lucifer, the devil are men. She feels powerless under the over pervading presence of men and hating their over-powering dominance cautions other women who are going through a similar mental turmoil to maintain a safe distance from them.

Plath by rising again with her "red hair and eating men like air" suggests that she would take her revenge upon men and would no longer be a powerless victim of them. Thus, "Lady Lazarus" titled after the biblical character Lazarus of Bethany who was saved by Jesus's magical powers from dying is a confessional note of Sylvia Plath who compares herself to Lazarus as she attempts to kill herself several times but had failed to do so.

The Feminist Concerns in "Lady Lazarus."

Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" is a poem written in 1962 that consists of some of the strong outbursts of the poet against the domineering ways

of men during the period. Plath, writing during the period of the mid-twentieth century experiences the dominating effect of men in her life. All through her life, she has been under the oppressive care of men and was highly aware of the injustice that the men's world was imposing upon the women of the times.

Before embarking upon the study of feminist concerns in the poem, "Lady Lazarus," let us look at what feminism generally means, and how it made its way in the field of literature. It is not known when this feminism as a movement began, although it was popular during the 1960s. However, the consciousness and awareness of the problems of inequality in society and the unjust ways in which women were treated in society were all in existence even before this 'women's movement.'

It was spoken about and discussed in the famous book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft. It was one of the earliest books on feminism championing the cause of women. She talks about the problems of women highlighting the injustices caused to them in the different institutions of society. She believed that women ought to be educated so that she in turn would educate her children and would be a companion to her husband, instead of being mere wife. She insisted that women are not to be treated as objects of ornamentation or as mere property to be "traded in marriage," instead, she maintained, "they are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men." She called for the equality of both the sexes in society.

Some of the other books that were early reactions to the suppression and oppression of women were Olive Schreiner's *Women and Labour* (1911) and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929). *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir is yet another book on the cause of women's equality and freedom. Some of the important books by male writers in this line are John Stuart Mill's *The Subject of Woman* (1869) and *The Origin of Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels.

Feminism centres around women's concerns and believes in the equality of men and women. In spite of the vast commonalities of the two sexes, male and female, one gender, that is, the male is often privileged over the other. This is because of the gender difference. This gender difference is not a natural one, but one that has been constructed by society and its culture. Hence, feminism aims at uprooting a gender-based social construct that causes injustice to women by suppressing, oppressing and dominating men.

Feminism is an attempt at providing full freedom to women in all respects. It aims at providing sexual, professional, educational, personal, religious, cultural and political freedom to women, thus liberating them from all traditional, conventional, cultural and political restrictions.

Many people feel that feminism has almost come to an end today, and that it has achieved its goal of gaining liberation from men. However, the fact is that the feminist movement is still felt strongly all over the world, especially in the Third World countries. The practice of patriarchy where men are the head and lead, and have a dominating power over women is still in existence and has not been completely extirpated. Its voice still has to reach the less advanced nations.

Feminist literary critics indulge in analysing the workings of patriarchy or male dominance in all its manifestations. They try to explore, expose and redefine the position of women in the social, historical, political and economic context. They not only bring out the ill-treatment, indifference and disregard shown to women in a patriarchal society, but also bring out the open and latent talents present in them.

Simone de Beauvoir, the French feminist exposes the unfair treatment of women by men as merely the 'other' - the object. She condemns the practice of patriarchy keeping men in the 'centre' and women in the 'other' position. Women are treated as objects and this 'objectification' of women is condemned by many feminists. Kate Millet in her book, *Sexual Politics* (1970) exposes Freud's male prejudices and criticizes vehemently some novelists' degrading presentation of women as mere sexual objects. These writers powerfully oppose the social system that gives power to men to continue their unjust domination over women. They strongly go against the social system that encourages the miserable subjugation of women.

It is here that we could place Sylvia Plath in the tradition of feminist literary writing. Belonging to the period of the first half of the twentieth century, Sylvia Plath vehemently criticizes the unfair treatment of women during her period. She lashes at the patriarchal domination by exposing the unequal treatment given to women in the institutions of education, marriage, profession and so on. Most of her poems in *Ariel* collection hits at the issues of gender inequality and explores the expectations of women that tormented the society. Looking at her biography would reveal how she was disturbed by the men in her lives including her father who died early and abandoned her.

She was always scared of her father and had felt his overpowering dominance over her. Her relationship with her father has been depicted by her in many of the poems like "Daddy," "The Colossus" and "The Bookkeeper's Daughter."

Plath has criticized the ways of the society that had conditioned and moulded women through its norms and values. Society had set its own values and customs to make women 'conditioned' to behave in the appropriate way. Plath has revealed her anger against the patriarchal society in many poems. She was against the roles that were set for men and women to play. She was different from the other Smith women of the period, where she was unable to enter into marriage that forced women into home makers subduing or oppressing their professional side. She was in a confused state whether she should give up her creative abilities in order to lead a successful married life, taking care of the husband, children and family.

After the two world wars, World War I and World War II, women of the times were stuck at an awkward juncture where they had to go for work to fill in the gap of men having gone to war, and again give them up, once the men returned at the end of the war. Sylvia Plath was excellent in her academics and was shocked at the lives of the women of her times who opted for working for a short period after school, then marrying and settling back into the role of the housewife.

This time in Plath's life was marked with indecision as the poet was swept away with the changing society questioning her abilities to marry and work. She wondered if marriage would sap her creative energy or would she attain a fuller expression in arts well as in the creation of children. Sylvia Plath was different from the typical Smith woman of the time and she describes her own feelings while comparing herself to her peers. She says that she did not plan to fill a 'role' or would not change for marriage but will go on living as an intellectual, mature human being. She was disturbed by the lifestyle of marriage of the women of her times.

Her marriage to the fellow poet, Ted Hughes was also not a harmonious one and it led to a lot of conflicts in her life. Hughes' infidelity shattered her and added to her existing mental agony and depression.

Being divided within, as a daughter, mother, wife, and an artist, Plath was feeling a sense of inescapable binding in these roles. She was unhappy at the gender roles constructed by the society and was strongly

against the machinations of patriarchy that kept women subdued and suppressed. She threw in all her frustrations and agony in her poems along with her feelings of death and suicide.

The poem, "Lady Lazarus" also represents men as dominant and women as subservient. The poem is narrated from the point of view of a woman in a male-dominated society. Filled with instincts of suicide and death, Sylvia Plath openly states in the poem that women are victims of men who do not allow them to act independently. She openly states that women are living in an oppressive atmosphere and that all the suffering and sorrow they suffer from are the result of the dominating men around them.

The open referring to Lazarus, the Biblical character whom Jesus raised from the dead uses the extended metaphors of death and resurrection. The mythical theme is used to express the personal suffering of the poet. Instead of using the myth of resurrection in its original intended line, the narrator subverts it. She says she is not happy in being brought back to life by the doctor. In the original myth, everybody, including Lazarus was happy to have Lazarus back to life, but here in the poem the narrator wishes to die only, and feels that whoever that saved her, whether the loved ones or the doctors are to her, selfish dominating people who control her life and act against her wishes. She feels she does not have an identity of her own. The imagery of a "featureless face" shows that she has been lacking an individual identity for herself. She seems to be hinting that in a male-dominated world, women lack identity for themselves and are only seen in their relationship with others in society.

Plath uses macabre metaphors and imageries like the 'Nazi lampshade,' 'grave cave' etc. to show how torturous it is for her to live her life. She says dying is an art for her and that she is skilled at it. It is only the intervention of people, especially, the male members of the society that she is unable to achieve anything that she wishes to achieve. They always act as obstruction to her desires, and it is because of them she is not able to achieve her goals, even if it is dying. She feels there is no personal space for her and that her privacy has been invaded by the men around her. She has become an 'object' for them to see and pass away time. She feels life to be intolerable with the overpowering dominance of men around her who do not leave her alone to live her life. Her wish is to die, but she is not allowed to even die. She blames the male-dominated society for all the oppression

and sufferings. She feels that there is no freedom for women and there is little hope of living in a peaceful manner in the patriarchal world.

In fact, the desire to die is to prove to herself, the autonomy and freedom that she has to lead her own life. She hates being treated as somebody's "valuable" / "The pure gold baby." The above words show her not only being objectified but also being treated as a child who does not know anything. She hates this, and hates to be a "big strip tease" whose body is put on display for other people's benefits and entertainment. She hates being a spectacle for the "peanut crunching crowd" that takes pleasure in other people's pain.

Here, we see Sylvia Plath raging against women being treated as objects. She brings out the pain and agony suffered by women at being commodified. Throughout the poem, we could feel the poet expressing her anxiety against several men. She addresses the "Doktor," "God" and "Lucifer" all men whom she feels are her enemies. These men are the authoritative figures in her lives who control her life. By referring to the men, belonging to the different institutions like medicine and religion, Sylvia Plath seems to generally talk about all the men in the male-dominated society in which she lives. She wants to escape from the oppressive society that is partial in the treatment of women, and subjects women to various injustices curbing her freedom and autonomy.

The last part of the poem shows Plath's hostility towards men. She hated the condition of women being under bondage and enslavement. Women are also seen as accepting the fate of imprisonment in an unquestioning manner. Plath is seen rebelling against the patriarchal society that curbs her freedom and does not allow her to live an independent life. All these makes her revengeful and she decides to take her revenge upon society. At the end of the poem she assumes that she is dead. However, she says she will be reborn like a Phoenix:

"Out of the ash /

I rise with my red hair /

and I eat men like my air."

Born anew she will have her revenge upon men who did not allow her to live her life in a peaceful manner.

We can see here that Sylvia Plath is directly blaming men for all

her suffering and oppressive condition. She is seen as revengeful in the last line of the poem where she turns into a vampire who eats men. Sylvia Plath seems to suggest that death alone will redeem her from the state of suffering because of the dominance of men and that death alone will show her a way in having revenge against men. We thus see Sylvia Plath as a feminist who raises her voice against the evil practices of patriarchy in society, and thus champions the cause of women.

Modernism in "Lady Lazarus:"

The poem "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath is a modernist poem where it exhibits several aspects of modernism. Although the poem was written in 1962, a period that is after modernism in the stricter sense, it still consists of aspects of modernism in it.

Modernism is a movement that was predominant in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The rapid industrialisation and urbanization and the World Wars led people to change or move away from set traditions and conventional beliefs about God, society and life. A conscious break away from the past and the search for new and innovative ways marked the period.

Modernism moved considerably away from classical and traditional forms. It opened up new vistas in the ways of thinking and writing, and was marked by innovation and experimentation. Modernism came up with the realisation that knowledge is not absolute. The movement is mainly characterised by individualism, subjectivity, experimentation, absurdity, symbolism and formalism. It was a revolt against the strict values of conservatism and realism. It was a rejection of tradition, certainty and the concept of God.

The modernists were influenced by the horrors of the First World War and by the changing ideas about reality developed by prominent figures like Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx etc. Apart from the Industrial Revolution, Prohibition and the Great Depression too influenced the period.

The modernists were filled with a sense of disillusionment and loss. Notable among the prominent American modernist writers are William Faulkner, T.S.Eliot and E.E.Cummings. Among the British writers, the notable were Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka and Robert Musil who were the early modernists.

Modernists gave high importance to subjectivity and individuality. They emphasized on the individual's opinions, experiences and emotions rather than to the society's. They rejected the established writing norms of the conservatives and realists. They experimented with new forms and ways of writing. They revolted against accepted rules of traditional writing and invented free verse poetry. They did not care about set rules of rhyme and rhythm.

They were nihilistic, which means there was a rejection of all religious and moral principles. They did not conform to society and rejected the moral codes of the society they were living in. The period was dominated by great doubt about the meaningfulness of life. They believed that there is no certainty in life and that life was absurd and meaningless. With the two World Wars, urbanization, rise of capitalism and fast-paced globalization, the writers felt disillusioned with life and lost faith in human kind. They believed that life itself was absurd and meaningless.

The modernists experimented with different forms of writing of which stream-of-consciousness technique is one. As opposed to the realists or conservationists, the writers started depicting the inner self of the characters. A journey inwards took place and subjective reality was presented to the readers. What was going on in the inner self and the minds of the characters were portrayed. The thought processes, however, inconsistent, chaotic or illogical were portrayed by these writers. Pioneers of this stream-of-consciousness narrative technique are Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Symbolism dominated the works of the modernists. It became one of the central characteristic features of modernism. Modernists reimagined symbolism and filled their work with symbolic details paving the way for several interpretations. Their books had open endings where multiple meanings were possible. This feature of symbolism is most prominent in the works of James Joyce and T.S. Eliot.

Another feature of modernism is fragmentation. Books abound in fragment narratives where the modernists were skilled at using the techniques of juxtaposition and multiple points of views, challenging the readers for establishing coherence of meaning from fragmentary forms.

Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" is a poem that exhibits the above-mentioned characteristic features. It is a long narrative poem that is narrated in the first person narrative. It is subjective in tone and the

narrator addressing the listeners in the poem could be the poet herself.

Modernism lays emphasis on the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique where the thought processes of the characters are given. Much importance is not given to the realistic portrayal of incidents but to the psychological aspects of the characters. Here we see that the narrator, Lady Lazarus is involved in monologue, which reveals her thought processes.

The poem as opposed to realism and naturalism is more psychological and subjective. It reveals the central character's inner thoughts and brings out the internal journey of the character. Her intense sufferings in the male dominated world is portrayed here. The narrator of the poem is filled with uncertain feelings about life and is highly depressed by the tortures of life. Her angst and depressed condition, and her suffering because of the people around her, are all expressed here in the poem. She is always filled with a strange notion of death and has attempted suicide many times of which she makes a confession in the poem.

The poem starts with the poet's confession of her attempt at death, "I have done it again." The poet here talks about herself, and introduces similes and metaphors. Her language is simple to understand and is close to the everyday common language of man. It is written in free verse and does not follow any set rhyme or rhythmic pattern. This is one quality of modernism where the modernists deviated away from traditional form and structure. There was intentional distortion of form and shape in modernist writing.

Sylvia Plath uses common place metaphors and similes to express her sufferings in life. She uses metaphors like the "Nazi lampshade," "a paperweight," "fine Jew linen," "cat," "pure gold baby," and so on which are all easy to understand. Instead of using complicated analogies, she has used simple ones. There is also the use of comparisons and allusions that belong to traditional times. There is the allusion to the Biblical character, Lazarus and the allusion to phoenix, a mythical bird. In all these usages, the author's flair for inventiveness and experimentation can be seen.

While Plath addresses God and Lucifer alike, considering them as enemies, we could witness the poet's disillusionment with the concept of God. She warns both God and the devil "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash, with her red hair and "eat men like air." She hates society, which is represented through some people in the poem, like the "peanut crunching crowd" that takes

pleasure in other people's pain. She hates the society who deprive her, her personal space and invade her privacy.

Like the modernists who were disillusioned with the concept of God and society, so is Sylvia Plath exhibiting her distrust in God and her aversion for society that were reasons for her living a depressed life. She also dares to disturb the sanctity associated with God and related subjects.

The modernists rejected history and there was a tendency to subvert the myths of the past in them. Here, the very title of the poem, "Lady Lazarus" refers to the Biblical character, Lazarus. Lazarus is a character whom Jesus raised from the dead. In the original myth, everybody, including Lazarus was happy to have Lazarus back to life, but here in the poem the narrator wishes to die only, and feels that whoever that saved her, whether the loved ones or the doctors are to her, selfish dominating people who control her life and act against her wishes.

She feels she does not have an identity of her own. The image of a "featureless face" shows that she has been lacking an individual identity for herself. She seems to be hinting that in a male-dominated world, women lack identity for themselves and are only seen in their relationship with others in society.

Plath has portrayed her intense suffering here as a woman and has used the extended metaphors of death and resurrection. The mythical theme is used to express the personal suffering of the poet. Instead of using the myth of resurrection in its original intended line, the narrator subverts it. She says she is not happy in being brought back to life.

Plath has also spoken about death, a subject that was much in reservation during the conventional times. She ironically and sarcastically calls "Dying" an art. She emphasizes the fact that death alone would make her liberated from the dreadful aspect of living and that death alone would redeem her from the state of suffering. She believes that death is her "call" and that only death could provide relief to her from the emptiness, miseries and depressed feelings she suffers from. Every time she escapes death, there is only more desire for it, as life keeps on bringing back the miseries and sufferings.

We thus see that Sylvia Plath handles such a serious and ghastly topic in a light-hearted manner to intensify the atmosphere of despair.

She has not only experimented with form and style but also in

theme. She does not bring about any moral teaching in this poem but simply states her personal sufferings using various innovative techniques. The choice of her words and diction is in perfect line with the modernists' style of writing.

We could thus see that Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus" consists of several aspects of modernism in it.

Questions

1. What is the theme of "Lady Lazarus?"
2. How does the poem, "Lady Lazarus" use the theme of death?
3. Bring out the theme of identity in "Lady Lazarus."
4. Comment on the modernistic elements found in "Lady Lazarus."
5. "Lady Lazarus" is poem of death and suicide. Comment on this.
6. Bring out the autobiographical elements in "Lady Lazarus."
7. Bring out the feminist concerns in the poem, "Lady Lazarus."
8. Do you consider "Lady Lazarus" as a modernist poem? State reasons for it.

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Lesson 2.5 Poetry : Maya Angelou - The Caged Bird Sings

Structure

- Maya Angelou – An Introduction
- Angelou's Life and Works
- Angelou's Autobiographies
- Angelou's Poetry
- The Poem, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"
- Paraphrase of the poem
- Analysis of the Poem
- Some of the techniques and poetic devices used in the poem

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and work of the great poet, Maya Angelou. The poet's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of her work.
- Have a glimpse at Maya Angelou's six autobiographies, their themes and the issues she brings out in these.
- Major themes in the poetry of Maya Angelou.
- Angelou's racial and feminist concerns.
- Have a complete comprehension of Angelou's poem, "Caged Bird"
- Appreciate the techniques that Angelou has innovated in her poetry and her use of poetic devices in "Caged Bird."

Introduction

Maya Angelou (1928 - 2014)

Maya Angelou, born as Marguerite Annie Johnson (1928 to 2014) is one of the most acclaimed literary figures of America. She is an important writer of contemporary black literature and her contributions to the literature of the Blacks is significant.



Maya Angelou was born in Saint Louis, Missouri on April 4, 1928, as the second child of Bailey Johnson and Vivian (Baxter) Johnson. Maya Angelou's father Bailey Johnson was a door man and Navy dietitian and her mother, a nurse and card dealer. She derived her current name from her older brother, Bailey Jr., Who used to call her "My" or "Mya Sister."

Maya Angelou's parents did not have a harmonious life together, as a result of which, they had to have a divorce. The tumultuous marriage of their parents ending in divorce, Angelou and Bailey were sent alone by train to Stamps, Arkansas to live with their paternal grandmother, Annie Henderson. They spent their early childhood with their grandmother in Stamps.

Angelou's grandmother was strong and wise, and owned a general Store, where she sold basic essential commodities and did well financially during the Great depression and World War II. When Maya Angelou was seven and after four years of living with her grandmother, she was sent to Saint Louis to be under the care of her mother.

While living with her mother and at the age of eight, she was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend named Freeman. Maya told about this to her brother Bailey, who in turn told about it to the rest of the family. On enquiry, Freeman was found guilty and was presented before law. However, he was put in jail only for one day and was released later. Angelou's uncles furious at his early release, murdered him after four days of his release from jail.

The incident had a traumatic effect on Maya Angelou and believing that her voicing out the name of the man, killed him, Maya Angelou went

into a deep silence for five years. Realising that the power of words would even cause death, and suffering from the impact of sexual assault, Angelou stopped speaking to anyone, except, her brother Bailey.

According to some critics, it was during this period of silence that Angelou developed her extraordinary sensibilities, memory and love for books and literature. It was during this time that her ability to listen and observe the world around her got sharpened and enhanced.

Shortly after the murder of her 'assailant' as Maya Angelou called him, Angelou and her brother were sent back to their grandmother to Stamps in Arkansas. There, she had her schooling in Lafayette County Training school, which was a Rosenwald School. Although she did not speak to anyone, she read widely, and credits her regaining of love of language and skill of recitation to her teacher and family friend, Mrs. Bertha Flowers. Bertha Flowers encouraged her and instilled in her the love of reading and reciting. She gifted her a lot of books and encouraged her to read authors like Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Georgia Douglas Johnson and James Weldon Johnson. It was Mrs. Flowers, who brought her back to speaking again.

The authors whom she had read extensively at her childhood affected her life and career, and influenced her to become a literary personality herself. She was also influenced by Black female artists like Frances Harper, Anne Spencer and Jessie Fauset.

When Angelou was fourteen, she and her brother were once again sent to live with her mother in Oakland, California. During World War II, Angelou attended the California Labour School. She took up dance and drama courses there, and developed a talent for both. She also attended George Washington High School.

Maya Angelou was an activist and a fighter, and her interest in participation and social activities showed itself when she applied to join the Women's Army Corps when war broke out. However, her application was rejected as she had her education in California Labour School, which was said to have communist ties.

Maya Angelou's individual spirit made her determined to be on her own and the trauma she faced as a young girl moulded her into a bright and strong individual. When she was fifteen, Maya Angelou enrolled herself as a street car conductor. The job was offered to her after a series

of rejections. As she was under the legal working age, she applied under the pretext of being nineteen for the job and became the first African American woman to work as a street car conductor in San Francisco. Her mother referred to it as Angelou's "dream job" and advised her to work harder than the others.

After a semester, Maya Angelou decided to go back to school. She then graduated from Mission High School in the summer of 1944. At the age of seventeen, she gave birth to her only child, Clyde Bailey (Guy) Johnson.

Angelou supported herself and her son with a series of odd jobs after her graduation and in 1949, she married Tosh Angelos, an electrician in the US Navy. Angelou has adopted a form of his surname and although the marriage ended in divorce in 1952, she still kept the name throughout her life.

Angelou was a multi-talented personality where her talents were noted in various fields of art and literature. She was noted for her singing and dancing abilities also, particularly in the Calyso Cabaret style. In the 1950s Angelou performed professionally in the US, Europe and North Africa and had sold albums of her recordings. She had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actor and composer. She was Hollywood's first Black director but it was as a writer, editor, poet, essayist and playwright that she became most famous.

She was also a political activist who worked for Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. In 1950, African American writers in New York City formed the Harlem Writers Guild to support the publication of Black authors. Angelou joined the Guild in 1959. She was also actively serving the Civil Rights Movement and served as the Northern Coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a prominent African American advocacy organisation.

Angelou was also an educator who served in Wake Forest University as the Reynolds professor of American Studies. During the 1960s, she worked as a freelance writer and was a feature editor at the African Review. When Angelou returned to the US in the mid-1960s, she was encouraged by author James Baldwin and Robert Loomis, an editor at Random House to write an autobiography.

At first Angelou did not have the inclination to write and so declined the offer, later changed her mind and wrote her first autobiography, *I know Why the Caged Bird Sings* in 1969. This was Angelou's most famous work and dealt with her early years in Long Beach, St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas where she lived with her brother and paternal grandmother. It dealt with Angelou's childhood days and narrates the events and influences of her life up to the event of the birth of her son. The book was a great success and was nominated for a National Book Award. Its huge reception and wide readership encouraged Maya Angelou to write her further autobiographies.

Angelou's Autobiographies

I know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969) is the first of Angelou's autobiographies. It is a tale of personal strength that echoed stories of childhood trauma and racism. In spite of the controversies found in the book about its portrayal of sexual abuse, racism and violence, it is widely taught in schools and colleges worldwide. This book was translated into many languages and over a million copies were sold worldwide. The massive success of this book made Angelou publish six more autobiographies, the final one being *Mom & Me & Mom* in 2013.

All the seven autobiographies of Angelou talk about various aspects like family, travel, literacy, racism and identity. The first autobiography, *I know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a coming-of-age story that describes the author's overcoming the trauma of sexual assault and racism, and emerging as a beautiful person with a love for literature.

It begins with the story of Marguerite (Maya) as a three year old spending her childhood at Stamps, Arkansas to her being a mother at the age of sixteen. This book throws light upon Maya Angelou's transformation from being an infant sexual victim with less confidence to a bold and dignified young woman. It shows her as a self-possessed young woman capable of handling sexist and racial prejudices.

The book presents the metaphor of a caged bird struggling to escape throughout its narration and consists of lessons about resisting racial discrimination and oppression. It brings out how Maya Angelou comes out of the personal trauma of sexual assault and racial prejudices through literacy. The power of words helped Maya Angelou to cope up with the traumas of the world and she saw refuge in the world of books to come out of despair and anguish.

Gather Together in My Name (1974) is the second autobiography of Maya Angelou. It is the second in the series of seven autobiographies by her. This book begins immediately following the events of the previous one, *I know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. It narrates the incidents of Angelou's life from the ages of 17 to 19. The central character Rita becomes closer to her mother in this book and expands upon the themes of her first autobiography including motherhood and family, racism, identity, education and literacy. It depicts the struggles of a young single mother who fights hard to cope up with poverty. Like her previous autobiography, this book also consists of a series of episodes closely woven together by theme and content. Although the book received positive reviews, it was not as critically acclaimed as Angelou's first autobiography.

The third autobiography, *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* published in 1976 is set between 1949 and 1955. It narrates the events of Maya Angelou in her early twenties. She describes her struggles to support her young son and her struggles at the level of forming meaningful relationships at the same time concentrating on a successful career in the world of entertainment.

The same themes of the two earlier books continue here also, along with the addition of the themes of travel, music and conflict. The book shows how Marguerite Johnson changes her name from Marguerite to Maya Angelou and her son's name from Clyde to Guy for professional reasons. The book ends on a happy note of the relationship strengthened between mother and son.

The fourth autobiography of Angelou was published in 1981 with the title, *The Heart of a Woman*. It recounts the events in Angelou's life between 1957 and 1962, and follows her travels to California, New York City, Cairo and Ghana in the midst of raising her son. Her active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the romantic involvement with the South African anti-apartheid figure are depicted here along with the faithful themes of motherhood, survival, sense of self and continuing education.

The fifth book, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* published in 1986 is set between 1962 and 1965. It begins at Angelou's thirty-three years of age and narrates her experiences during her life in Accra, Ghana. This book like her earlier one consists of a series of anecdotes connected by them. It depicts pictures of Maya Angelou's struggle with being the mother of a grown up son and with her place in her new home.

A Song Flung Up to Heaven written in 2002 is the sixth book in Angelou's series of autobiographies. It begins where Angelou's previous book, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* ends and is set between 1965 and 1968. It talks about the two tragic events, the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. It describes how Angelou dealt with these tragic events, and how these events affected the country and her personal life.

The last autobiography *Mom & Me & Mom* published in 2013 is the final book of Maya Angelou's series of autobiographies. This book is a compilation and overall view of Angelou's life. We see that many of the incidents and anecdotes related in her earlier books find a place here also. She has repeated many of her life experiences in this book as an attempt at revisiting them.

It brings out the transition in her behaviour towards her mother, from resentment and distrust for her mother to acceptance, support and love for her. She celebrates the reunion with her mother in this book and shows the maternal bonding as a significant one.

In all these autobiographies, beginning with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* to *Mom & Me & Mom*, Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird struggling to escape its cage. The bird and the cage represents the confinement of racism and depression.

The injustice of racism, family relationships, education, literacy, identity, travel and career all find a prominent place in these autobiographies. The use of plot, dialogues and episodic form of writing help Angelou to innovate in her books and helped her to bring out her themes in an effective manner. Although her books are episodic and highly knit together, the events do not follow strict chronology. They are arranged in a way to lay importance on the themes.

Angelou's Poetry

Maya Angelou is a prolific writer and widely read poet. She made her mark in poetry also where her poetry has often been praised more for its depictions of Black Beauty, strength of women and the human spirit. Angelou's poem, "Caged Bird" or "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" as the poem is sometimes referred to was written in 1969. It brought international fame and recognition to her. She has published several

volumes of poetry, the themes of them usually being family, love, music, racism, discrimination and struggle.

Angelou does not speak just for herself but for her entire race and gender. The themes of oppression and suppression, and that of survival find a common string in her poems and autobiographies. Her themes deal broadly with the painful anguish suffered by the blacks and their struggles to come out of the state of submissiveness.

Maya Angelou had recited a number of poems before spellbound crowds and the most important of those being her recitation of the poem, "On the Pulse of Morning" for the first Inauguration of President Bill Clinton on January 20, 1993. Her poetry had often benefited from the performance of it. Her poetry can be traced to African American oral traditions. They usually sing about oppression and suppression, loss, hardship and survival. It talks of gender and racist oppression on a larger social and psychological scale. It is usually called as Slave Narrative that examines the individual's state of slavery and confinement.

Maya Angelou received the Literarian Award in 2013 for her notable contributions to the literary field. She died in 2014 at the age of eighty-six.

The poem "Caged Bird Sings" was published in Maya Angelou's poetry collection, *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* published in 1983. This was her fourth volume of poetry. The poem is in the style of Slave Narrative as is typical of African American oral traditions that sings songs of slave and work. It describes the two extreme opposite experiences between two birds - one bird is a free bird enjoying its liberated state and the other bird, in captivity, suffering, slavery and bondedness. While the free bird enjoys the outside world, freely flying and floating calling the sky its own, the bird of slavery arrested in a cage only sings longing for its freedom. It seems to cope up with its stifled situations.

Using the extended metaphor of these two birds, Maya Angelou depicts two extreme conditions of freedom and oppression. She brings out well the privilege of the unoppressed in strong contrast with the simultaneous experience of the oppressed suffering emotional resilience.

Under the pretext of the contrary experiences of the two birds, Maya Angelou is seen as making an effective portrayal of the experience of a black person in America. She wonderfully delineates the pain and

anguish of the black people through the representations of the bird in captivity.

The poem, “Caged Bird” is also frequently referred to as “I Know why the Caged Bird Sings.”

The original text of the poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost given below for the convenience of the scholars is taken from the internet source, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird>.

“Caged Bird” - Poem

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Paraphrase of "Caged Bird"

Stanza I:

The first stanza opens with a free bird leaping on the back of the wind and floating down until the current ends. It is seen as a bird floating on the wind with extended wings as the current takes him downstream. The bird's wing tips catch the orange race of the setting sun. It seems that this little bird is bold enough to claim the sky as his own.

Here, in the first stanza, the poet has set the tone of the poem that is the idea of freedom. The bird enjoys the privilege of being free and his flight is totally effortless. He really does not struggle to fly but floats on the wind and is carried downstream. The experience of freedom is effortless and beautiful.

The bird is in no hurry and only dips his wings when it becomes absolutely necessary. He purveys the world from his high position in the sky and moves to where he wishes to go. He is so free and uninhibited with

the struggles of life that he has the audacity to claim the sky as his own. The bird's existence is free from any burden and hence is able to even win over the sky.

Stanza II:

The second stanza talks about the bird that appears in the title of the poem, the caged bird. This bird is portrayed in contrast to the bird in the first stanza. A caged bird is here that moves about slowly down its little cage. He is extremely angry at being in this present situation of imprisonment and oppression and hence cannot see the world. He cannot experience whatever the free bird was able to experience. His wings are cut off and his feet are tied curbing off his movement.

The first word of the second stanza 'but' presents a sharp contrast between the free bird and the caged bird. The narrow cage has restricted the physical space that the bird occupied and hence the bird is forced to stalk restlessly in the cage. He wishes with all his heart to escape his plight but he cannot, under the imprisoned state that he is in.

The word, 'clipped' shows that even if the bird wishes to fly and even if he is let out of the cage he cannot fly. The bird's ability to fly has been forcibly taken away from him. He is tied to the ground, which shows that his very natural quality of flying has been removed from him. It presents the facts of isolation and alienation and brings about the despondent condition of the bird.

However, when all is removed, the throat which is able to voice out remains. With the throat, the bird can sing and so it opens his throat to sing. This seems to be his only joy and achievement in his life.

Stanza III:

The third stanza shows the caged bird singing with the "fearful trill". Trill refers to a series of quick and high-pitched notes. So the fearful trill of the caged bird would be repeated in high pitch and nervous singing.

The caged bird is singing of freedom, something he does not have and of something he does not know. He does not know not what freedom is but longs for it. His heart is filled with uncertainty and is aching for a freedom, a freedom that is his dream. He knows he cannot touch it and so there is fear in his voice. He has never known what freedom tastes like but

hopes to have it for his own. His voice can be heard from distant places on hills where it inspires others to dream of freedom.

The caged bird does not sing of sadness but of hope, inspiration and of freedom. He is not sure if he will ever be free but his song of freedom reverberating on the hills may have the power to voice out his anguish and shows that he cannot be subdued by silence. Even in the state of lack of freedom, he does not sit quietly but struggles to achieve freedom.

Stanza IV:

The poet talks once again of the free bird that it revels in the joy of freedom. He enjoys flying through the trade wind that blows through the trees. He is also able to hear the sighs of the trees as the wind passes through them. Even the trees that are rooted in one place are sighing looking at the freedom of the bird to move anywhere he likes. The image here is one of abundance, leisure and joy. The free bird's world is a world of plenty. This bird thinks of the fat worms that he feeds on, waiting for him on sun-drenched lawns. Here the food is waiting for the bird instead of the bird going in search of it.

The free bird lives a rich and luxurious life, and this richness of existence makes him claim even the ownership of the sky. We see here the poet presenting a bright picture of the free bird's world. This is a world of possibilities and aspirations.

Stanza V:

The fifth stanza shows the caged bird again standing on the "grave of dreams." If the free bird enjoyed in the world of plenty, the image of grave is brought here to portray the dismal condition of the caged bird. The caged bird is standing on the grave of dreams and his shadow is shouting a nightmarish scream. The predicament of the caged bird is given in the words, 'grave', 'nightmare' and 'scream'. The death of dreams is the result of the bird's enslavement. That is the condition of his existence.

The caged bird knows that it is not free but a captive, a prisoner. Although he sings of freedom, he has lost all hopes of freedom. His wings are clipped and his feet are tied, and there is little hope of freedom for the bird, and that is why it is screaming a "nightmare scream." The bird wishes to survive against all odds but his condition makes him lack hope. There is only faint but kindling ray of hope in his song. The scream represents all

the pent up emotions and frustrations that take place because of a life of confinement and deprivation.

The last two lines of the second stanza are used as a refrain here to emphasize this condition. The bird can only sing out his hopeless song.

The last stanza, which shows the caged bird singing with the “fearful trill”, is a repetition of stanza Three. It is used as a refrain to assert the caged bird's determination to go on in life with his dreams of freedom.

Moreover, the caged bird chooses to sing since this is the only freedom available to him. His wings are clipped, his feet are tied but his throat only is free now, enabling him to exercise his freedom of speech.

It is the freedom of speech and freedom of singing that provides the bird a feeling of hope in life filled with anguish and despair. Singing alone will make him free from the clutches of isolation and alienation. This can be seen in the poet's message to raise one's voice against the face of oppression. It is the song of the bird that is heard in the distant hills that gives hope to the oppressed that freedom will be there sooner or later and that it is worth fighting.

Analysis of the Poem, “Caged Bird”

Maya Angelou is one of the great poets of America and one of the most celebrated Black American writers in history. She has written a number of poems and has around eighteen collections of poetry starting with *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die* published in 1971.

Angelou's poetry is marked with a sense of precision and clarity. She writes in a style that is direct and conversational, inviting the readers to share in her stories. Whatever issues she presents are presented in a steadfast manner well supported by the literary devices and figurative language like images, symbols, metaphors, call and response, and eye dialect. One reason why Angelou was well received all over the world is her writing style.

Her poems are usually about family, love, loss, loneliness, experiences with gender and racial issues. She talks a lot about suppressed and oppressed situations, and about slavery and freedom. She expresses her views and writes about all these things both from a personal perspective and from the perspective of African American woman as a whole.

The poem, "Caged Bird" is one of Maya Angelou's powerful poems that expresses the oppressive situation of the African Americans' intense longing for freedom. "Caged Bird" was published in Maya Angelou's collection of poems, *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* in 1983. This was her fourth volume of poetry.

The poem is in the style of Slave Narrative as is typical of African American oral traditions that sings songs of slave and work. It describes the opposing experiences between two birds - one bird is a free bird enjoying its liberated state and the other bird in captivity, suffering slavery and bondedness, while the free bird enjoys the outside world, freely flying and floating calling the sky its own, the bird of slavery arrested in a cage only sings, longing for its freedom. It seems to cope up with its stifled situations.

Using the extended metaphor of these two birds, Maya Angelou depicts two extreme conditions of freedom and oppression. She brings out well the privilege of the unoppressed in strong contrast with the simultaneous experience of the oppressed suffering emotional resilience.

Under the pretext of the contrary experiences of the two birds, Maya Angelou is seen as making an effective portrayal of the experience of a black person in America. She wonderfully delineates the pain and anguish of the black people through the representations of the bird in captivity.

The poem consists of six stanzas and the opening lines of the first stanza itself begins with the idea of freedom. The first stanza talks about a bird that jumps and leaps at the back of the wind. This free bird is as free as the wind unstopped by any conventions.

The very opening of the poem itself brings in the powerful images of the idea of freedom. The bird with his extended wings can move anywhere and he experiences a smooth flight, free through the air. He flies over the stream of wind and floats downwards to where the current of the stream ends. He dips his wings in the sea of orange sunlight. He is so free and peaceful that he dares to call the sky his own.

His life, free from the clutches of slavery and the narrowness of the cage gives him the power and the ability to move about wherever he desires. His life is not threatened by anything and so he is able to look at the world from high in the sky and is able to reach such heights.

The second stanza in contrast to the first is about the imprisoned bird in the cage. This bird contrary to the earlier free bird cannot go up the sky but is only able to stalk down its little cage. All that this bird knows is the bars of cage that has narrowed down his prospects. His wings are clipped, his feet tied, and the only thing that is left free of him is his throat.

Wings are usually associated with freedom and so we see here that by clipping off the wings of this bird, the option of flying itself is denied to him. The bird is so much enslaved and bound to its limits that even if it is able to escape the cage it will not be able to fly. This caged bird's freedom is forcibly taken away and he is made to succumb to the forces of imprisonment.

The physical confines of the bird is severely restricted representing the fact of isolation and alienation. Although there is a lot of rage in the bird, the bird is helpless and angry at his plight. In his helpless condition, the one way out for the bird to escape the monotony of the cage is to sing. Under the condition of being caged and tied to a narrow space, the only thing given is the option of singing. Opening his throat to sing is the only joy and achievement in this locked bird's life.

Starting the poem with the plight of two birds, one free and the other locked in a cage, blocked off his movements, Maya Angelou is trying to bring out the plight of the white and Black Americans. The whites are like the free bird who are able to achieve a lot and touch the sky, whereas, the blacks are like the un-free bird who is in anguish and despair, unable to move out in the broader wide world.

His world is the narrow bars of the cage and bereft of the freedom and liberty enjoyed by the whites, these black people are doomed to their ill fate. The bird's wings are clipped and his feet are tied. These images of clipped wings and tied feet bring out the violent nature of oppression and suppression that keeps the bird, and by implication the black Americans caged.

However, these physical restrictions have not completely enslaved the bird. The body is trapped but the soul is not. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, the bird has the choice of singing and he opens his throat to sing.

The third stanza shows the caged bird singing with a "fearful trill". He sings with a nervous and fearful pitch of things that are not known to

him. Locked in a cage the bird does not know what freedom is. He does not know what freedom is, but longs for achieving it. The bird sings in a fearful tone that exhibits his uncertainty and nervousness about his future.

The bird has so far known only enslavement and oppression. He is not sure if he will ever become free. He knows only the cage, its bars and the narrowness of the space he occupies. He is ignorant of the outside world and is a total stranger to the concept of freedom. He does not know whether he will survive in the outside world and is filled with fear and anxiety.

However, the fact he voices out and sings is heard in the distant hill, to the outside world. Though the bird is curbed off his freedom and caged, he cannot be subdued by silence. Even the state of lack of freedom does not make him sit quietly, but he struggles to achieve freedom. He dreams of freedom, which is symbolic of the black people's struggle for freedom.

The metaphor of the caged bird singing reminds of the struggles of black Americans for their civil rights and equality. Maya Angelou was herself a part of the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr. The black people raise their voice against oppression and suppression of the whites. They sing songs of freedom. The song "We shall overcome" was the unofficial anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

Maya Angelou uses the bird's song as a metaphor. She tells that the song of the bird, albeit in uncertain and anguished tone is the song of hope and aspiration. Through the song, the bird aspires for freedom. The bird's voice is heard on the distant hills because it is the voice of freedom. It is the voice of hope and courage. The caged bird reminds of its existence with its voice. He does not sing of sadness, but of hope, aspiration and freedom.

The fourth stanza once again brings back the free bird that enjoys his freedom. He thinks of another breeze and enjoys flying through the trade wind that blows through the trees. He is also able to hear the sighs of the trees as the wind passes through them. The sighing of the trees is mentioned here to show that even the trees are not as free as the free bird as it is rooted to the ground with movement restricted.

The images of the breeze and wind here are that of abundance, leisure and joy. The free bird's world is a world of plenty. This bird thinks of the fat worms that he feeds on, waiting for him on sun-drenched lawns.

Here the food is waiting for the bird instead of the bird going in search of it.

The free bird lives a rich and luxurious life, and this richness of existence makes him claim even the ownership of the sky. We see here the poet presenting a bright picture of the free bird's world. This is a world of possibilities and aspirations.

Maya Angelou seems to be telling that the world of the whites too is similar to the world of the free bird where they live an existence of privilege.

Here it can be noted that the poet had set up a contrast in the first two stanzas between the birds and highlighted the physical space they occupied. In a similar vein, stanzas four and five highlight the different psychological spaces the birds occupy. The mental makeup of the birds differ from each other and this difference is the outcome of the differences in physical existence.

The fifth stanza shows the caged bird again standing on the "grave of dreams." If the free bird enjoyed in the world of plenty, the image of grave is brought here to portray the dismal condition of the caged bird. The caged bird is standing on the grave of dreams and his shadow is shouting a nightmarish scream. The predicament of the caged bird is given in the words, "grave," "nightmare" and "scream." The death of dreams is the result of the bird's enslavement. That is the condition of his existence.

The caged bird knows that it is not free but a captive, a prisoner. Although he sings of freedom he has lost all hopes of freedom. His wings are clipped and his feet are tied, and there is little hope of freedom for the bird, and that is why it is screaming a "nightmare scream." The bird wishes to survive against all odds but his condition makes him lack hope. There is only faint but kindling ray of hope in his song. The scream represents all the pent up emotions and frustrations that take place because of a life of confinement and deprivation.

The last two lines of the second stanza are used as a refrain here to emphasize this condition. The bird can only sing out his hopeless song.

The last stanza is a repetition of stanza three. It is used as a refrain to assert the caged bird's determination to go on in life with his dreams of freedom. Moreover, the caged bird chooses to sing since this is the only freedom available to him. His wings are clipped, his feet are tied but his

throat only is free now, enabling him to exercise his freedom of speech.

It is the freedom of speech and freedom of singing that provides the bird a feeling of hope in life filled with anguish and despair. Singing alone will make him free from the clutches of isolation and alienation. This can be seen in the poet's message to raise one's voice against the face of oppression. It is the song of the bird that is heard in the distant hills that gives hope to the oppressed that freedom will be there sooner or later and that it is worth fighting.

Thus, the poet uses the metaphor of the two birds, one of a free bird and the other of a caged to emphasize the importance of freedom for an equal and just society. It is voicing out and expressing oneself that would free one from the bondage of slavery.

This poem captures the view of Maya Angelou that freedom could be obtained by finding one's own voice. Maya Angelou brings about a deeper connection between the intensely personal experience of the poet as a woman, images of the cage and the idea of singing. The poem revolves around the aspects of slavery and freedom. The traumatic experience of sexual abuse and demeaning victimising racial prejudices that were part of her life makes Maya Angelou here express it in two contrasting positions.

The poem, "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou is a poem of oppression and suppression on the face of racial discrimination. Using the extended metaphor of two birds, the free bird and the caged bird, Maya Angelou portrays the situation of the oppressed black people. She presents a grave social conflict that especially prevailed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the world. The theme of the poem is the suffering of the African Americans and the contrast of freedom versus slavery.

An in-depth reading of the poem with the backdrop of the racial discriminatory practices would throw light upon the desperate and pitiable condition that the black Americans were undergoing. The poet uses the contrasting metaphor of a free bird and the caged bird to make the point that freedom is an essential condition for equality in society.

Maya Angelou compares the lives of a free bird and a bird living in a cage in this poem. The free bird enjoys the open sky and floats on the back of the wind, while the caged bird's wings are clipped and feet are tied.

The free bird enjoys a life of luxury and plenty and dares to own the world, whereas, the life of the caged bird is gruesome and his future is

bleak. He sings songs of freedom in a fearful voice that shows his lack of hope.

Literary Devices Used in "Caged Bird"

Maya Angelou has used a wide variety of poetic devices and figurative language in her poem, "Caged Bird" to effectively convey her message of oppression and suppression underwent by the African Americans. She has used metaphors, including extended ones, images, rhymes, alliteration, personification and so on to enhance the meaning of the poem. The poem, "Caged Bird" is written in free verse without employing regular meter or rhyme scheme. The poem is not bereft of rhymes and there are occasional end rhymes beautifying the poem.

Metaphor:

Metaphor is similar to simile as the two are involved in making comparisons. Simile makes use of the words "like" or "as" while comparing, whereas, metaphor simply compares two things that are not alike without using the words "as" and "like." It simply states a thing. For instance, the sentence, "She is a lion while fighting her enemies." Here, without using the words "like" or "as" it is stated that she is a lion when it comes to fighting with her enemies.

Extended Metaphor:

This literary device is aimed at building evocative images in a piece of creative writing. Extended Metaphor is also known as Conceit where a single Metaphor or analogy is used at length in a work of literature. For example, in the poem, "Caged Bird" the images of the free and the caged birds are used as extended metaphors.

The entire poem is based on the extended metaphor of the birds, the free bird and the caged bird to compare and indicate the states of persons enjoying freedom and the state of being in captivity. This could be taken as an allegory also where the contrast between the free bird and the caged bird stands for the contrast between the lives of the whites and their counterparts, the African Americans.

The poet has also compared wind and water. The words, "downstream" and "current" remind us of the tides in the ocean or sea.

Personification / Anthropomorphism:

Personification is used where the birds are attributed with human qualities. In the second stanza, the words, "his" and "he" are used to refer to the bird. This technique is also called as 'Anthropomorphism' where both the free and the caged birds are described as possessing human thoughts and emotions. The free bird like the white community, "names the sky his own" and thinks that being free is the natural state of things, whereas, the caged bird, like the African American community is forced to live within the confines of the cage, longing for freedom.

This poetic device enhances the metaphorical meaning of the poem and adds a sense of seriousness to it.

Rhyme:

The poet has not used any regular rhyme or meter but has used 'end rhymes' where the ending words rhyme with one another. This too is not in a regular pattern.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage.

The words, "narrow cage" and "bars of rage" bring out the inescapable situation of the caged bird.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

These rhyming words, "breeze" and "trees", "lawn" and "own" bring out the sense of freedom of the free bird, where these words are evocative of the sense of the outdoors. It implies that the free bird feels that the breeze, the trees, the lawn and everything else, all belong to him by right.

The poet has also used 'internal rhyme' in the fourth stanza:
and the fat and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
with the words, "dawn" and "lawn" rhyming with each other.

Imagery:

The poet also uses vivid images and mood to bring out the actual sense of the poem.

The words, "orange sun rays," "distant hills," "fat worms," etc. are examples of visual imageries. The words like, "sighing trees," "nightmare scream" and "fearful trill" are examples of auditory imageries.

Repetition:

The poet has used the technique of repetition to bring about the distressed situation of the African Americans in an effective manner. She has repeated the third stanza in full, at the closure of the poem to emphasize the fact that using their voice alone will help the oppressed people to come out of their condition of slavery and bondage.

This stanza brings out the bird singing whose voice is heard on the "distant hill" where it inspires others to dream of freedom. The caged bird does not sing of sadness but of hope, inspiration and freedom. He is not sure if he will ever be free but his song of freedom reverberating on the hills may have the power to voice out the language and shows that he cannot be subdued by silence. Even in the state of lack of freedom, he does not sit quietly but struggles to achieve freedom.

Irony:

The title of the poem is "Caged Bird." It is seen that when the readers are prepared for reading about a caged bird, the poem begins with a free bird. There is no inkling in the beginning of the poem that this is going to make a comparison between the two birds. This is ironical.

In the poem, it is said that the caged bird is not free and the free bird is free enough to move about and is shown as enjoying its freedom and liberty. However, the irony here is that it is only the caged bird that sings and not the free bird. It is the caged bird with all his torturous conditions that is heard "on distant hills" while the free bird with all his luxuries is not heard. In addition, the caged bird in his captivity learns to value freedom than the free bird enjoying the freedom.

Symbolism:

The poet has used symbols in the poem. The free and the caged

birds are symbolic representations of the white and black Americans respectively.

Consonance:

Consonance is the repetition of a similar sound in the middle or end of the connected words. In the line “But a bird that stalks down,” the sound, ‘b’ is repeated and in the same way, the sound ‘d’ is repeated in “trade wind.”

Assonance:

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line. Assonance is used in a creative work of art to create rhythm, add meaning and tone and to emphasize on the themes. Assonance in the “Caged Bird” is found in the lines:

So he opens his throat to sing (Line 14)

Dawn bright lawn (Line 25)

Alliteration:

Alliteration is the repetition of the same initial sounds in closely connected words. It is found in the following lines in the poem:

But a bird that stalks (Line 8)

can seldom see through (Line 10)

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees (Line 24)

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn (Line 25)

and he names the sky his own. (Line 26)

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream (Line 28)

Maya Angelou is also well known for her usage of other techniques in her poems like “Call and Response” technique and “Eye Dialect” technique.

Call and Response Technique:

Call and Response technique is a literary technique that was borrowed from oral tradition of storytelling. It involves the writer literally speaking to the reader or listener. This style was especially common in African and African American songs, especially those sung in church or

for religious purposes. The lines from Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise" is a best example of this.

"Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Angelou also popularly uses another technique in her poems called "Eye Dialect" technique. This a technique in which words are spelled differently to create a different pronunciation, in this case, one that is more similar to how a person would speak in real life. One can see this technique in action in the following stanza from her poem, "Ain't that Bad?"

"Puttin' down that do-rag
Tightenin' up my 'fro
Wrappin' up in Blackness

Don't I shine and glow?"

A mention of these two techniques is made although these are not found in the "Caged Bird" in order to show Maya Angelou as an innovator of various literary techniques.

Questions

1. What does the free bird symbolise?
2. What does the caged bird symbolise?
3. Describe the helplessness of the caged bird.
4. What are the themes depicted in Maya Angelou's poem "Caged Bird?"
5. Compare and contrast the condition of the caged bird and the free bird.
6. Why does the caged bird sing in a fearful trill?
7. What does the free bird do downstream?
8. What is the message of Maya Angelou's poem "Caged Bird?"
9. What literary devices are used in "Caged Bird"
10. How is the theme of self-awareness brought out in the poem, "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou?

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UNIT – III

Lesson 3.1- Drama : Eugene O'Neill - The Hairy Ape

Structure

- Eugene O'Neill – An Introduction
- Eugene O'Neill's Life and Works
- *The Hairy Ape* – Scene by Scene Summary
- Expressionism
- Characteristic Features of Expressionist Drama
- Expressionist Drama / Drama of Protest
- Expressionism in *The Hairy Ape*
- *The Hairy Ape* as a Tragedy
- *The Hairy Ape* as an Existential Play
- The appropriateness of the title
- Modernism as a Movement
- Characteristic Features of Modernism
- Postmodernism
- Formal Features of Modernism and Postmodernism
- Formal Features of Modern Narrative

Learning Objectives

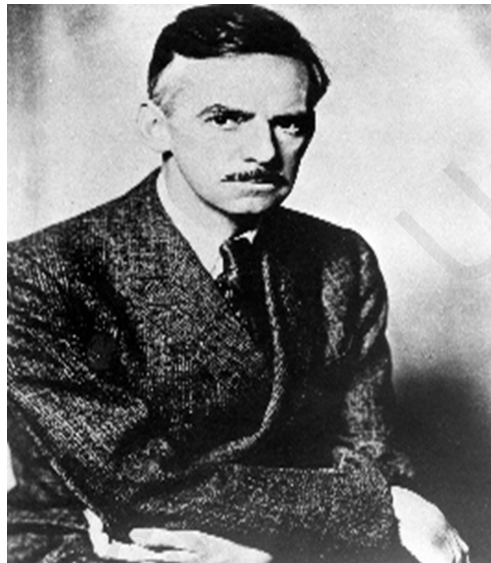
With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great American dramatist, Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of his work.
- Have an understanding of O'Neill's philosophy and his innovations in the field of drama.
- Have a complete comprehension of O'Neill's play, *The Hairy Ape*.
- Understand the characteristic features of Expressionism.
- Appreciate the play as an Expressionist Play.
- Understand the tragic aspects of the play.
- Appreciate the play as an Existential Play.
- Feel the Appropriateness of the title of the Play.

- Read *The Hairy Ape* in the light of Modernism and Postmodernism.
- Have an understanding of what Modernism and Postmodernism are and what popular beliefs that these two movements hold.
- Understand the characteristic features of Modernism and Postmodernism.

Introduction

Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953):



Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) is one of American greatest playwrights. He is a prominent dramatist of his age who has contributed many innovations to the American theatre. He belongs to the Expressionist School of Drama and his plays foreground the value of spirit, inner-conflicts and anguish, failure and pride. We often find themes of isolation and alienation, and the sense of not belonging in his plays. He uses a number of innovative techniques in his plays that took him to great heights in the literary canon of American literature.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born on October 16, 1888 to James O'Neill and Ella Quinlan in an up-town family hotel named Barrett House on Broadway Street, New York. His parents were ardent Catholics and his mother was an exceptionally beautiful woman who loved music and practiced curled-handwriting. His father was one of the best known actors of America. O'Neill had inherited the artistic vein from both his parents who were vested with artistic abilities.

O'Neill spent his early years in catholic schools. His early years as a boy found him accompanying his father on his actor assignments. Instead of exhilarating him, this filled him with a sense of instability and insecurity.

He had his education in Betts Academy at Stamford for four years from 1896 to 1902. He went to Princeton and joined a course in B.Litt. there. However, law did not suit him and so he quit it. He was soon attracted by drama. During his time in Princeton, he indulged in various misdeeds and activities gratifying his senses.

In 1909, he married Kathleen Jenkins of New York secretly and had a son in the following year. Disapproved by the Jenkins family and on account of charges of infidelity, the marriage ended in divorce in 1912.

O'Neill's father sent O'Neill to Honduras, Central America as an assistant on gold-mining expedition, but O'Neill came back from there without finding any gold.

O'Neill involved in fun and frolic, and drank, and loved girls. For some months, he assisted his father's company and had a few odd jobs, including a job as a caretaker of mules on a cattle steamer in Buenos Aires. Later, he became an ordinary seaman on a British ship sailing to New York, and had also sailed to Southampton as an able seaman on an American ship. He acted in his father's company in the far West for sometime. Later, living with his parents in their summerhouse at New London, Connecticut he worked as a reporter and started writing plays and poems.

In December 1912, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent five months at the Gaylord Farm Sanatorium at Wallingford, Connecticut. He left the sanatorium with the intention of seriously becoming a playwright. He entered G.P.Baker's Academy in the autumn of 1914 and took lessons in play writing. He wrote many plays out of the great deal of learning that he had from there.

O'Neill married Agnes Boulton in 1918 and lived in Peak Hill near Province town. They had two children but were separated in 1827. He married Carlotta Monterey after this second marriage broke, and she accompanied him on his many long journeys to Europe, Asia and American West.

The last years of O'Neill was marked with physical and mental suffering including the suicide of his son of the first wife, Eugene O'Neill,

Jr. and the partial paralysis, which paralyzed the movement of his hands. He suffered increasingly from isolation, family trouble and dissension. He died on 27 November 1953.

O'Neill enjoyed fame and recognition as the leading American dramatist during his lifetime. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936 and received the Pulitzer Prize four times for *Beyond the Horizon* (1918), *Anna Christie* (1902), *Strange Interlude* (1928), and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1948). His plays were popular among the English-speaking world.

O'Neill was America's outstanding playwright, who not only built up the American theatre but also took it to great heights, enabling it to achieve a dynamic and distinguished place beside the great theatres of Europe and continental countries. O'Neill had the theatre in his blood and his strenuous efforts and hard work to excel in it made him achieve the highest glory in it.

The Hairy Ape:

The play, *The Hairy Ape* by O'Neill consists of Eight Scenes and spreads for a period of almost two months. The characters of the play are,

Robert Smith, "Yank"

Paddy

Long

Mildred Douglas

Her Aunt

Second Engineer

A Guard

A Secretary of an Organisation

Sticklers, Ladies, Gentlemen Etc.

Summary of the Play with Comments:

Note: The Scenes in the play are simply entitled as Scene I, Scene II and so on only by the author. The sub-titles given here below are only for easy understanding.

SCENE I

Yank and the Stokers in the Forecastle:

The scene opens in the fireman's fore-castle (the fore-part of the ship, under the main deck, allotted to the crew) of a large passenger ship which sails across the Atlantic. The ship had sailed from New York only an hour ago. The small room is crowded with a number of sailors who are all nearly drunk. These men shout, curse, talk and sing giving an impression of confused defiance of a beast in a cage. They are dressed in dirty trousers and ugly shoes.

The scene is an Expressionist setting where the ceiling is low that these men cannot stand upright. They are given a stooping posture with an over development of back and shoulders.

The dramatist has intended to bring about an expression of "cramped space in the bowels of the ship." O'Neill himself comments that this is not a naturalistic setting but an Expressionist one, one that is meant to create a particular impression than a real, exact description of the fore-castle of a ship. This holds true for the settings of the other scenes too in the play.

The men on the ship, especially, the stokers whose duty is to shovel coal into the furnace of the engine to feed fire are gathered there. They are all hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power and low receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes. All the civilized white races are represented, but except for the slight differentiation in colour of hair, skin, eyes, all these men are alike.

When the curtain rises with a tumultuous sound, Robert Smith, who is called as "Yank" is seated in the foreground. He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent (aggressive), more powerful, more sure of himself, than of the rest. They respect his superior strength - the grudging respect of fear, "Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, their most highly developed individual."

The description of the physical appearance of these men is close to being hairy apes, resembling the Neanderthal man. The men are all drinking, singing, talking and jesting. As they are all talking together, only drunken, gibberish and incoherent noises are heard. Whatever they talk about individually is not understood.

Soon a fight breaks up between Paddy and Long, and others join in the fight. It is then that Yank orders them with contemptuous authority not

to make that hideous noise. He asks them to give him some strong drink and we find that the others are afraid of him as he exerts great authority and influence over him. The other men respect him for his superior physical strength.

The men then turn to Paddy, an old wizened Irish man whose face is extremely monkey-like with all sadness and patient, pathos on it. He is drunk fully and sings a song "Whisky Johnny" in a long, drunken voice catering to the request of the other men to sing a whisky song. Yank is irritated by all these noises and angrily orders them to stop all noise because he is "trying to think." The others repeat the word with amused mockery and burst into loud laughter. But they are pleased that 'think' rhymes with 'drink' and sing out in a chorus:

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think!

Then some drunken, sentimental stoker begins to sing,

Far away in Canada,

Far across the sea,

There's a lass who fondly waits

Making a home for me –

Unable to tolerate this, Yank in a fierce contemptuous tone asks him to shut up. He calls the sentimental singer "lousy idiot" and uproariously states that there is no concept like home. He calls their workplace, the ship as their home.

He tells that he had run away from home when he was a kid and was only too glad to have left it. He says home is not for the types of his and contemptuously shouts at the belief of the singer that the girls whom he thinks are waiting for them at home are 'whores' who have to be treated rough.

Long, a very drunk fellow-stoker agrees with Yank that the ship is their home and that home of theirs is Hell. They are condemned to live in it and suffer in it all their lives. He exclaims fiercely, "They dragged us down till we're only wage slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, eatin' coal-dust! Hit's them's ter blame-the damned capitalist class!"

We find O'Neill using the dialects of the stokers to present their dialogues and it is the actual drunken language of drunken seamen. O'Neill has drawn upon his personal experiences of sea life here. Long who calls the ship as Hell is portrayed by O'Neill as a revolutionary radical who expresses his antagonism for class in American social life.

Yank's Sense of Belonging:

The other stokers greet Long's outburst with jeers and laughter. Yank angrily asks him to shut up and sit down or else be knocked down by him. Yank feels that whatever had Long said was all wrong and that he has not understood the real situation. As a matter of fact, they are superior to the first class passengers who are not their equals in any way.

He calls them as just "baggage" who cannot run the ship. Yank says that he and the like of him belong to the ship and not those upper class men. Yank's speech is greeted with pride and admiration. All agree with him that they make the ship go and they are manly and superior to the first class passengers.

Yank is at present happy that he 'belongs' to the ship but is not aware that very soon he will lose his sense of belongingness to a feeling of insecurity. We thus see that the theme of alienation and quest for identity that will lead to the tragedy of Yank is introduced here.

The crowd of drunken stokers is ready to kill Long, but Yank prevents them from doing so. Paddy, who had been sitting in melancholic silence until then, expresses his nostalgia for the good old days. He expresses his romantic yearning for the old days when the ships were beautiful and they really belonged to the sea. However, now the ships are dirty and the men working in it are slaves to that horrible mechanical monster.

Contrary to the stooping physique of the present stokers, the seamen of the past had straight backs, full chests, clean skin and clear eyes. He resentfully tells Yank that it was during those past days that men belonged to the ships and not now. He scornfully questions Yank whether he wanted to be associated with black smoke from the funnels smudging the sea, and the decks and the bloody engines choking their lungs with coal-dusts, breaking their backs and hearts, feeding the furnace of the stokehole. He expresses the harsh truth but he feels that they are bloody apes caged in the zoo.

Thus through Paddy, O'Neill has voiced out his own condemnation of the squalid, mechanical life of contemporary civilization. By contrasting the past and the present, we see that O'Neill presents the past as the glorious one. Paddy's comment that they are like the bloody apes in a zoo throws light on the significance of the title.

Yank, however, does not agree with Paddy. He retorts with an air of confidence and security that he is young and belongs to the ship. He is in the ship and the engines, the coal and the smoke, and all the rest of it are his life. If the stokehole is Hell for Paddy, it is Yank's favourite climate. He is proud that he is the one who makes the noise, the smoke and all the engines moving in the world and, but for him, everything would stop.

He says that 'new is modern' and he is the steam and oil for engines. He is the iron for the steel and the steel that stands for the whole thing. As he utters this in a self-glorifying frenzy, the other men, except Paddy cheer him up. Paddy bursts out into mocking laughter. Yank is angry with him but before he could tell anything the bell rings loudly calling them back to their duty in the stokehole.

All except Paddy jump up and mechanically file out of the room to go out for their duty. Paddy decides not to go to work on that day and sits there "drinking and thinking and dreaming dreams." He is a dreamer like so many other characters of O'Neill. Yank goes out telling him that he makes him sick and that he does not belong.

Comment:

We can observe here, that Yank, the central character of the play has an idealistic view of his job on the ship and very much feels he belongs to it. Like him are majority of the other stokers who believe they belong to the ship. It is Long and Paddy who have realised their real situations, but ironically, when they point it out, they are silenced and hated for holding such weird views.

SCENE II

Mildred Douglas and Her Aunt:

This scene takes place two days after the opening scene. It takes place on a section of upper deck of the ship and we are introduced to Mildred Douglas and her aunt. They are found relaxing in easy chairs. Mildred is a young woman of 20. She is pretty but a self-conscious air of

superiority mars her face. She is nervous, unconfident and anaemic. There is a look of artificiality around her. She is dressed all in white.

Her Aunt is a fat old woman, pompous and proud and has an air of pretentiousness around her. The setting of this scene is in total contrast with the setting of the fireman's forecastle in the previous scene. It is vivid and beautiful with a sunshine lining the deck and fresh wind blowing across it.

Mildred and her aunt are presented as two incongruous figures, artificial and inert, being in total disharmony with the sea. The aunt is like a grey lump of dough and the niece looks lifeless and lacking vitality.

From the beginning of the introduction of the two, the aunt and the niece, it is clear that there is not much love and affection between the two. Mildred keeps teasing and crossing her aunt for whatever she says. She keeps insulting her aunt.

From their conversation, we can understand that Mildred is interested in social service and as such wants to find out at first-hand how the other world is, that is, the world of have-nots. Having studied sociology she wants to know how the have-nots, that is, the economically disadvantaged poor people live their lives. She has already studied the living conditions in the East end of New York and now she is voyaging to make her, "slumming international."

She would very much like to help the 'have-nots' if only she knew how. She is sincere in her wish but feels tired and exhausted. She feels that all her vitality was burnt out in the stock before she was born. Her father is a steel magnet who has accumulated a huge wealth. He has earned countless millions for all which Mildred is the inheritor. She has inherited the wealth acquired through steel but did not possess the physical energy or strength that might keep her energetic and enthusiastic. She feels bored all the time and does not have energy for life.

She wants to help the have-nots, the poor and the needy but does not have necessary strength and vitality. Still she is doing her best. On the ship also she wanted to study how the other half lives and works. She wanted to go to the stokehole to see poor stokers working in the bowels of the ship. Her aunt warns her of the heat and the dust that would frighten her but she is determined to go.

She has already obtained the permission of the captain of the ship

for the visit, by simply informing him that her father, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nazareth Steel Co., had told her that there would be no difficulty about the visit.

At this point, the second engineer who is to escort her to the stokehole comes there for the purpose. He warns her that it would be terribly hot in the stokehole, but Mildred does not mind it. She does not even mind spoiling her pure white dress. She goes with him bidding goodbye to her aunt and asking her not to "pray too hard that I may fall into the fiery furnace." The aunt is insulted and wrathful, but helpless before her more ready-witted niece.

Comment:

This scene provides a pleasant contrast to the previous one in the fireman's forecastle, and in this way highlights the devious divide between the haves and the have-nots. It heightens the wretchedness, the misery, and the hardship of the stokers. It also brings out the artificiality and emptiness of the American upper class society. The stokers may be poor but they have greater fellow feeling and comradeship, and enjoy their life more than the exhausted and enervated rich.

SCENE III

In the stokehole:

The scene takes place in the stokehole (the narrow cramped space before the furnace of the engine, where the stokers work and shove coal into it) of the ship. A line of men stripped to the waist before the furnace doors are seen. They bend over, looking to neither right nor left, handling their shovels as if they were part of their bodies with a strange, awkward swinging rhythm. They use the shovels to throw open the furnace doors. Then from these fiery round holes, a flood of terrific light and heat pours upon the men who are outlined in silhouette in the crouching, inhuman attitude of chained gorillas.

The men shower with the rhythmic motion, swinging as on a pivot from the coal, which lies in heaps on the floor behind to hurl it to the flaming mouths before them. There is a tumult of noise - the brazen clang of the furnace doors as they are flung open or slammed shut, the grating teeth-gritting grind of steel against steel, of crunching coal. This clash of sounds stuns one's ears with resounding dissonance. Nevertheless,

there is order in it, a rhythm, a mechanical, regulated recurrence, a tempo. Moreover, rising above all, making the air hum with the quiver of liberated energy, is the roar of leaping flames in the furnaces, the monotonous throbbing beat of the engines.

The stokers work for some time and then the furnace doors are shut as the men rest for a moment. The engineer's whistle sounds from time to time reminding them that they must continue to feed the fire. This continued whistling irritates the stokers. They are working hard, their backs are almost broken, and still it is not enough.

Yank who loves his work, who has the feeling of belonging to it, encourages the fellow stokers and asks them to follow his own example and put in harder work. However, when the whistle keeps sounding incessantly, he brandishes his shovel over his head and pounds his chest with one hand "gorilla like."

He too loses his temper, and bursts out furiously that he would murder the engineer who keeps blowing his whistle. As he was throwing out his curses, he was totally not aware of the arrival of Mildred. It was just at that moment Mildred had come down escorted by the two engineers.

The other stokers were staring at her dumb-founded. She was standing there in her white dress and was standing right behind Yank. However, Yank whose back is towards her does not see her and goes on with his cursing, shouting and brandishing. When at last, he turns his face towards her with a snarling, murderous growl and glaring at her with gleaming ferocious eyes, she is terrified by his abysmal brutality, naked and shameless.

As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own. As she faints with fear and heat, and is carried away from there, she exclaims, "oh, the filthy beast." Hearing this, Yank feels insulted "in the very heart of his pride," and roars out, "God damn, Yuh!" Over-head the whistle sounds again as the curtain drops.

Comment:

This meeting between Mildred and Yank is melodramatic and at once capturing. It is a scene of strong situations and is dramatically

significant. It sowed the seeds of tragedy and catastrophe in Yank's life. In addition, it marked the beginning of Yank's disintegration and destruction. Yank's pride is hurt at Mildred's words calling him a beast, and it lays the foundation for the shattering of all that he holds close to him. It would lead to his fall.

SCENE IV

The Thinker

The scene once again shifts to the fireman's forecastle where the first scene of the play was laid. It portrays the effect that Mildred's visit to the stokehole had on Yank and the other stokers.

The men are in the fireman's forecastle, washing themselves and are getting ready for dinner. While the others still drink, joke, laugh and talk as before, Yank sits moodily in the pose of Rodin's "The Thinker." He is now a blackened, brooding figure. Yank does not wash or clean himself and when the others remind him in a chorus to wash himself, he replies angrily, "Hell with washing."

He angrily asks them to let him alone, for he is trying to think. Paddy then teasingly suggests to him that perhaps he has fallen in love. To this Yank angrily retorts that he has fallen in hate, and not in love. Long, who has by now gathered some information regarding the purpose of Mildred's visit, informs them that her visit was an insult to them.

Long informs the stokers that she is the daughter of the capitalist who makes all the bloody steel in the world, and who owns the bloody ship. They are all his slaves, and she came down there to look up on the "bloody animals" in the cage who work for her father. The engineer who brought her there had no right to show them to her, as if they were animals in a zoo. They will never digest such an insult. They would go to the law about it. However, Yank does not believe in law, government, or God. "To Hell with such notions," he says. He believes in direct action in taking personal revenge for the insult that has been enforced upon him.

Paddy provokes Yank when he says that the white woman was standing there behind them with the engineer pointing at them and showing them to her as if showing an animal in a circus. And it was at that time that Yank was throwing curses at the engineers who were whistling continuously. Paddy tells him that she was scared and shocked as if "she

had seen a great hairy ape escaped from the zoo."

She did not use these words actually but she looked as if she said those words. This was enough for Yank to get enraged and he burst out in uncontrollable anger, and wanted to teach her a lesson for calling him a 'hairy ape.' He would have her revenge on her. She is only a mere baggage, a mere white ghost, a parasite who lives on the fruits of their labour. They sweat and slave for her day and night. He decides to throw her into the furnace if she comes there again.

Yank rushes in a mad rage intending to go to her cabin and kill her there, but the other stokers hold him back by the sheer force of their numbers. The scene ends with Yank roaring that he would have her revenge on her.

Comment:

From that moment onwards, we see that Yank sees himself as a hairy ape. His pride and sense of security and belonging were shattered by the insult inflicted upon him by Mildred. He started to increasingly realize that he does not belong. Yank feels Mildred has insulted him and he says that he will have his revenge on her and show her "who's an ape!"

SCENE V:

The Fifth Avenue:

The scene takes place three weeks later on a fine morning on a corner of the Fifth Avenue. The street was clean and neat and the shops were magnificent with a bright downpour of artificial light. The jeweller's shop and the furrier's shop are specially mentioned in order to reflect the wealth, pomp and glitter of the commercialised America.

The general effect is that of a background of magnificence, cheapened and made grotesque by the commercialism, a background in tawdry disharmony with the clear light and sunshine on the street itself.

Yank and Long are on the side street where Long is dressed in shore clothes with the black tie and cloth cap. Yank is in his dirty dungarees and fireman's cap and has looks with fierce and resentful eyes. He has not shaved for days and the black soot of coal-dust still sticks on to him.

They are there on the Fifth Avenue in search of Mildred or of the people of her class, rich capitalists, who exploit them and insult them.

Yank is thirsty for his revenge on her and the like of her. With defiant contempt, they feel that they pay with her blood for all the costly stuff that they see in the shops there.

Yet they do not belong to that place. They are the proletarians and so they are regarded as trespassers there. The girl who insulted them was only a representative of the rich capitalists. Yank was mad with anger to fight her whole lot, if only he could find her out. Long tells him that he wanted to instil knowledge in Yank about class-consciousness. He says it is not Mildred alone that Yank has to fight against but the whole mob of people like her.

Long is sensible and advises him to use only peaceful, lawful means such as capturing power through their votes, otherwise, they would be in trouble. However, Yank, no longer capable of any thought, calls such ideas fit only for women. He is a man and so he will use force to have his revenge.

Just then, the church service is over, and a crowd of well-dressed men and women comes out of the church. Yank, waiting for a fight, walks into some of them. However, they take no notice of him who is trying to disturb them. They avoid him and move on leaving him confused and perturbed. Long warns him against involving him in any such mischiefs and asks him to be careful. He warns him of them handing him over to the police. Yank refuses to listen to Long, and so Long leaves him, telling him not to blame him if he gets involved into trouble.

Yank is left alone. He is senseless and in trying to take revenge on the upper class, he involves in many foolish things. He approaches a lady and winks at her, bumps into a gentleman who begs his pardon with his mechanical, affected politeness, and turns to others, but all ignore his presence.

When a woman exclaims excitedly at a monkey fur, in a shop, Yank gets maddened at it and with a rage tries to pull off some "street kerbing" and then tries to pull off a lamp post to use it as a club. He then strikes his fists full on the face of a man rushing to catch his bus. When he thought that the man would fight him back, the man calls for a police, and Yank is arrested. He is taken away to be imprisoned. Yank's mad and senseless attempts at revenge land him at the Blackwell's Island, the jail.

Comment:

The scene portrays the artificial and pretentious lives of the modern people who live mechanical lives. The men are mechanical and they do not possess much strength or the fighting spirit. The scene is a reflection of the contemporary American society where the artificial nature and mechanical lives of it are satirised by O'Neill.

SCENE VI

Yank in Prison:

Scene VI is set in the prison in Blackwell's Island. It is the night of the following day. There are endless rows of cells stretching from one end to another. Yank is locked in one of them and is sitting in the pose of Rodin's "The Thinker." There are bruises on his face, and a bloodstained bandage round his head. He is under mental torture and the words, "hairy ape" torture him and he thinks of the cell he is in as a cage. He talks to himself loudly and hearing his talk, the prisoners in the other cells laugh loudly. They laugh at Yank's thought of the 'place' as "a zoo and that they are animals in their respective cages."

Yank's fellow prisoners wanted to know what had landed him in prison and he tells them that he was trying to have his revenge on a girl who had insulted him. Having failed in the attempt, he says that once he is released from jail, he would soon have his revenge on her.

Thus, we understand that he was keen on avenging the insult inflicted upon him by Mildred. He says, "But I'll get back at her yet, you watch! And if can't find her I'll take it out on de gang she runs wit. I'm wise to where dey hangs out now. I'll show her who belongs! I'll show her who's in de move and who ain't. You watch my smoke!"

A prisoner then tells him if he wants to get even with her, then he should join the organisation called I.W.W (Industrial Workers of the World). Explaining that to him, one of them reads out a report about the organisation that has appeared in the papers. The report says that the members of the I.W.W. would soon make civilisation a shambles, a desolation, where man would soon degenerate into the ape.

Yank is delighted at this and makes up his mind of visiting the I.W.W and joining it soon. He believes that he belongs to it and after joining it as a member, would have his revenge upon the Douglas, the father and the girl who treat them as their slaves. They not only insulted

him but it is their steel, which now keeps him in a cage, like a hairy ape.

Maddened at the thought of revenge against Mildred and her class, Yank bends the iron bars of the cell with such tremendous strength that the bar comes out. Nevertheless, the next moment, the prison-guard rushes at him and he is swamped down. He is once again put behind the bars.

SCENE VII

Yank's Disillusionment and Gradual Disintegration:

The scene is laid at a local I.W.W. office (Industrial Workers of the World Local No. 57). He is dressed as he was in section V and knocks at the door. He tells the Secretary of the organisation that he has come there to join the organisation. He pays half a dollar as membership fee and fills a form.

He is welcomed by the Secretary of the organisation, who tells him that he is in work, and that Yank can help them by distributing their pamphlets among his fellow workers. He says that he can convert his fellow workers and could persuade them to join their society. Yank is happy that at last he feels that he belongs. He tells them that he would be of great use to the society, for he can shoot folks, if so required. He would blow things up for them and would use dynamite and blow the steelworks, the steel trust of Douglas and others like him who keep them in cages and exploit them and thrive on their labour.

In one of his conversations with the Secretary, Yank tells him that he would burn and blow the factory of steels of the Douglas. He is not interested in the murder of Douglas, the owner but he was interested in destroying his factory. Then he would write a letter to his daughter that he did it, the Hairy ape whom she had insulted in the stokehole did it.

Here we can see the deep rooted feeling of revenge that Yank had for Mildred and the like of her. However, Yank is disillusioned soon. The Secretary tells him that they have no use for dynamites. They do not want him to blow up anything. They want to change the conditions of society by entirely legitimate means. He takes Yank to be a spy, to be an agent provocateur, a Secret Service man. He says Yank is a spy and is "a brainless ape."

At the words "brainless ape", Yank's passions are aroused, but at the next moment, he is thrown out of the office into the street. With extreme

anger, he starts to get up and storm the closed door, but stops confused by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent. He sat there, brooding, in as near to the attitude of Rodin's "thinker" as he can get in his position.

He has been disillusioned and realises that he does not belong even to the I.W.W. He thought that he belonged to steel and the world of steel owns him. But now, everything is dark and hellish. His conception has been wrong. He turns bitter, marks face up like an ape gibbering at the moon.

A police officer soon arrives there and asks him to get away from there as soon as possible. Yank challenges him to imprison him stating that the charges with which he could be imprisoned is that "he was born."

The police officer stating that he had no time for kidding with a drunkard asks him "to go to Hell."

Comment:

We see that in this section, Yank is completely isolated and there is no one for him to physically or morally support him. He is slowly disintegrating and losing his sense of belongingness from all corners and the only thing on his mind is that he has to have his revenge on the girl who called him the Hairy ape. He is all the time conscious of this, and hence, we see him consciously or unconsciously going to the zoo.

We also see that Yank is troubled and worried and the fact that he is not able to do anything against the girl who insulted him or against the lot to which she belonged throws him to extreme agony. He has lost his sense of respect. It gives him a feeling of alienation. He feels he does not belong anywhere and has lost his identity. He feels bitter at his very birth.

SCENE VIII

Yank's Tragic Death with a Feeling of Hopelessness:

The scene is laid in the monkey-house of the zoo during the evening of the next day. In one cage, there is a sign from which the word 'gorilla' stands out prominently. The gigantic animal himself is seen squatting on his haunches on a bench in much the same attitude as Rodin's "Thinker." Yank enters from the left. Immediately, a chorus of angry chattering and scratching breaks out. The gorilla turns his eyes and makes no sound or move. Yank stands in front of the cage, and talks in a friendly

and confidential tone at length to the gorilla. He regards the gorilla with sympathy, and thinks of it as his own brother, as a member of his own family and sees the zoo as a place he belongs to.

He thinks that he and the gorilla are the members of the same club. He tells it that the white-faced prostitute, that is, Mildred would have seen this gorilla in him. Yank pounds at the rail with his fist. The gorilla rattles the bars of his cage and snarls. All the other monkeys set up in an angry chattering in the darkness and Yank goes on excitedly addressing the gorilla.

He calls the gorilla lucky since he does not belong with them and he knows it, whereas, he belongs with them but does not know that. They do not belong with him. The gorilla growls impatiently. Yank goes on gropingly and says that the gorilla at least belongs to the jungle and the rest of it. However, Yank has no good luck of this sort. He did not belong to the world.

Continuing with this long monologue, Yank tells the gorilla that he would ever remain firm to his purpose, and if released, he would certainly knock them off the earth. He would shake hands with him, take him to the Fifth Avenue, where he can wipe out the whole gang of them. Yank gets hysterical and totally loses his senses as he frantically addresses the gorilla.

Furiously exalted at the idea of taking the gorilla to knock off the aristocrats of the Fifth Avenue, Yank breaks the lock of the cage door and opens it for the gorilla to come out. He stretches his hands out to the gorilla to have a handshake calling him his "brother" in a mocking tone. The next moment the enraged gorilla wraps his huge arms around him in a murderous hug and crushes him to death. Yank falls down on the floor. The gorilla takes him up, throws him into the cage, and closes the doors and walks off menacingly in the dark.

As Yank dies, he painfully mutters that even the gorilla did not think that he belonged. In deep agony, he asks, "Christ, where do I get off at? Where do I fit in?" As he dies in the cage, the author comments that now, perhaps, the "Hairy Ape at last belongs."

Comment:

The scene consists of a long monologue of Yank where he is bewildered and hysterical and is abounded by uncertain and insecure feelings. His feeling of not belonging makes him have an acquaintance

with the gorilla whom the white-faced girl sees in him. He calls it his brother thinking he could belong to it. His soul is agonised and suffers from alienation and loss of identity.

We could see that O'Neill has made a successful use of the Expressionist technique here, which gives a terrifying picture of Yank's pain and despair. The reactions of the gorilla, carefully depicted by the poet imparts realism to the drama. O'Neill has realistically and expressionistically portrayed the spiritual disintegration and death of Yank. His suffering is the symbolic suffering of many alienated souls in contemporary America. Yank's predicament is a predicament of not only one American but also of every man in general. In that, the tragedy of *The Hairy Ape* becomes a representative tragedy of a modern man who is bound to machines and leads a mechanical kind of life.

Expressionism

Expressionism is an artistic movement of the modern era, which began at the end of the nineteenth century. It is an outcome of modernism, of which we will study in detail at the end of this lesson. It is an artistic movement that was in reaction against the other existing movements of the period like Realism and Naturalism. Expressionism was against materialism, bourgeois property, rapid mechanisation and urbanisation. It included the domination of family within the World War I European society. It became popular in Germany after the First World War and later spread to parts of Europe, including Austria, Sweden and later to the United States of America.

This genre became popular when the field of psychology was growing in Europe with Sigmund Freud and his theories. Psychology delved deep into the psyche of the individuals studying their emotions and feelings. Interested in expressing the psychology of their characters, the Expressionists attempted at writing from a psychological perspective. They came out with a new kind of work protesting against the existing art forms and hence, they were called Protest dramatists and their drama as Drama of Protest.

The Expressionist playwrights were interested in conveying their ideas through a new style of drama. They were not interested in representing things in a realistic or naturalistic way as the practitioners of realism or naturalism were doing. These expressionist writers portrayed

the inner world of the central characters focusing on their feelings and emotions as in contrast with the external realities describing the physical environment and physical happenings. Realism often focuses on the everyday life representing things in a realistic way, whereas, for the expressionists, mind was of supreme importance. They were interested in expressing the spiritual or psychological reality. The following points are given for a better understanding of Expressionist drama.

Characteristic Features of Expressionist Drama

1. The Expressionist dramatists conveyed their ideas through a new style of writing.
2. They were interested in representing the general truths rather than part situations.
3. They were not interested in representing the outer world, but were interested in presenting the inner state of minds of the central characters. The focus is not so much on the external, physical realities, but on what was going on in the minds of the characters.
4. Their focus is not on the outer world defining time and place but on the internal workings of the mind.
5. The playwrights replaced the imitation of life with ecstatic evocation of the states of mind.
6. The central characters in these plays are found pouring out their emotions and feelings in the form of monologues, expressing their sorrows and sufferings, the torture of their souls.
7. It is seen that they revolt against the older generation, and possess a kind of idealism. When their ideals are disrupted, the agony they feel are given in a detailed manner. The readers are able to have a peep into their souls.
8. In many plays, the incidents portrayed are dreamlike and nightmarish. It evokes fear and a spooky mood that is shadowy and unrealistic.
9. The characters in these dramas often use short speeches and quick phrases while their monologues will be long and sometimes boring.
10. The characters will be seen seeking solutions from various political bodies and would be found demystified of them.
11. The dramatists are involved in uncovering intense emotions and are

interested in portraying the failure of societal systems like family, church and education.

12. Various literary devices like verbal irony and sarcasm are used.
13. Soliloquies are used to enter into the minds and spirits of the central characters.
14. The central characters are usually new men or modern men who are neither too submissive nor too headstrong to act against the ways of the society.
15. The Expressionist dramatists adopt episodic scenes to portray the happenings of the play.
16. They use simple names for characters like Long, Yank and Paddy.
17. Their settings are usually with striking noise and light effects. We find that there is a purposeful exaggeration or understatement of setting.
18. The Expressionists give importance to subjectivity rather than objectivity.

Expressionist Drama is a Drama of Protest

Expressionist Drama or the Drama of Protest emerged during the beginning of the twentieth century as a revolt against romanticism and realism. It was a revolt against realistic or naturalistic representation of the surfaces of characters, life, speech, setting, emotions and ideas of one society or another. It was an experiment on the 'real' reality, which is not limited to the outside world alone but in presenting the inner reality, the inner world of feelings thoughts and emotions.

The expressionists were interested in presenting the inner essence of things, the spirit that guides man to the real aspects of life. Man is, because of his thinking power. These dramatists are interested in presenting man as a thinker, as a thinking man. The physical appearance is not the real one, and to know the real essence, probing into man's psyche is needed.

The expressionist dramatists are interested in depicting the subjective feelings of the characters, rather than delineating the objective reality. They attempt at portraying reality beyond the superficial realms of life. They do away with naturalistic and realistic writers' way of concentrating on the physical movement, setting and life of the characters.

The action moves freely backward and forward, in time and

space, bringing in total harmony with the thought processes of the central character. They do away with creating conventional plot, character and setting, where we have clear-cut beginnings, middle and end, and prominent explanations of things. These dramatists, discarding the methods of the realists and naturalists opt for a form episodic in nature, where a series of relatively short scenes, with characters experiencing variety of emotions and feelings are portrayed.

There is a deep probing of the subconscious, and what goes on within the soul becomes important than the external action. Instead of picturing the external events in a dramatic sequence, there is a concentration on the stream of consciousness, where the projection is on the thought processes. The surface of life becomes scattered and disjointed as if in a dream to suggest the inner reality, which lies beneath the surface.

The scenes are often short and brief. Time sequence is sometimes sacrificed, where order and unity are also neglected. Like the processes of the mind and the spirit, the incidents of the play alternate between reality and fantasy.

The dramatists use certain techniques like asides, soliloquies, monologues, internal monologues, dreams, slip of the tongue, symbols, metaphors, fables and allegories to bring about an understanding of the inner workings of the characters. Even unseen voices are heard to express the secret thoughts of the characters.

Noises and flickering lights are used to express the conflict of will and struggle between the dark desires. They use fantasy and dream that are often distorted and disconnected to bring out the thoughts of the central characters.

In Expressionist drama, characters are usually types where they are symbolic of a role or position in society. The number of characters is usually kept to the minimum in Expressionist plays. The focus is on the central character and the other characters are not individualised. They are usually kept in the background to occasionally give a sharp relief to the central character.

Expressionism in *The Hairy Ape*:

The *Hairy Ape* by O'Neill is an Expressionist play that uses memory, dream-sequences, shifts in time and place. It is a play where O'Neill has

effectively used the methods of German experiments. It cannot be said that O'Neill has completely discarded realism but he has used expressionism to probe into the unconscious, to portray effectively the problems of the contemporary society.

O'Neill believes that merely recording the external events of the characters prevent man from seeing the real reality, which is truly embedded in the psyche of human beings. In the very opening of the play, O'Neill informs us considerably that this play is a combination of realistic and expressionist techniques. He emphasizes in the opening of the play itself that, "The treatment of the scene or any other scene in the play, should no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is of a cramped space in the bowels of a ship imprisoned by white steel"

He thus gives a realistic setting in the manner of an expressionist where the setting is intended to give the impression of overcrowding. The stokers are given a realistic description,

"Hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low receding brows about their small, fierce, resentful eyes. All the civilized white races are represented; but except for the slight differentiation in colour of hair, skin, eyes, all these men are alike. Yank the central figure of the play is seated in the foreground. He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength – the grudging respect of fear. Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, the most highly developed individual."

Thus, Yank is a representative of a class.

In Expressionist drama, the characters are not usually given distinct identity or individuality. They are presented as types representing groups and masses. Their individuality is minimised and emphasis is laid on typicality. Thus, we have the characters in *The Hairy Ape* named as Yank, Long and Paddy and so on classifying them as representatives of society. All the characters in *The Hairy Ape* are symbolic. However, they are not lifeless or abstract.

Yank is a representative of a class. He is represented as a symbol of the oppressed working class in general, of the have-nots for the economically disadvantaged sections of society. He serves as a symbol of the primitive animal like man.

The other minor characters in the play like Paddy, Long and the Stokers who are simply named as 'voices' in the play, who do not even have names, simply serve the purpose of playing the roles in supporting the central character. Mildred and her aunt are seen as symbolic of the upper class, wealthy section of the society who are highly artificial and pretentious. Mildred is a poseur who falsely pretends herself as a human interested in social life. They are living artificial and pretentious lives, and are symbolic of the enervation caused by the contemporary mechanised, materialised urban life.

The description of the inhabitants of the Fifth Avenue is symbolic of modern life.

The crowd from church enter from the right, sauntering slowly and affectedly, their heads held stiffly up, looking neither to right nor left, talking in toneless, simpering voices. The women roughed, calcimined, dyed, over-dressed to the nth degree. The men are in tail coats, tall-hats, spats, etc. A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankensteinis in the detached, mechanical unawareness.

Here, we see that the description is an exaggerated description of reality that is a typical characteristic feature of Expressionist play.

The prisoners in the prison scene are mere nameless voices. The Secretary of the I.W.W. and the other people in this office are equally lacking in individuality. The playwright, in order to mainly focus on the central character Yank, and to portray what is going on within him, or in his inner soul purposefully does these things.

Yank is a man who looks "broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest." The Stokers "respect his superior strength and the grudging respect of fear." He is a man easily recognised and identified.

Long is symbolic of radicalism in America who believes in law and legitimate ways of fighting against oppression and heinous ways of society. He believes in the Marxist philosophy of class struggle and deals with workers' alienation in the industrial age. He opposes the rich capitalists' ways of exploiting the proletariats. He is totally identified with the working class and he is the person who talks about the rights and privileges.

He takes Yank to the Fifth Avenue and opens him up to the luxury

and riches of the aristocratic class. He states that they should oppose them in a lawful way instead of using violence.

O'Neill gives most of his characters names as being expressive of the characters' inner nature. The names give us an understanding of them and the world they represent. We also see that there is no full development of characters, yet, the dramatist manages to bring about the intended effect. Mildred and Yank confront each other only for a moment but yet that one moment is enough to create havoc in Yank's soul. It is this one moment, which sets the tempo of the play.

They face each other only once but the impact of one on the other, and on the audience is complete. Only one scene is enough to present Paddy as a sentimental character who is nostalgic of the glorious past. It is enough to show him as being out of time with the present.

Through a few dialogues, Long is revealed as a revolutionary wishing for a change in the societal system. The Secretary of the I.W.W., the police officer and the gorilla all appear for a few moments only, but leave indelible impressions on the minds of the readers.

The dramatist's effective use of sentences brief, conversations in the form of monologues and dialogues are also effective. The characters often express themselves briefly, often in monosyllables. It reveals what is passing on in their minds, their attitudes, agitations, bewilderment, confusions, obsessions etc.

Yank's brief expressions like "I belong," "I will fix her," "in the end" etc. establish the fact that Yank's unsophisticated mind is only guided by a few ideas. The dramatist has widely used the technique of 'interior monologue' to present the sufferings, despair and agony of the central character, Yank.

The long monologue of Yank after he is thrown out of the I.W.W. office is an outstanding example of stream-of-consciousness technique. Yank is confused and bewildered, and is in a helpless situation.

He visited the I.W.W. with a strong belief that he belongs to it. However, the rude revelation that he receives there that he would be the ape shatters him terribly. He is extremely hurt and we see that the modern, mechanised age affects the individual spirit of man only. Man is degraded and dehumanized. He has been reduced to a machine, merely to a thing of steel.

Yank expresses in his bewilderment that

I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de world. Now I ain't steel and the world owns me. Aw, hell; I can't see - it's all dark, get me. It's all wrong: (he turns a bitter, mocking face up, like an ape gibbering at the moon). Say, Youse up dere. Man in de Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer, huh? Slip me the inside dope, de information right from de stable - where do I get off at huh? He belongs neither to earth, nor to heaven. The proper place for him might be Hell. He might belong there.

The Eighth scene of the play is one long monologue, the gorilla in the cage being the only listener. This monologue fully brings in the disintegration of Yank's personality by presenting his thought processes. Yank is obsessed with the thought of Mildred calling him a 'beast' that was reframed by Paddy when he told Yank that Mildred called him a hairy ape. This is registered on Yank's mind strongly and carried away by this obsession Yank sees himself as the Hairy Ape.

He addresses the gorilla as his 'brother' and thinks that he belongs there to the same club, the club of the apes. He is also obsessed with having his revenge on Mildred and the like of her and is no longer capable of any reasoning or rational thought. He has lost his mind and is thrown completely off the balance. He feels that he does not belong anywhere. His world, the world of the ship, where he thought he belonged, rejected him.

At least the gorilla belongs to the world of nature but he did not belong even to that world. The world of man, which he thought he rightfully belonged, too rejected him. So being so obsessed with the feelings of revenge, he has the idea of taking the gorilla to the Fifth Avenue to have his revenge on the class of people to which Mildred belonged.

With this notion, he lets open the gorilla and tries to shake hands with him. However, the gorilla looking at the mocking tone of his words gives him a deadly hug and crushes him to death, where he falls on the floor muttering in deep anguish, "Even he did not think I belonged. Christ, where do I fit in?"

Even at the moment of dying, the feeling of not belonging and being isolated and alienated creeps into the soul of Yank and makes him suffer the pain and agony of the mind more than the pain caused by the gorilla.

Thus, we see the isolation and alienation that is the lot of the

common man in the modern industrialised and urbanised society is forcefully brought out by O'Neill with the use of the 'internal monologue' technique.

The short scenes and the limited number of scenes add to the effectiveness of expressionism employed by O'Neill. Contrary to the realistic plays, the scenes are not logically related or sketched. Much is left to the imagination of the audience. The connections between the scenes are emotional and not logical. It appears to the senses rather than to reason.

There is no development of plot or character, but only the intensification and deepening of the obsessive feeling of the central character that takes place. The play does not have the complete formlessness of the Expressionist plays of the contemporary German dramatists. There is no total decay of plot and character. Instead, there is a mix of realism and expressionism. There is realism in both setting and character.

The character of Yank in his confusion and bewilderment, being keen on taking revenge on Mildred keeps moving from one place to another. He first goes to the Fifth Avenue accompanied by Long, sees the rich in their Sunday clothes, then he is a prisoner, then he moves outside to society's institutions and seeks refuge with the anarchists, the I.W.W. who are the declared enemies of the society. All the time going with the intention of taking revenge against Mildred, we see him only moving farther and farther away from her.

Finally, understanding he is rejected everywhere and belonged to nowhere, he seeks refuge in the zoo. Calling the hairy ape as his 'brother,' thinking he belonged to the club of apes, he is misunderstood there also, and is killed by the gorilla. We see that all through these developments in Yank's story, the action does not move backward and forward in time, nor does it range far and wide in space as is typical of stream of consciousness technique, but follows continuous forward movement, each scene delineating a well-defined stage in Yank's consciousness. O'Neill has skilfully maintained the coherence and integrity, characteristic of realistic plays, while at the same time has been expressionist also.

O'Neill is an experimenter of modern and new techniques. This play is a wonderful experiment of O'Neill's mix of realistic and expressionist techniques in an admirable way.

The Hairy Ape as a Tragedy:

O'Neill, the great master of American drama has produced many tragedies. In fact, most of O'Neill's plays are tragedies. *The Hairy Ape* is also a great tragedy, which proclaims modern man's fall because of his alienation and isolation.

The hero of *The Hairy Ape* does not come under the category of Shakespeare's tragic heroes who were individuals of exception, men of higher rank, a King or a prince, but he is a man of humble origins.

Aristotle laid down that the hero in a tragedy must be a character of high importance because only then the fall from his high place, a place of greatness would arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Although the subject matter and theme of tragedy of the plays coming in the Aristotelian and Shakespearean tragedy are found in the plays of O'Neill also, it is the rank of the tragic hero where it dissents.

O'Neill's hero is not a hero belonging to a royal or aristocratic tradition but a simple and humble stoker whose business is to shove fuel into the furnace of the ship's engine. Yank who had run away from home as a boy started working in the ships and he had to work for long hours in the cramped and long roof of the stokehole.

Yank is a person who is poor, who does not have a formal education, and who does not have any worldly ambitions. He is beastly, filthy, vulgar and coarse. In fact, although he frequently adopts the pose of a thinker he cannot think. He has no mind of his own but can only use his physical force. He is like the hairy ape that he is.

He is also like the other stokers in the play but only difference is that he is with superior physical strength and is in more harmony with his work than the others. He has a sense of belonging to the ship. He represents the most highly developed individuality. He feels that he belongs and that he can coal and smoke. He feels that he is steel and that he has the power to make the ships go. He is the ideal stoker living in an ideal world of the ship and the sea. It is here where the other stokers fall short off and lack the idealism that is present in Yank.

Aristotle states that a great tragic hero must have a tragic flaw, but here we see that Yank does not suffer from any fault of his own. The reason for his failure is the society and the environment around him, the system of class that pervades in modern society. Yank is in conflict with the social

forces surrounding him, which are stronger than him. He is unable to have a winning fight against it. He struggles against the social forces that drive him to his doom.

In the opening of the play, Yank is at ease and peaceful, content with his life of coal and smoke. He is satisfied that he belongs, and lives with the sense of certainty, security and belongingness. However, these are shattered when he comes into contact with "that fool - fog of a girl" (Mildred) who comes down to the stokehole to look down upon them as "the filthy beast." She considers them as wild animals in a zoo.

For no fault of his, Yank is disturbed of his complacency and idealism. He feels insulted and his pride is hurt. His sense of belonging is shattered. He is no more the confident person that he was. He realises he is not still steel and steam which makes the ship go but the slave of the owners of the ship. We see that Yank disintegrates from the moment of the encounter between him and Mildred.

He feels dehumanised and thenceforward, there is a gradual regression in his personality. He is stopped from his impulse of killing the girl who threw pain on him. He tried his best to at least cause disturbances to the class to which the girl belongs in a small way visiting the Fifth Avenue but was in vain.

Society itself is the villain here and it is the social forces that destroy Yank. His spiritual disintegration is because of the unjust and cruel societal class system of the American democracy. He is obsessed with the name hairy ape given by an upper class woman which marks his tragedy. Unable to come out of it he begins to actually see himself as the hairy ape. The obsession makes him meet the real hairy ape in the zoo, which eventually leads to his gruesome death.

The tragedy of Yank is so deeply moving as he is noble and is in position of superior physical strength, efficient and capable with a lot of loyalty towards his work. His sense of belongingness and all that was him gets shattered by the cruelty of society. His tragedy is the tragedy of many common men tied to the machines and to the mechanical modern life.

Yank's loss of the sense of belongingness, sense of harmony and security and creative joys result in his disillusionment and tragedy. Yank's tragedy is the tragedy of everyman. What happened to Yank happens to millions of people in the modern age. It shows the disintegration of

modern man, which is a typical characteristic feature of modern age.

Modernism is a movement that was predominant in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The rapid industrialisation and urbanization and the World Wars led people to change or move away from set traditions and conventional beliefs about God, society and life. A conscious break away from the past and the search for new and innovative ways marked the period.

Modernism moved considerably away from classical and traditional forms. It opened up new vistas in the ways of thinking and writing, and was marked by innovation and experimentation. Modernism came up with the realisation that knowledge is not absolute. The movement is mainly characterised by individualism, subjectivity, experimentation, absurdity, symbolism and formalism. It was a revolt against the strict values of conservatism and realism. It was a rejection of tradition, certainty and the concept of God.

The modernists were influenced by the horrors of the First World War and by the changing ideas about reality developed by prominent figures like Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx etc. Apart from the Industrial Revolution, Prohibition and the Great Depression too influenced the period.

The modernists were filled with a sense of disillusionment and loss. Notable among the prominent American modernist writers are William Faulkner, T.S.Eliot and E.E.Cummings. Among the British writers, the notable were Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka and Robert Musil who were the early modernists.

The Hairy Ape is a play that reflects the characteristic features of modernism. A detailed analysis of modernism and postmodernism is given below. This would enable the scholars to have an idea of these movements of the twentieth-century which were reflected in much of the literature written after the two World Wars.

The Hairy Ape as an Existential Play:

Existentialism is a philosophy that believes in the existence of man. According to the great philosopher Sartre's views, "Man is condemned to be free because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything

he does." Existential philosophy is a revolt against traditional philosophy. It rejects the view that life has inherent value and meaning. It believes that it is the individual that is responsible for creating his subjective values.

Existentialism values individual subjectivity over objectivity. Questions regarding existence and subjective experience are of high importance in it. Existentialism lays emphasis on action, freedom, and decision as fundamental to human existence. It is opposed to positivism and rationalist tradition. It argues against the notion that human beings are primarily rational.

Existentialism attacks the traditional notion that man is a rational creature and that he lives in an orderly, intelligible universe that has order and structure. It states that if man believes in the outside world and expects to create order and purpose from it then his expectations will meet with failure only since the outside world lacks order and is absurd. It is man who has to give meaning to his existence and man who has to find meaning in a meaningless world. The Existentialists feel that man is fully responsible for whatever situation he is in.

They find the world to be a meaningless place and life to be silly and absurd. It is man that has to create a meaning in this absurd place. Albert Camus, the French philosopher in his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus* says that life is as absurd as the lot of Sisyphus who keeps rolling a stone up to the top of a mountain only to find it sliding down. Just like how there is no meaning in the act of rolling up the stone which keeps falling down, so does life also. It has no meaning in living it. It is absurd.

Existentialism tends to view human beings as subjects in an indifferent, objective, often ambiguous, and absurd universe in which meaning is not provided by a natural order but can rather be created by human beings' actions and interpretations. Existentialists believe that man living a life of anxiety, fear, dread, and uncertainty should find meaning through his own actions and interpretations.

Existentialism is often associated with anxiety, fear, dread, awareness of death, and freedom. Some of the famous Existentialists are Jean-Paul Sartre, Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Heidegger and Simone de Beauvoir.

O'Neill saw no salvation for modern man in this cruel and meaningless world. He has portrayed human beings existing in a condition

where they are brutalised by machinery and industry. Man suffers from existential angst and longs to find his own identity. O'Neill shows modern man wallowing in alienation and questions of identity. Yank is the best example for this.

He suffers terrible anguish and ultimately meets his premature death, being crushed by a gorilla. O'Neill is highly pessimistic and his presentation of Yank and his weird and terrific ending shows no hope for man.

Yank, in the beginning of the play believed himself to be the master of the ship and felt he belonged. He felt himself to be a part of Steel and machinery and had a false sense of belongingness. When he was only a slave of the ship, he thought himself to be a master of it. It is only the entry of the upper class character, the owner of the steel company, who calls him "a filthy beast," that the bitter truth dawns upon him.

The life of satisfaction and contentment he was leading so far crumbles down and shatters him at the insult inflicted upon him by Mildred and he begins to rebel against the upper class. So far, he thought that the upper class relied solely only upon him, but the insult inflicted upon him shows that he was of little worth to them. He means nothing to the upper class and his existence is not even noted by them in the Fifth Avenue. His act of rebellion against them goes unnoticed. It is impossible for him to rebel against them as he has no actual tangible thing against them. His struggle fails even before it begins.

He does not listen to Long's advice that they should be in a state of position to do anything against them. He tries to use violence in a small way on the inhabitants of the Fifth Avenue but does not achieve it as it is all taken in a pretentious manner of the modern age. His simple rebellion is not even recognised by the people belonging to the Fifth Avenue. This itself shows Yank who is living a life of despair, anxiety, and depression as an existential hero or character belonging to the 'Theatre of Absurd' tradition. His search for Mildred and the like of her to take revenge upon them is futile.

Yank leaves the job to make his futile search for them, to have his revenge upon them, thus devoting his entire existence to a meaningless rebellion. However, in all these, he achieves nothing at all. He is unable to do anything against the upper class and the process of taking revenge upon them only leads to his disillusionment. He is disillusioned and dissatisfied

at every stage. He feels alienated and lost. There is no meaning to his life and he is shattered. In trying to search for a meaning for his existence, he sacrifices his life. To whatever he thought he belonged, everything fails him and towards the end, he is crushed to death. It becomes clear to him at the end of the play that his struggle collapsed, and all his struggles were meaningless and absurd. Yank experiences remorseful acceptance and his liberation is derived from the futility of his existence.

We thus see that O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* is an existential play where Yank, the protagonist suffers from an existential angst and finds his life useless and meaningless. His entire existence on this planet is absurd, and it is towards the tragic end of his life that he finds he belongs to nowhere. It is to death he belongs. The play opening with Yank's confidence in belonging to the world of the ship, and steel and machinery ends with the sense of not belonging, alienation and loss of identity. This is the condition of modern man where his life is ruled by machine and materialism. Even the rich Mildred suffers from feelings of alienation and feels life to be meaningless. She lacks enthusiasm for life and her life is filled with the pretensions of modernity.

The Appropriateness of the Title, *the Hairy Ape*:

1. The title of any literary piece of work is often significant and of great importance. The title of the work itself should be suggestive of the subject matter of the work. In this regard, the title of the play, *The Hairy Ape* is appropriate and quite fitting to its subject matter.
2. Yank is the protagonist of the play and the title, *The Hairy Ape* quite suits his quest for identity in the play.
3. The ape stands for ancient also since it is believed man evolved from monkey. An ape is an embodiment of physical strength and primitivism. It is a symbol of primitivism and ancient culture also. It is hairy-chested with long arms and tremendous physical power.
4. It has little brains but huge muscle power. It is incapable of thought and acts on impulse. Its physical strength can cause great destruction if used violently.
5. The play shows Yank, the central character as being broader, fiercer and more powerful than the other stokers in the ship are. He and the other stokers remind one of the primitive Neanderthal men. Yank has

- great physical powers and feels an oneness with the smoke and coal. He feels a sense of belonging with the ship and the sea in the beginning of the play.
6. Yank is confident of his superior strength and feels himself proud and confident that he is solely responsible for the functioning of the ship.
 7. Mildred's arrival on the scene calling him "the filthy beast" shatters his pride and sense of belongingness.
 8. Mildred's reaction on seeing him affects him deeply and he is unable to forget the girl looking at him with terror in her eyes. He feels insulted at her words and looks.
 9. Instead of using his brain to tackle the situation, he desires for revenge against her. His feeling of revenge is impulsive and instinctual, and he immediately wants to inflict pain upon her. He is stopped by the fellow stokers in trying to go to the upper cabin of the ship to have his revenge on her. Yank behaves like an ape from that moment onwards and goes with Long to the Fifth Avenue to have his revenge on her and the like of her.
 10. He does not listen to Long's advice that they have to adopt legal means to change the existing social system. Instead, he involves himself in small violent acts that finally land him in jail. His ape-like behaviour and senseless action landed him there. All these things intensify the thought that he is a hairy ape and it becomes an obsession in him. In prison, he imagines the prison cell as a cage and himself as a hairy ape.
 11. In prison, he comes to know about the I.W.W. and wishes to have his revenge on the upper class society by joining it. The steel bars of the prison remind him of Mildred, and the thought of Mildred being the owner of the steel that has been used to cage him, makes him angry. He bends the bars of the cell and comes out of it. In all these, he exhibits the strength of a hairy ape. He behaves like a gorilla. Even in the office of the I.W.W, he is called an ape and hence, he feels he does not belong there also. He is thrown out from there thinking that he is a spy. All these affect Yank deeply and everywhere Yank is rejected.
 12. He is rejected by the civilized society and there is a constant disintegration in him. He disintegrated rapidly, and feels obsessed with the thought of being a hairy ape. Rejected by the society, he goes to the zoo, thinking that he belongs there. He sees the hairy ape there, a gorilla that is caged inside. He stands face to face with the gorilla and

talks to it as a friend. He thinks of using the gorilla's help to have his revenge on society, especially the upper class. He opened the cage and sets the gorilla free, and calling him "brother" shakes hands with it.

13. The gorilla simply crushes him to death, and throws his body into the cage and walks off menacingly. Even at the moment of dying, Yank is filled with thoughts of belongingness and utters the words, "the hairy ape at last belongs."
14. We thus see Yank's psychological transformation into an ape, and hence, the appropriateness of the title of the play, *The Hairy Ape*. The sub-title of the play, "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life" is also appropriate since the gorilla is the biological ancestor of man. Yank is a modern man who is obsessed with the feeling that he is the hairy ape. He indeed is a modern hairy ape with less thinking abilities. Thus, the title of the play is appropriate as it shows the disintegration of modern man, Yank to a state of an animal, the hairy ape.

Characteristic Features of Modernism

1. Modernists gave high importance to subjectivity and individuality. They emphasized on the individual's opinions, experiences and emotions rather than to the society's.
2. Modernists rejected the established writing norms of the conservatives and realists. They experimented with new forms and ways of writing. They revolted against accepted rules of traditional writing and invented free verse poetry. They did not care about set rules of rhyme and rhythm.
3. They were nihilistic, which means there was a rejection of all religious and moral principles. They did not conform to society and rejected the moral codes of the society they were living in.
4. The period was dominated by great doubt about the meaningfulness of life. They believed that there is no certainty in life and that life was absurd and meaningless. With the two World Wars, urbanization, rise of capitalism and fast-paced globalization, the writers felt disillusioned with life and lost faith in human kind. They believed that life itself was absurd and this notion about meaninglessness and absurdity led to the invention of the 'Theatre of the Absurd.'
5. The modernists experimented with different forms of writing of which

stream-of-consciousness technique is one. As opposed to the realists or conservationists, the writers started depicting the inner self of the characters. A journey inwards took place and subjective reality was presented to the readers. What was going on in the inner self and the minds of the characters were portrayed. The thought processes, however, inconsistent, chaotic or illogical were portrayed by these writers. Pioneers of this stream-of-consciousness narrative technique are Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

6. Symbolism dominated the works of the modernists. It became one of the central characteristic features of modernism. Modernists reimagined symbolism and filled their work with symbolic details paving the way for several interpretations. Their books had open endings where multiple meanings were possible. This feature of symbolism is most prominent in the works of James Joyce and T.S. Eliot.
7. Another feature of modernism is fragmentation. Books abound in fragment narratives where the modernists were skilled at using the techniques of juxtaposition and multiple points of views, challenging the readers for establishing coherence of meaning from fragmentary forms.

To sum up:

- i. Modernists deviated away from the realistic way of portrayal. There was intentional distortion of shapes.
- ii. A lot of focus was on form of the writing rather than on meaning. A search for meaning in the text was not of significant importance. The modernists gave less importance to social norms and cultural values and hence, there was a breakdown of these two in the modernists text.
- iii. The modernists were disillusioned with the concept of God and Society and hence, their texts reflected this.
- iv. There was a rejection of history and history was substituted with the mythical past.
- v. The influence of Industrial Revolution and urbanisation made the writers to reflect upon the complexity of modern urban life. Importance was given to the conscious and unconscious minds and hence, the emergence of new techniques like Stream-of-Consciousness and Internal Monologue.

- vi. The modernists felt an urge to give importance to the primitive and non-western cultures.
- vii. They felt it impossible to represent the absolute reality and the interpretations of it. Hence, the recording of the thought processes of the characters. The modernists were also faced with a lot of technological changes.

Formal Features of Modern Poetry

- i. The Modernists kept their works of art open ended and used free verse form. Intertextuality, which is the shaping of a text's meaning with the help of another text, found its place in modern literature. For this, various compositional strategies like quotations, references, allusions, translations etc. were used. Instead of comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory, juxtaposition of ideas were used. Unconventional ways of using metaphors were employed.
- ii. Words and forms were borrowed from other cultures and languages and importance was given to sounds to convey ideas. Free verse was used with no traditional rhyme and metre or regular rhyme. Flexibility was adopted for the length of the line and massive use of alliteration and assonance were there. Visual images were used in distinct lines.

Formal Features of Modern Narrative

- i. The narratives were innovative and experimental in nature. Traditional chronological narratives were sacrificed for a discontinuous narrative. There were several different narrators giving different or multiple points of view to a story.
- ii. Use of Stream-of-Consciousness technique and Dramatic Monologue technique to bring out the thought processes of the characters effectively. These techniques helped in focusing on the characters' conscious and subconscious minds.
- iii. The act of writing itself was reflected upon and the texts were self-reflexive about the nature of literature.

At this juncture, it is also essential to know what Postmodernism is, since modernism and postmodernism are connected and interlinked in many ways.

Postmodernism

Modernism and postmodernism are two aspects of the same movement only, with the difference lying in the approaches towards life. Postmodernism began after the Second World War and it was a reaction against modernism. If modernism was based on using rational and logical means, postmodernism rejected the application of logical thinking. Postmodernism is characterized by irony, hyper-reality, intertextuality, magical realism, unpredictability, distortion of time, and themes of paranoia. It aims at subverting reality and mocks at the long-held beliefs of objective reality, value systems, concept of God, human nature, social progress etc. Modernists lamented fragmentism, whereas, postmodernists celebrated it. Postmodernists believed that there is no absolute truth but that truth is only relative.

Modernists had faith in ideas, values, beliefs and culture, whereas postmodernists called them as only a small part of human experience and rejected such ideas, beliefs, culture and norms. Postmodernists treated serious subjects in a playful and humorous way.

Modernists focused on central themes, whereas postmodernists saw human experience as fragmented, contradictory, unfinished, unstable, discontinuous, ambiguous and so on. Unlike modernists who saw a unified vision in a work of art, postmodernists saw a vision that was contradictory, fragmented, ambiguous, incomplete, unfinished and uncertain.

Modernists guided the readers towards their work, whereas, postmodernists left their works open for the readers to come out with their own meanings and interpretations.

Some of the postmodern writers were John Barth, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman etc. Some of the techniques that were widely used by the postmodernists are given below:

- a. Pastiche: Pastiche is a literary work that borrows from some other work. It means to combine, or "paste" together multiple elements. It is related to postmodernist intertextuality.
- b. Intertextuality: Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning with the help of another text found in modern literature. For this various compositional strategies like quotations, references, allusions, translations etc. were used. Instead of comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory, juxtaposition of ideas were

used. Unconventional ways of using metaphors were employed.

- c. Metafiction: Metafiction is a writing about writing, a fiction within a fiction. It is an attempt to make the readers aware of the text's fictionality. Temporal Distortion refers to the distortion of chronological time. It means jumping forwards and backwards in time. There may be cultural and historical references that may not fit into the particular work. Time may overlap, get repeated or lead to multiple possibilities.
- d. Technoculture and hyperreality: In the age of technology, information abounds. Society has moved beyond capitalism to a technological age. The world is crowded with videos, advertisements and product placements. Everything is in abundance. Postmodern writers concentrate on this technoculture with a mix of old and new cultures.
- e. Paranoia: Paranoia is thinking and feeling like you are being threatened in some way, even though there is little evidence for it. It is a kind of delusion where an individual is filled with uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety. Postmodern writings portray this Paranoia in their writings where the characters face distrust of fixity, lack of sense of belonging to any one place or identity. Paranoia and multiple personalities are common in Postmodern fiction. The schizophrenic condition or split personality of characters lead to chaos and confusions in their lives. *The Hairy Ape* is a best example of this which is reflected in the character of Yank.
- f. Magical Realism: Magical Realism is a technique where fantastic or impossible elements are introduced into a narrative. This may include instances like a dead character returning to life, dreams occurring in normal life and fairy tales becoming part of the narrative, wild and complicated plots and shifts in time.

Questions

1. Consider *The Hairy Ape* as a modern tragedy.
2. Make a characteristic sketch of Mildred Douglas.
3. Bring out the existential angst of Yank.
4. Bring out the pessimism and spiritual chaos in the play, *The Hairy Ape*.
5. Comment on expressionism in the play, *The Hairy Ape*.
6. Bring out the themes of alienation and isolation in the play, *The Hairy Ape*.
7. Comment on the ending of *The Hairy Ape*.
8. Bring out the symbolism in *The Hairy Ape*.
9. Bring out the quest for identity portrayed in *The Hairy Ape*.
10. Comment on *The Hairy Ape* as a social satire.
11. Consider *The Hairy Ape* as an existential play.
12. Comment on the appropriateness of the title, *The Hairy Ape*.
13. Bring out the features of Modernism.
14. What is Postmodernism? Elaborate your views on it.
15. Differentiate between Modernism and Postmodernism.
16. Consider *The Hairy Ape* as a Modernist play.
17. What are the modern and postmodern elements you find in *The Hairy Ape*.

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UNIT – IV**Lesson 4.1 Fiction : The Old Man And The Sea****Structure**

- Ernest Hemingway - An Introduction
- Hemingway's Life and Works
- *The Old Man and the Sea* – A Summary
- The Happenings before the Eighty-fifth Trip
- Catch of the Marlin
- Santiago's Return Trip
- Character of Santiago
- Character Analysis of Manolin
- Character Analysis of Joe DiMaggio
- The significant presence of the Sea
- Analysis of minor characters
- *The Old Man and the Sea* as a Tragedy
- *The Old Man and the Sea* as an Existential novel

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great American novelist, Ernest Hemingway. The author's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of his work.
- Know the story of Santiago and his adventures on the sea.
- Have an understanding of Hemingway's philosophy.
- Have a complete comprehension of Hemingway's novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*
- Have a detailed analysis of what happened before the old man's eighty-fifth trip.
- Understand how he caught the marlin and his return trip home.
- Read the novel as a tragedy.
- Analyse *The Old Man and the Sea* as an Existential Novel.

Introduction

Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961)



Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961), in full Ernest Miller Hemingway is a well-known American novelist, short story writer and journalist. He was born into a prominent family on July 21, 1899 in a Conservative suburb Chicago known as Oak Park, Illinois, United States of America. He was the first son and second child of six children born to Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway and Grace Hall Hemingway. They were a wealthy family, well known in Oak Park. His father, Clarence was a physician and naturalist, and his mother Grace was a Contralto (woman singer with the lowest female singing voice) and voice teacher.

As a boy, Ernest Hemingway was sent to High School in Oak Park in 1913. He spent four years there, and during the period there, he began to write. He had an active and outstanding school life, but the best part of his boyhood lay in the summers spent on Walloon lake in upper Michigan with his family.

He graduated from High school in 1917 and did not like entering college immediately after it. Instead, he chose to move to Kansas City where he was employed as a reporter of Kansas City Star. He worked there for six months and later wanted to join the army.

It was the period when World War I was going on and his wish to enlist himself in the army went unfulfilled. He was repeatedly rejected for military service and was disqualified to take part in it because of a defective eye on the left. However, he joined the Italian Red Cross ambulance Cops in 1918.

The Austro-Italian war was going on at that time and Hemingway's job was in a heavily damaged village called Fossalta, river Piave. Here, on July 8, 1918, when he was less than 19 years old, Hemingway was severely wounded in both the legs by a trench mortar, while carrying a supply of cigarettes, chocolates and postcards for the soldiers. His valour and benignity extended even at that critical condition when he saw a man close to him more severely wounded and was piteously crying for help. Unmindful of his own severe wounds, Hemingway carried the wounded man towards the Command post before he lost his consciousness.

Admitted in the Red Cross hospital in Milan, where he was recuperating, he met a nurse called Agnes Von Kurowsky. He expressed his love to her and proposed marriage to her. However, Agnes declined to marry him and he returned to Oak Park in 1919 as a wounded war hero and a dejected lover. Three years later, Hemingway was honoured with Italy's Medaglia d'Argento al Valore Militaire and Croce ad Merito di Guerra for his heroism. These were experiences that were deeply imprinted on him.

Rejection by Agnes and his own recuperation at home made Hemingway renew his efforts at writing. In 1920, he went to Toronto where he worked for the *Toronto Star Weekly*. Later, Hemingway went to Chicago where he met the famous poet, Carl Sandburg and Sherwood Anderson, a famous writer.

He married Hadley Chase in September 1921 and sailed with her for Paris as European Correspondence for *The Toronto Star Weekly*. In 1922, the couple set up their house in Latin Quarter in Paris. Here they met some of the well-known writers like Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, John Dos Passos, James Joyce, and Ford Maddox Ford.

Later, Hemingway was sent on an assignment to Constantinople where he covered the Greco-Turkish war. He also covered the conferences in Geneva and Lausanne. Hadley left Paris to join her husband in Lausanne and on the way, she lost the valise containing all of Hemingway's manuscripts.

In 1923, Hemingway travelled to Spain to see Bullfights for the first time. This was the beginning of a lifelong affair with Spain and Bullfights for him. Advised and encouraged by his writer friends in Paris, Hemingway decided to print his non-journalistic work. The year 1923 was remarkable for him since it saw the publication of his first book, *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (Contact editions), and also the birth of his first child, John Hadley

"Bumby" Nicanor Hemingway, lovingly called as Bumby in Toronto.

The Hemingways returned to Paris from Toronto in 1924 and Hemingway joined Ford Maddox Ford's *Transatlantic Review* as Associate Editor. His literary circle was much larger now and he started being noticed as a writer.

In 1925, he published his first important book, a collection of stories called *In Our Time*. It was published by Boney and Liveright in New York City. He then met Pauline Pfeiffer who was working for the Paris edition of *Vogue* magazine, whom he was to marry two years later. During this time, he developed a close friendship with the famous American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald and visited Pamplona with family and friends in the same year. It was here that he got the material and inspiration to write, *The Sun also Rises* (1926).

The Sun also Rises gave him his first solid success. It was a pessimistic book but a captivating one in that it deals with a group of aimless expatriates in France and Spain who are the members of the post-war lost generation, a phrase that Hemingway scorned while making it famous. This book took him to the limelight for which he yearned for a long time, but resented for the rest of his life.

Hemingway also wrote a novel at this time with the title, *The Torrents of Spring* (1926). He had parodied the style of a writer of the times Sherwood Anderson in this and sent it to his Publisher, Boni and Liveright. They rejected the manuscript as it made fun of their leading author. This made Hemingway free himself away from the publisher and nullified his contract with them. He then sought another publisher, Charles Scribner's sons and got it published. Hemingway's subsequent works were also published by them.

For most of the post-war years the activity of writing kept Hemingway busy and occupied. Although he remained based in Paris, he travelled widely for skiing, bullfighting, fishing and hunting that had by then become part of his life and formed the background of much of his writing. His position as a skilled writer of short fiction had been advanced by the publication of the novel, *Men Without Women* in 1927. In the same year, after his divorce from Hadley Chase he married Pauline Pfeiffer.

The year 1928 was an eventful year for him. He began writing *A Farewell to Arms* that was to be published in 1929. This novel was based

on his experiences as a Red Cross Ambulance driver in Italy during the Austro-Italian war. The material needed for concluding the novel *A Farewell to Arms* was obtained from the birth of his second son, Patrick by caesarean section.

In 1928, Hemingway moved to Key West, Florida and began ocean fishing. His father committed suicide in December of the same year. He met with a car accident in October 1930 and spent eight weeks in a hospital in Billings, Montana. Pauline's uncle bought the Key West home as a gift for her in 1931. Hemingway's third son, Gregory Hancock Hemingway was born in November of the same year.

In 1932, Hemingway published *Death in the Afternoon*, a treatise on bullfighting. This work contained some of Hemingway's views on the craft of writing and his aesthetic principles.

In 1933, Hemingway took up to marlin fishing and caught fifty marlins in two months. He went on an African Safari with Pauline in 1933.

Based on his experiences of the African Safari, Hemingway wrote *Green Hills of Africa*, a fictionalized account in 1935. In 1936, he published two of his most anthologised stories, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and *the Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*.

In 1937, he went to Spain as a war correspondent to cover the Spanish Civil War for the North Atlantic Newspapers Association (NANA). In the same year, he published his third novel, *To Have and Have Not* and also his only play, *The Fifth Column*. *To Have and Have Not* is a novel set against a background of lower-class violence and upper-class decadence in Key West during the Great Depression.

In 1940, he divorced Pauline and married Martha Gell Horn, a fellow journalist whom he had met in Spain. In this same year, he published his fourth novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It was based on his observations on the Spanish Civil War. In 1941 he visited China with Martha.

He made Havana, Cuba, his home where he lived at Finca Vigia, which is called as Lookout Farm. Later, he patrolled to the North Coast of Cuba in his fishing boat *Pilar* looking for Nazi submarines in 1942, with the approval of the Government of The United States of America.

All of his life war fascinated Hemingway and in 1944, he went to England and Europe as war correspondent for *Collier's* to cover the

Second World War with the Fourth Infantry of the army of the U.S.A. In London, he met Mary Welsh, who was writing for the London Bureau of Time, Life and Fortune magazines. He divorced Martha and married Mary in March 1946. He was working on and off on *The Islands in the Stream* and *The Garden of Eden* during this period.

In 1948, Hemingway met the beautiful Adriana Ivancich who served as an inspiration for his work, *Across the River and into the Trees*, in the form of the character of Renata when he was in Italy. *Across the River and into the Trees* is his fifth novel that was published in 1950. This novel underwent adverse criticism of the time and it was during this time that Hemingway also found a deterioration in his health.

His sixth and the Noble Prize winning novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* was published in 1952. This novel came out in *Life* magazine. It brought great laurels to Hemingway and won him the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953, and the Noble Prize in literature in 1954. It is said that he was bestowed with the Noble Prize in Literature in 1954 for "his mastery of art of Narrative most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea* and for the influence he has exerted on contemporary style."

In 1954, Hemingway went on an African Safari with Mary and suffered two air-crashes in quick succession. He and Mary were believed to have been dead and a lot of tributes and obituaries were pouring in for Hemingway in newspapers and magazines. Hemingway, having survived the air-crashes had the privilege of knowing what the world had thought of him as a man and the writer by reading the obituaries and tributes.

He was seriously ill and had suffered burns, multiple injuries and concussion, and was not able to attend the award ceremony in Stockholm when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. However, Hemingway put on a brave front and coming out of his physical ailments, kept moving on in life. In 1955 and 1956, he helped in the filming of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

In 1960, Hemingway's *The Dangerous Summer* was serialized in *Life* magazine. This work is a non-fictional account of bullfighting in which Hemingway was highly interested.

Long involved in World Wars I and II, Hemingway suffered from depression, delusion and paranoia. He was admitted to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota and was given electric shock therapy.

In 1961, he was discharged from there and returned to Ketchum, Idaho, but was dominated by suicidal instincts. Owing to his suicidal depression, he had to be readmitted to the Mayo Clinic and after two months, returning to Ketchum, he committed suicide with his shotgun.

He died on July 2, 1961. Many of his novels were published after his death, some of which include *A Movable Feast* (1964), *Islands in the Stream* (1970), *The Garden of Eden* (1986), and *True at First Light* (1999). A lot of Hemingway's material is still unpublished and kept safe in the Hemingway Room of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston.

Hemingway was a legend in his lifetime. He had seen three Wars from a close range and held an active outdoor life amidst violence and pain most of the time. His experiences were reflected in his books and his writing has many classical virtues. He pays attention to the minutest details and makes clear, objective observation of what happens in action. His works are a result of his own experiences and his themes are highly subjective.

Hemingway believed that art is a microcosmic representation of the universe and that is what he has precisely represented in his work.

The Old Man and the Sea – Summary:

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway is a short novel - a novella consisting of 120 pages. It is a short story about an old man in Cuba struggling to catch a great fish. The novel is based on the real life story of an old Cuban fisherman catching a great fish and losing it to the sharks.

Hemingway was amazed at this real life incident and was inspired to write a short note of this in *Esquire* magazine. Later, after 15 years this same incident instigated him to write a short novel that took him to the pinnacle of fame when he received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954.

The novel opens with the protagonist, an old fisherman, Santiago who lives in Havana Cuba. He is seventy years old and fishes in the Gulf Stream for eighty-four days without catching a fish. He has a companion, a boy named Manolin, much younger to him in decades and who loves Santiago and looks after him.

Manolin accompanies him to the sea for the first forty days, but

later is not allowed by his parents to sail with him as they now have come to the conclusion that this old man is hopelessly unlucky and that he cannot have any great catch. They call him "salao" or "the worst form of unlucky" and send the boy to another boat.

The old man is "thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles," and blotched and scarred but he remains "cheerful and undefeated." His age or his lack of companions does not deter him from going to the sea. Manolin having earned some money with more fortunate and successful fishermen helps the old man by bringing him food and drinks, and helps him to carry his tackle to the boat. He reminds him of their previous ventures together in the sea where they had gone for eighty-seven days without any fish but was blessed with catching a great fish every day for three weeks. He also worriedly tells the old man that he had to obey his father who told him to go to work for another fisherman, as his father had lost faith in him.

Seeing the two men together in the Terrace Cafe, some fishermen make fun of Santiago, but Santiago does not mind. Santiago tells Manolin stories about baseball legends and they reminisce together about the many years the two of them had fished together. Manolin tells Santiago that Santiago is the greatest fisherman. He finally leaves Santiago for the night and the old man sleeps alone, dreaming of his youth in Africa and the lions on the beach.

The next morning as is usual of him Santiago walks up the road to Manolin's home and wakes him up for work. It was the morning of the eighty-fifth day and Manolin helps Santiago to launch his boat into the sea. Wishing each other good luck he and Manolin part on the beach.

The old man rows over the deep as he wanted to catch the biggest fish ever caught in the Gulf Stream. He was not interested in catching small fish. So he steadily moves towards the deep waters after Gulf Streams. He thinks of the sea as a woman whose wild behaviour is beyond her control. He sails far out, setting his lines with patience and waits for the big fish. Santiago is well versed with the sea and loves it although he thinks that he can be cruel at times.

The sun comes up and Santiago observes the leaping and whirring of the flying fish, and frail birds trying to catch them. He watches a school of dolphins chasing the flying fish and curses the distasteful purple Portuguese man of the war that drifts nearby. Rowing farther and farther out, Santiago follows the sea bird that is hunting for fish. He uses it as a

guide and finally in the early afternoon catches a ten-pound tuna. He tells himself that he could use it as a bait to catch a bigger fish and wonders when he had developed the habit of talking to himself.

He also decides to use that tuna for his meal, not long afterward, Santiago feels a pull on his bait, and he is sure that the fish tagging on the line is of a considerable size and would be a bigger one. He waits for the fish to finally take the bait and when it does, Santiago realises that it is a marlin that is nibbling at his bait some 600 feet below. He gave the pull with all his might but is not able to achieve anything.

The fish drags the boat farther into the sea and no land is visible to Santiago now. He is not able to pull it because it is big. A long struggle between Santiago and the fish takes place, and the old man misses the help of the boy Manolin and wishes over and over again that he was with him then.

In the evening, Santiago feels a kind of companionship with the marlin. He pities the fish and even loves it, but is at the same time determined to kill it. The night passes away with Santiago having a grip on the heavy line, carrying across his shoulder. He feels pressurized but is determined to do it. He thinks about the fish at the end of the line and about the other great fish he has caught. The fish is strong and during the night, he lurches and Santiago falls down on his face. His cheek is cut but he does not relax his hold on the line. He is careful not to make any mistakes.

On the morning of the next day, as the sun rises he feels stiff and hungry. He is frustrated and angered at the weakness of his body. He decides to eat the tuna he caught the day before to keep himself strong. He also talks to the bird advising it to stay and take rest before heading towards the shore.

He does not pull the line lest the fish should break it. However, the fish suddenly lurches pulling the line and cutting Santiago's hand. His hand hurts but he is determined not to let go. He thinks of the fish, which is putting up a brave front and was equally resisting, as his brother, but he thinks he must be stronger to overcome his prey. He suffers a cramp in his left hand and tends to nurse it. Although his hand hurts, he feels a pleasure that the fish is getting tired.

Santiago wonders about the fish's next move and at that time, all

on a sudden, the line gets slackened and the marlin jumps out of the water. It is the largest marlin Santiago has ever seen and it is longer than his skiff or much bigger than he had ever caught so far in his life. Santiago prays that he should catch the fish and in case he finds the attempt going into the next night then he should have enough strength to bear. He wants to show the fish "what a man can do and what a man endures."

He baits another line in hopes of catching another meal. The fish tows the skiff eastwards all afternoon and Santiago's struggle with the marlin wears on. The old man alternatively questions and justifies seeking the death of such a noble opponent. The marlin's strength makes him seek the help of the divine where he prays that he would undertake a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre if he succeeds in killing the marlin.

As night approaches, Santiago's thoughts turn to baseball. He tries to draw strength from the thought of a hand-game he won several years ago in a tavern. He wonders what his hero, DiMaggio would do if he were in Santiago's situation. At nightfall, he catches a dolphin and clubs it dead. He saves the meat for the following day. Again he feels sorry for the marlin though he never gives up on the thought of killing it. He talks of feeding many people with the fish, though he thinks they are not worthy of the creature's dignity. He thinks against rigging the oars which will make the fish pull harder and eventually tire out. But thinking he might lose the fish, he decides to rest.

After resting for a few hours he is broken up by the marlin jumping frantically and he continues to hold the line. The line has been continuing to cut his hand but he endures the pain and pressure. He also dozes off in the middle of the struggle, and has several dreams. He again dreams of Africa and the lions.

On the morning of the third day, the fish jumps up again and again and keeps circling the boat. He begins shortening the line and every time it tears his hands causing him severe pain. He grows weaker from lack of proper food and sleep. He washes his bleeding hands in the sea and gets back to drawing in the line.

Once again he wishes that the boy was with him to wet the coils of the line that would lessen the friction. He eats the second flying fish found in the dolphin to gain some strength. All these times the tiring marlin keeps encircling the skiff in ever-narrowing concentric circles. Just before the fish comes close enough for his harpoon to kill it, Santiago begs it

not to kill them both. He is filled with love and admiration for the fish and explains that he does not care if the noble creature who is at once his brother and opponent kills him.

He says he does not care who kills who. Eventually he pulls the fish on to its side by the boat and plunges his harpoon into it. The fish jumps out of the water and dies. Its blood stains the river. He ties the marlin to the side of the boat and begins sailing back home.

However, an hour later, during his homeward journey on the third day, a mako Shark smelling the blood of the marlin attacks it, taking away a slice of its flesh. The smell of the fresh blood of the marlin spilling into the water makes more sharks to attack the marlin. Santiago fights them off with all his might.

He wonders whether he has committed a sin by killing the marlin. Santiago feels sorry for the fish, his "brother" who is dead. However, he defends his victory thinking "a man can be destroyed but not defeated." He fights hard against the sharks pouring in large numbers and knew he was fighting a losing battle. However, he fights back with determination.

He lost his knife and club in the fight and broke his tiller which were the only weapons remaining. He knew he was beaten and was sad to find no flesh left on the marlin now as the sharks had fed on it and only the skeleton of the fish was tied to his boat when he reached the shore. Now he realizes that his strength with the marlin was for nothing as almost nothing was left on the marlin except for the skeleton.

When Santiago steers the boat towards the harbour, it is dark and everyone is sleeping. He struggles to carry his mast back to his shack leaving the marlin's skeleton still tied to his boat in the harbour. He tells himself he has gone out too far and hence, suffered defeat. He stumbles and falls on his way but rises and moves on. He falls asleep in his shack lying on his face with the arms outstretched. His bruised palms are turned upwards.

Early the next morning, Manolin comes to the shack of the old man and is overjoyed in finding him sleeping. Nevertheless, the sight of his ravaged hands brings tears to his eyes. He brings coffee for Santiago and sees the fishermen gathering around Santiago's boat marvelling at the great skeleton of the marlin.

When he wakes up Manolin talks to him warmly. Santiago tells

him that the sharks beat him and Manolin tells him that he will work with the old man again, regardless of what his parents say. He expresses his happiness on seeing the old man again and tells him that there had been a search for Santiago involving the coast guards and planes.

Santiago is happy to talk to Manolin. Meanwhile, a party of tourists watching the marlin's skeleton tied to the boat mistake it for a shark's. Manolin leaves Santiago to find food and newspapers for him and to tell Pedrico, a man concerned for Santiago that the marlin's head is his. Santiago drifts to sleep as Manolin gazes at the old man dozing off with his usual dreams of the lions.

The Happenings Before the Eighty-Fifth Trip Starts

The Old Man and the Sea is a short novel written by the Nobel Laureate, Ernest Hemingway in 1954. It is set at the backdrop of the sea with an old man fighting with courage and determination the forces of the sea.

Santiago is an old fisherman in the beginning of his seventies fishing in the Gulf Stream. While the novel opens, we understand that eighty-four days have gone for the old man without catching a fish. Manolin the boy who is dearly loved by him as a friend and companion, has been forced by his parents not to extend his service to him as they consider him unlucky in his pursuit of fishing. We see that this opening sets the scene of the action to follow in the novel and the character of Santiago is established.

Despite the love of Manolin, the old man remains isolated and alienated. He lives like an outsider. The fellow fishermen of the village like the parents of Manolin believe that he has to retire from sea as he has not been able to catch any fish. Many of his fellow fishermen greet him with mockery because of his fruitless voyages in the sea. He is shown like a person who is kept away from society because of his being unsuccessful in attaining success in materialistic aspects like coming back home with a great catch of fish.

This old man is typical of Hemingway's heroes whose greatest achievements depend in large part on their isolation. Manolin accompanied him for many days of his sail in the sea, but all during those times the old man did not catch any great fish and it is only when he is alone he does it. He is wrinkled, blotched and scarred from handling heavy fish on cords

and is old in body but his eyes are young that has the colour of the sea reflecting the spirit of cheerfulness and indefeatability.

Manolin, understanding that the old man pretends only to have eaten, takes him to a restaurant, the Terrace and offers him food and drinks from the money he earned with other fishermen. Santiago does not get into the bait of other fishermen mocking at him and with patience endures it. He feels he will emerge as a victor in spite of all odds faced by him, because he strongly believes that "man is not made for defeat."

Santiago is raised to the stature of a great person who is undaunted by the hardships and hurdles he faces. Nothing can deter him from attaining the great heights, not even hunger, poverty and the contempt of his fellow men. He has an emaciated body with a thin, gaunt frame and not very sophisticated fishing tools. He goes into the sea on his skiff and his weapons like the harpoon, knife and tiller are simple. Yet he has a will power, the will power of the greatest achiever who achieves in spite of all physical pains like the great baseball player, DiMaggio. DiMaggio appears frequently in his dreams as do the lions of Africa, which give him the power to renew his strength and vigour.

When the old man tells Manolin that he was going to the sea the next day, Manolin begs him to let him provide fresh bait for him. The old man accepts the gift with humility. In a way Manolin helps the old man come out of his loneliness by reminding him of the previous eighty-seven day run of bad luck which ended in the catching of big fish every day for three weeks.

A peep into Santiago's house is shown and, thereby, a peep into his poverty stricken condition is also given. Santiago's shack contains nothing more than the barest necessities: a bed, a table and chair and the place to cook. There are two God pictures on the wall, one of the sacred Heart of Jesus and the other of the Virgin of Cobre, the Patroness of Cuba. The old man has not hung the photograph of his wife since it would make him feel too lonely.

We see that the old man is not too sentimental and emotional, but very practical and realistic. The old man shows a newspaper to Manolin which is given to him by Perico at the bodega. Perico is kind towards the old man and understanding the old man's passion for baseball gives him some newspapers containing news of baseball scores. He also sends some food for the old man through Manolin. The talk of the good old fishing

days and of the greatest ball player and baseball managers leave the old man content. The boy leaves him to sleep, allowing him to have the dreams of the white beaches of Africa and the lions playing on its shore, a dream that appears to him several times.

Here we see that the section introduces two important symbols: the lions playing on the beaches of Africa and the great figure in baseball, Joe DiMaggio. DiMaggio represents a kind of triumph and survival to Santiago. He is a great influence and inspiration for him to win at his adverse times. DiMaggio returned to baseball to achieve his greatest triumph after suffering from a severe bone spur on his heel. The lions, symbolic of the king of the forest give him energy during times of need and exhaustion.

The next morning before sunrise, Santiago goes to the house of Manolin to wake him up. The boy is sleeping and Santiago sitting by his side in the dim light lifts his leg and holds it gently until he wakes up.

Santiago is bored with eating. He never carries any food with him. However, he takes a bottle of water with him. He drinks the coffee from the condensed milk cans and the two head back to Santiago's shack. They carry the old man's gear to his boat and the boy lifts the skiff and slides it into the water. He wishes him good luck. Santiago rows out of the harbour into the dark and as he is rowing, he hears the splashing noise made by the other fishermen's rowing their boats.

Santiago's Catch of the Marlin

The novel, *The old Man and the Sea* by the Nobel Laureate Hemingway is about an old man's heroic efforts in catching a giant sized marlin and his disappointing experience after catching it. For eighty-four days, the old man has not caught any fish. Being a veteran fisherman that he is, it is not understood why he did not come back with any fish. When the mocking comments of his fellow fishermen about his attempts at fishing and the parents of the boy whom he loves dearly calling him unlucky, he is not much worried or depressed. He maintains his cheerful countenance and on the eighty-fifth day sets out for sail. He takes his skiff into the sea with the help of the boy Manolin and parts from the shore with the hope of getting a great catch. As he was bored with eating, he does not carry any food with him but only takes a bottle of water with him.

The first day of the trip moves on in a normal way without much notable events. Santiago is an expert seaman who is able to read the sea and sky and is able to decipher the movement of the birds and the arrival of fish. He understands the Cosmos with a rare determination and meditates on the general aspects of the sea. He looks at the sea being beautiful and benevolent and also cruel at times. He thinks of the sea as a woman getting out of control at times due to her wild behaviour. The old man always thought of the sea as “feminine” and as something that gave or withheld favours.”

He looks at the flying fish and at the birds and thinks of them with sympathy. He gets farther and farther into the sea as he sees a variety of birds and fish. He crosses the Deep Well, which is “seven hundred fathoms” deep and is full of fish of various kinds.

He then throws the lines with the baits attached to them hoping that at least one bait would be bitten by a fish. Soon one of the lines goes taut and he pulls out a ten pound tuna which he says will serve as a bait. However, he keeps it for his meal for the next day, as he should be strong and enduring. He now understands he has sailed far out that he could no longer see the shore. When at last he feels the projecting stick dip sharply, Santiago is sure that a fish is tugging on the line and his experience in fishing tells him that it is of a considerable size. He prays that the fish should take the bait and the marlin after playing with the bait for some time finally takes it. It moves pulling the boat with it. The old man tries his best to pull the fish but he is not able to.

All day the fish drags the skip farther and farther into the sea and no land is visible to Santiago now. He exerts his force to keep the line firm with his back and hands. He keeps struggling all night and the fish continues to pull the boat. There are no lights as the glow of the lights of Havana gradually fades. The boat is farthest away from the shore and the old man wishes that the boy Manolin was with him.

Santiago sees two porpoises playing in the water and is reminded of how he got one of a pair of marlin long time back. The memory of it makes him sad and he feels brotherly feelings for the marlin which is now in his bait. Although feeling with a touch of sadness, he is not deterred by it and is determined to make a catch of it. The fish also is relentless and keeps moving the skiff. The sun arose and still the fish is not tired. It swims in shallower waters now and the old man has second thoughts in

increasing the tension on the line.

He is afraid that if pulled too hard then it will break and the fish might get away. He is careful in patiently handling the line and the hook, and feels love and respect surfacing for the fish. However, he promises he will kill it before the end of the day.

As Santiago is preoccupied with such thoughts, a small tired warbler bird perches on the skiff and the old man calls to rest up before heading towards the shore. At that time, the marlin surges nearby pulling Santiago overboard and the bird flies away. Santiago's hands are cut and he bleeds from where the line has cut it.

Feeling hungry and the compulsion to eat to keep himself strong makes him eat a tuna he had caught before and which he intended to keep as a bait. As he is eating the tuna, he could feel the cramps in his hand and is angered at the weakness of his own body. He hopes that eating the tuna will reinvigorate him and his eating builds in him the feeling to feed the marlin also and so he calls it a 'brother.'

Santiago tends to his hand and the struggles he faces on the sea all alone makes him realise that it is impossible for a man to be alone on the sea. Suddenly he finds the marlin leaping into the air, and Santiago notes that it is bigger than he thought it would be, and of a giant-size that he had ever laid his hands on. It is two feet longer and is bigger than the skiff itself and is a great one. His frail physique and the determination to get at the fish make him pray and he promises to undertake a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre on the successful completion of the venture. He is determined to go home with the great catch even if it would take another day for him on the sea. Therefore, he lays another line with a bait in the hope of catching another meal.

The second day of Santiago's struggle with the marlin goes on and on and Santiago is faced with questions of morality and justifications for it. He feels whether it is a sin for him to kill such a magnificent opponent who keeps on trying to save itself. He feels tired and sleepy and as is usual has thoughts of the boy Manolin and of the baseball player, DiMaggio.

He thinks how the player was unrelenting during the physical pressure of the pain of bone spur on his heel but played brilliantly to triumph. He wonders if DiMaggio would have stayed with the marlin like him in a similar situation. He also recalls an incident of his youth where

he won the great all-night arms-wrestling match and earned the title of Champion. All these give him confidence and he is determined to kill the fish. This attitude of the old man shows that in Hemingway's world mere survival is not enough. One needs to involve oneself in distinct activities in order to be distinguished away from the masses.

Santiago is not a religious person but he is shown as a religious person praying during his struggle with the marlin. On the night of the second day, before its fall, Santiago is able to catch a dolphin from the second bait that Santiago had dropped. He handles it with one hand and kills it dead. He keeps it for the food of the following day. By this time, he feels drained of all his energy and is numb with pain. He sees the stars and considers them as his friend. He is also happy that they are lucky in life in not having to involve in hurting the stars and the moon.

Again, he feels sorry for the marlin because he is bent on killing it. He thinks that the fish will feed many people although they are not worthy of the creature's dignity. Time moves on and he rests for a while. After two hours of "resting", Santiago cuts open the dolphin and finds two flying fish in his belly. He eats a portion of the dolphin and one of the flying fish. After eating, he dozes off. In his sleep, he has several dreams. He dreams once again of the lions on the beach of Africa.

He is then suddenly woken up by the jerking of the line in which a tuna is caught. The fish jumps out of the water again and Santiago is thrown off, with his face down on his dolphin meat. Santiago tries his best to keep the lines in control, in the process of which his left hand is badly cut. He feels the need of the boy there with him then and wiping off the crushed dolphin meat from his face he looks at his damaged hand.

Undaunted by the physical infliction caused to the marlin he keeps on to the lines. He eats the second flying fish to keep building his strength. As the sun rises, the marlin begins to circle. As it is circling, Santiago adds pressure to the line to bring the fish closer to the skiff. Admiring its size and strength, the old man says, "I do not care who kills who" and saying that, he finally pulls the fish on to the side of the boat and plunges his harpoon into it and kills it. He then ties it to the skiff to take it home. He wonders how much money he will be getting for the fish.

Santiago's Return Trip

Santiago kills the marlin around noon on the third day of the trip. He pulls the skiff up alongside the fish. He calls this work as a "slave work." However, he feels that DiMaggio would be proud of him. His hands are severely cut but he feels happy at his great catch and is heading towards the land with the great marlin tied to his boat. He eats some shrimp raw which he gets from a patch of gulf weed. He watches the marlin carefully as the ship sails on and his wounds remind him that the fight with the marlin had been a real fight and not a dream.

As he is heading wayward home, a mako Shark arrives smelling the blood of the marlin. It hits the marlin and the old man is not frightened, but hits it hard on its head with a harpoon and kills it. The harpoon was the only weapon he had but stuck up on the body of the Shark, the Shark completely dead, sinks down into the deep sea.

The old man is very sad not only because he lost his weapon but also because the shark had eaten away 40 pounds of flesh of the marlin's body. He is also worried that the bleeding marlin may attract more sharks. He is now frustrated and feels that he should not have killed the marlin. But once again feeling the rising hope in him says that "man can be destroyed but not defeated."

The old man is now prepared to take life as it comes. Though he has lost his harpoon, he still has his knife to the bust of one of his oars and could use it as a weapon against the sharks. He sails along for two hours and when he is about to take rest he sees two shovel-nosed sharks coming towards the skiff.

The shovel-nosed sharks are blood thirsty creatures which, when hungry bite at an oar or a rudder and do not hesitate to cut off sleeping turtles' legs and flippers or to hit a man in the water even if he has no smell of fish blood or of fish slime on him.

Santiago is deeply pained and gives out a noise likened to the sound a man makes when nails are driven through his hands. Here the symbol of Christ at the time of crucifixion is brought out. The sharks attack the marlin and Santiago fights with a knife that he had lashed to an oar. He kills one shark and the other one that hides under the skiff tries to bite the marlin from beneath it.

The skiff is shaken because of this and so the old man kills that also. However, the sharks had eaten a quarter of the marlin's flesh. The old man feeling that the sharks only have benefited from the killing of the marlin regrets that he had killed it. He feels that he should not have gone out so far to fish. He enjoyed killing the mako shark because he considered it as his worthy opponent that was a mighty and fearless predator. However, he hated the scavenging shovel-nosed shark. They came "like a pig into the troupe."

The old man apologizes to the dead marlin that he had killed it as it did not do any good to either of them. Again another shovel-nosed shark arrives and the old man kills it but in the process loses his knife. Even now the old man does not despair and thinks about having two oars, a tiller and a club. He is determined to fight as long as he had these things.

Next comes a pair of galanos. The old man attacks them badly with his club. However, they have their feast on the marlin before moving away. The sun goes down and the old man sails with determination to fight even if the sharks come in the night. He regrets having come so far and only the front part of the marlin remains. Even this might be lost before he reaches the shore.

He sees the lights of the Havana around 10 o'clock at night. The wind grows enough and Santiago is extremely tired and worn off. His entire body is aching and he longs to reach home. At that time, a pack of sharks comes and a fierce battle takes place between the old man and the sharks. Santiago beats a shark with his club and the shark seizes the club and moves away. He arms himself with the tiller next and beats a shark which swallows the marlin's head.

The tiller gets broken and the old man forces the sharp splintered edge of the tiller into the shark and kills it. Now the marlin is completely ruined and only its backbone and the bones of its head and tail are left. The old man is resentful at this new turn of misfortune and spits blood into the ocean.

The blood spit frightens him and he thinks that the sharks have killed him. His mind is completely blank now and he feels void. He has no thoughts or feelings. In the night, many more sharks come and eat what little flesh the marlin has.

The old man does not bother about it anymore as there is nothing to lose anymore. No more meat is left on the marlin now. He longs for rest and when he reaches the harbour, all the lights are out, and no one near. It is only the skeleton of the marlin left that is tied to the skiff. Getting down from the boat, he shoulders the mast and walks home. He is so tired that he sits down five times before reaching his shack. Once there, he immediately falls asleep.

Character of Santiago

Santiago is the protagonist of the novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*. He is the eponymous character (the character in the novel whose name is in the title) of the novel, who has a strong bonding with the sea that embodies nature. He is an elderly Cuban fisherman, 70 years old, who lives a lonely life in his shack as his wife had died. Fishing is his passion and in the opening of the novel, we see that his luck seems to have run out.

Eighty-four days had gone without him catching any fish on the Gulf Stream. He has become the butt of laughter among his villagers in the small village but he endures. He was not like the other fishermen. He fished alone in the Gulf Stream. He used a skiff which means a small boat meant for a single person. He was a strange man who was not interested in catching small fish.

Despite eighty-four days having gone with him returning home without any catch and in spite of being called unlucky by his fellow villagers he refused to catch small fish. The description, "his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords" explains that he was in the habit of catching heavy fish single-handedly rowing a small skiff. The veteran fisherman that he is, it is a surprise that he came without any catch.

Santiago is humble in his dealings with others and in his attachment with nature like the fish, birds, animals and the sea but is filled with pride when it comes to fishing, his profession. He is frustrated and embarrassed at his failures and looks at his aging body as a kind of betrayer which does not extend its cooperation with him.

He fondly remembers his younger days when he was exceptionally strong and used to have a good catch as a successful fisherman. He was a great fan of the successful baseball player DiMaggio who played brilliantly

in spite of the pain of a bone spur in a heel. If DiMaggio is a great player and sportsman, Santiago is a great fisherman. The thoughts inspire him during moments of feeling down, drained of all his energy. He always dreams of lions, a symbol of strength and supremo.

It is not for materialistic wealth he goes out fishing but to satisfy the cravings of his soul to prove himself as the best fisherman. He would not be satisfied with catching any small fish but wanted to catch big fish. He took it as his professional challenge and that is why he was not bothered about what other people thought of him and did not relent when the boy's parents stopped sending Manolin to work for him. Although he missed the boy whom he loved much it seems he loved this profession more than the boy.

His expedition in the sea required a strong and powerful build, but we see that with Santiago's age his body had withered. He was a thin man without any fat in his body. He was "thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of neck." Santiago worked far out in the sea and braved the scorching sun and the hazards of the sea. He would be in the sea for days trying to achieve his feat and we learn in the last part of the novel that "coast guard" and "planes" were searching for him when he did not return home for two days.

Though he was thin and gaunt, he had a will power strong and undaunting, that heroism was in his thoughts and blood. His "hands were scarred by handling heavy fish on the cords" and these scars were marks of heroism. Santiago was a heroic fisherman who in his past had handled heavy fish and in the present also was reluctant to catch small fish. In spite of experiencing a long dry spell of not having caught in great fish, he never went for a small catch and did not bother about explaining himself to anybody.

He was still cheerful and determined, and with faith in himself and committed to his profession he went towards achieving his pride. He never accepts defeat. His undefeatable spirit is revealed in his eyes where it is said that everything about him was old except for his eyes which "were the same colour as the sea," cheerful and undefeated. Santiago had young eyes in the old body, which revealed his unconquerable spirit. The sharks had mutilated the marlin and he was sad and depressed about this, but he tried to cheer himself by casting his mind to the original, happy state of mind.

It is this cheerfulness and strong willed determination that help him be respected among his villagers. It is his pride and knowing himself to be the best fisherman that made him patiently endure the insults inflicted upon him by his more successful fellow fishermen. When the successful fishermen mock at him for not catching any fish for days together he did not lose his temper but only exhibits his inner strength and peace.

Manolin, the boy had gone fishing with Santiago since he was five and though the boy was several decades younger to him he never had a superior or patronizing feelings over the boy. He only had a warm love and friendship for the boy who admired him. He missed him and felt his absence during challenging moments of fishing.

Santiago did not have any superior ego in him and had "attained humility." He was humble and self-contained and was proud of himself as a fisherman. His pride is what enables him to endure. It is perhaps endurance that matters in the world of death and destruction, which is the natural order of the world. Endurance or death and destruction is Hemingway's concept of the world.

Santiago chooses to endure and his stoic determination is admirable. For three days, he struggles holding fast to the line that links him to the fish. It cuts deeply into his palms, bruises his hands, and causes a crippling cramp and ruins his back. The physical pain allows Santiago to have a love for the equally suffering marlin. It forges a connection with the marlin that goes beyond the literal link of the line. He feels that the marlin is a worthy opponent with whom he is holding a fight. He identifies a brother in marlin but in the world of survival of the fittest, one has to be defeated.

He says to the marlin, "Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." He wants to kill the marlin to prove his will power and intelligence, and his superiority over it. Santiago has a loving attitude towards all natural objects and we see that he talks with the birds and fish of the sea. Even after killing the marlin and he is not overwhelmed with feelings of victory, rather is filled with feelings of remorse. He thinks it a sin to have killed the marlin, which has not done him any harm. "Perhaps it was a sent to kill the fish." However, he justifies his act that everything kills everything else in this world. He eats the tuna not out of his liking for it but out of his need to strengthen himself to fight against the marlin. He survives on the sea by eating the tuna and shrimps raw. The only thing he likes is the water, which he carries in a bottle.

Here, we see Santiago as a simple man of the sea who is determined to be true to his role of a fisherman. When questions of morality arise in him about the killing of the fish, he tells himself that he has "no understanding of it" and that "there are enough problems now without sin." His simple thought is that he was "born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish." He believes there ends the matter. He feels that there are people who are paid to think about sin and that his job is to fulfil his role as a fisherman. He killed the marlin for his survival as a fisherman, or for his "pride," or for his "self-defence." Finally he convinces himself that it is "Fishing" that kills him as well as keeps him alive. This explains Santiago's clutching on to his life through fishing, which is the thing that keeps him going on in his life, giving it a meaning.

Character of Manolin

Manolin, the boy had gone fishing with Santiago since he was five and though the boy was several decades younger to him he never had a superior or patronizing feelings over the boy. He only had a warm love and friendship for the boy who admired him. He missed him and felt his absence during moments of fishing.

The boy Manolin is deeply attached to him in spite of the disparity of age between them. He loves him, admires him and respects him, and considers him as a mentor despite the fact that all the other fishermen avoid him and call him unlucky. When all the other fishermen believe that he has lost all his efficiency and must retire, Manolin believes that he is the best fisherman and still capable of action and can rise to great heights.

Manolin shows a son's care and affection on Santiago and does not allow him to be upset on his failure on the eighty-fourth day. He takes him to the Terrace, a restaurant and gets him some coffee. He talks to him about his good old days and encourages him to pursue more in his career. Telling the old man it is out of compulsion from his parents that he left him, he gets him some sumptuous meal from the money he earned from the other successful fisherman. He also presents the old man with baits to use for the following day and the old man accepts them with humility. He wishes him good luck as Santiago goes off on his sail the next day. Santiago misses him in the sea and thinks how the boy would care for him in moments of physical pain and distress.

When the old man returns home, Manolin is moved to tears looking at his wounded hands. Santiago goes to sleep peacefully dreaming of the lions while Manolin watches him with love and sympathy.

Manolin's role in Santiago's life is immensely important that Santiago during moments of his inner conflicts feel that Manolin is the person who "keeps me (him) alive." He feels that his absence would make the boy to worry although he "would have" immense "confidence" in him. It is the boy who takes care of him and the love for each other is an unconditional one. At the end of the novel, we see that the love for the old man makes him even go against his parents in their wish of him not to accompany the old man in his fishing. He tells Santiago that he does not care about what his family would say and that they both should "fish together again."

Character of Joe Dimaggio

Joe DiMaggio, the great baseball player plays a significant role in the novel, although he makes no appearance in it. He is Santiago's role model and Santiago admires him the most. He often appears down the memory lane of Santiago and he used to talk about him to Manolin. The memory of Manolin and DiMaggio refresh him with fresh energy during his struggles in the sea. He worships him as a model of strength and commitment.

When he was cramped on the left hand and was feeling an excruciating pain, he found courage and endurance, thinking about DiMaggio who played and won despite of having been affected with a painful bone spur on his legs. Santiago feels a special affinity with DiMaggio because his father was a fisherman. DiMaggio was his constant source of encouragement and refreshment during his struggles to achieve excellence in his efforts.

Even in his dire moment of struggle with the marlin, he wonders what would DiMaggio have done in such a situation. He wants to do things perfectly so that DiMaggio would approve of his performance:

But I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur on his heel.

After killing the great marlin, Santiago feels happy and thinks that the great DiMaggio would be proud of him.

The Tourists at the Terrace

In the very few characters that appear in the novel, there is the appearance of the tourists at the Terrace. Hemingway concludes the novel with his characteristic irony when he describes the party of tourists at the Terrace. A woman and the party looks down in the water and sees the skeleton of the great marlin amid the empty beer cans and dead barracuda. This itself is an ironic circumstance, since we know what it is and how it came there. It was there with the old man watching the great three-day fight.

The woman asked the waiter what it was and he replies that it was a shark. He was meaning to explain what had happened. The woman and her male companion understand the skeleton of the marlin as a shark and they admire the beautifully formed tail of the fish. Here the gap of the two worlds is brought out by Hemingway. The ironic gap between the old man's great fight with a great marlin and the ignorance of the tourists who represent the world outside is strikingly comic.

The tourists' ignorance and their admiration are set against the value and courage of the old man representing the normal happenings in life. Blissfully ignorant of the tourists' conversation and their ignorance, the old man sleeps, dreaming of the lions of Africa.

The Sea:

The sea, which is placed on an equal footing to the old man in the novel has an over pervading presence in the novel and plays a significant role in it. It is a powerful presence, which is at once cruel, kind and beautiful. Santiago thinks of her as "*la mar*" as she is called in Spanish. She is imagined as a woman and people may say bad things about her. Santiago compares the sea to a woman whose wild behaviour is beyond her control. Some young fishermen refer to the sea as masculine and think of it as a contestant or a place or an enemy. The old man thinks of her as one who gives great favours. She is sometimes wild and wicked and is often affected by the moon like a woman.

Towards the end of the novel, Manolin tells the old man that they searched for him with coast guards and planes. The old man then says, "the ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see." The old man's words remind us that man with all his superiority and power is insignificant on

the face of nature. All the glories and achievements lay bare on the face of nature, which is an embodiment of true power and strength.

The Old Man and the Sea as a Tragedy

Ernest Hemingway, one of the greatest novelists of America has written *The Old Man and the Sea* with a character highly noble and lofty in terms of endurance and perseverance. Santiago, the protagonist of the novel commands our love and respect due to his Christ-like qualities where he exudes love and affection for the boy Manolin. He is not carried away or affected by the negative comments passed by his fellow fishermen. He endures everything patiently and keeps trying to prove himself and his capabilities as a fisherman.

This novel could be read as a tragedy though the central character, Santiago does not face death or devious fall at the end of the novel.

The novel shows the central character as being isolated and alienated. Santiago does not come under the category of Shakespeare's tragic heroes where those heroes were men of exception belonging to a higher rank, a king or a prince, but Santiago is of humble origins. Aristotle had laid down that the hero in a tragedy must be a character of high importance because only then the fall from his high place, a place of greatness would arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Hemingway's hero is not a hero belonging to a royal or aristocratic tradition, but a simple and humble fisherman whose business is to go into the sea and come back with fish.

Aristotle had stated that the tragedies present tales of suffering and calamity, often involving violence and death of exceptional people belonging to royalty and nobility. The fall of the protagonist will be due to a flaw in his character. The downfall will be either due to a flaw in his character or due to some fate or destiny in which he will not have a say. The fall may also happen because of some villainous character who might have manipulated against the protagonist. Here, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, no such villainous character acts against Santiago. It is merely the play of fate or destiny. Santiago is a character who arouses in the readers strong feelings of pity.

He is an admirable character who is simple and humble and who has a strong bonding with the sea that embodies nature. He lives an isolated

an alienated life and is at the age of 70. He lives in a lonely shack and has a great passion for fishing. He has a great enduring quality around him and is unmoved or undisturbed by any evil comments passed on by the others around him. He has become the butt of laughter to the people around him but he endures. That he was a great fisherman in his youth fills him with pride and he remembers days when he was exceptionally strong and used to have a good catch as a successful fisherman.

But now, with his old age, his body had withered and he is a thin man without any fat in his body. He worked far out in the sea and braved the scorching sun and the hazards of the sea.

He would be in the sea for days trying to achieve his feat. He has a strong will power and undaunted courage. He is cheerful and determined, and has faith in himself. He is committed to his profession. He is a man who is not disillusioned with his failures. He keeps on trying and plans for a better tomorrow. Just like the tragic heroes, Santiago is endowed with heroic qualities and fights against all odds.

Although eighty-four days have gone without catching any fish, he does not lose hope or confidence. Manolin calls him "the best fisherman" and Santiago humbly accepts the compliments and tells Manolin that he knew many tricks. He is resolved to prove to the world that he is still capable of achieving. He confidently and professionally lays down the baits with precision.

Santiago's undaunted struggle with the marlin shows his pain, suffering and endurance. He carries on a struggle with the fish for two days and two nights. It is indeed a heroic fight that the brave Santiago puts in. Despite loving the fish much, he says he would kill it. He resolves and sticks on to his resolution firmly. Despite the physical damages caused on his hands, his will is undeterred. He is determined to catch the marlin against all odds. Observing the struggles of both Santiago and the marlin, our admiration and pity are aroused for both Santiago and the fish. Santiago does not give up and endures despite his hands being cut badly and he is deeply tired. This shows his firm determination and he would never stop trying. The fish marlin is equally tough and obstinate and summoning all his strength, Santiago kills it at last. He does it with his own determination, strong will and enduring confidence.

When the fish was killed, Santiago still faces tribulations. He could not be in peace and enjoy the fruits of his victory. The sharks come to

eat the marlin. Santiago hardly enjoys his victory but his faced with more challenges and obstacles. More sharks and more galanos come against which he had to fight. He says "I will fight them until I die." However, by midnight he comes to know that he was fighting a losing battle since the sharks had eaten away the marlin completely. Santiago understands he has been beaten off completely. The pose after he reaches his shack, lying on his bed is reminiscent of the crucifixion of Christ. This symbol has been brought in to show his endurance and suffering. He often dreams of lions which serve as symbols of youth and strength.

Santiago's quality remains with him throughout. He does not feel dejected or forsaken by his defeat. He does not feel bad in talking with Manolin about the future plans. We see that although he is physically broken, he is spiritually still strong. The marlin is reduced to only a skeleton but all those who see it have a feeling of awe. We admire Santiago for his spiritual strength, endurance, love, compassion and tenderness for the birds, fish, turtles etc. We also admire him for his piety, charity and faith.

Like most tragic heroes, Santiago is faced with inner conflicts. He has a conversation within himself, whether his act of killing the marlin is a sin or not. His killing of the marlin is to feed people. His pride as a fisherman also lay in his killing the marlin.

Santiago regrets that he went out too far for fishing because that only killed the marlin as well as brought about a disaster for him. Santiago is aware of his pride and need. He seems to have understood what brought about is fall. His pride to prove himself made him go farther into the sea and that too individually in a skiff too small for the vast ocean. He feels sorry he went too far which ruined both himself and the marlin. However, it was only by going so far that Santiago discovered his greatest strength, courage, dignity, nobility and love.

Hemingway seems to say that the stoic individual may be driven in his isolation and pride to go beyond human limits and forget his place in the world, and thus meet his tragic fate.

Thus, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a remarkable tale of courage, endurance, pride, humility and death. It is a story of moral victory.

Santiago's success lies in his flaw of going too far and losing everything he had gained by going too far. However, this bold move of him

going too far into the sea has brought out his stoic courage, indefatigable endurance, pride and humility and put him on par with many other classical tragic heroes. The novel is certainly a tragedy and though a little bleak, it provides a sense of hope and purpose in the world so cruel.

The Old Man and the Sea as an Existential Novel:

Existentialism is a philosophy that believes in the existence of man. According to the great philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's views, "Man is condemned to be free because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."

Existential philosophy is a revolt against traditional philosophy. It rejects the view that life has inherent value and meaning, but instead it is the individual who is responsible for creating his subjective values. Existentialism values individual subjectivity over objectivity. It exhibits man's individualism. Questions regarding existence and subjective experience are of high importance in it.

Existentialism lays emphasis on authenticity, anxiety, consciousness of existence, free will, passion and responsibility. It is opposed to positivism and rationalist tradition. It argues against the notion that human beings are primarily rational. Existentialism attacks the traditional notion that man is a rational creature and that he lives in an orderly, intelligible universe that has order and structure. He says that if man believes in the outside world and expects to create order and purpose from it, then his expectations will meet with failure only, since the outside world lacks order and is absurd. It is man who has to give meaning to his existence and man who has to find meaning in a meaningless world. They feel that man is fully responsible for whatever situation he is in.

They find the world to be a meaningless place and life as silly and absurd. It is man that has to create a meaning in this absurd place.

Existentialism tends to view human beings as subjects in an indifferent, objective, often ambiguous, and absurd universe in which meaning is not provided by a natural order but can be rather created by human beings' actions and interpretations. Existentialism is often associated with anxiety, fear, dread, awareness of death, and freedom. Some of the famous Existentialists are Jean-Paul Sartre, Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Heidegger and Simone de Beauvoir.

Man living a life of anxiety, fear, dread, and uncertainty should find meaning through his own actions and interpretations.

Albert Camus, the French philosopher in his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus* says that life is as absurd as the lot of Sisyphus who keeps rolling a stone up to the top of a mountain only to find it sliding down. Just like how there is no meaning in the act of rolling up the stone, which keeps falling down, so is life also. It has no meaning in living it. It is absurd. Without being dejected at the futility of the exercise, Sisyphus keeps rolling up the stone repeatedly. He does not yield to the despairing situation. Santiago too, in the novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* keeps moving on in life, despite his loneliness, failure, dejection and despair.

The Old Man and the Sea is an existential novel that portrays the story of Santiago, an old fisherman, in his seventies. Santiago lives a life of loneliness and simply exists. Fishing is his profession, which has not benefitted him for the past eighty-four days. Going to the sea regularly to have a good catch, he returns home empty handed with no fish caught. His attempts at catching fish were futile and he became the butt of ridicule of his fellow fishermen, who laughed at his failure. He lives in a hostile world as his fellow fishermen shun him as unlucky. In this, he could be compared to Sisyphus who kept on rolling the stone up the mountain despite the futility of the exercise. Santiago keeps going to the sea despite his futile attempts at it. Santiago has not caught any fish for eighty-four days and keeps on fishing alone in the vast ocean.

Santiago feeling lonely in this vast, wide world expresses his individualism by being unique and undeterred in his struggles of fishing. The ridicule of the fellow fishermen does not affect him and make him go for small fish. He is determined to have big catch and is even ready to risk his life by going too far in the ocean. He knows he is risking his life and is tortured by feelings of sin and remorse. He has an internal conflict whether his killing of the marlin is good or not. Though he is thin and gaunt, he had a strong will power and determination that make him pursue his goal without any disturbances. Heroism was in his blood and thoughts, and he will not give up on his act of proving to himself and to the others his superior abilities in catching a great fish.

Despite many hardships and difficulties, he remains cheerful and determined, and with faith in himself, he goes towards achieving his pride. His undaunted and indefatigable spirit is revealed in his eyes and he is not

conquered by the physical wounds he faces during his struggle with the fish. Nothing would deter him from catching the marlin. He also puts on a brave fight with the disastrous sharks and galanos. He does not yield to his despairing situation. His eighty-fifth day's trip also ends in failure but his will and determination does not desert him. He returns home utterly exhausted and wounded, but still he plans with Manolin to go on a fishing trip once again. Like Sisyphus, Santiago too does not accept defeat. While he is fighting the marlin, he says "man can be destroyed, but not defeated." Santiago chooses to endure and his stoic determination is admirable.

The existentialists find life full of contradictions. Santiago is also self-contradictory. At one time, he regards the marlin as his brother, and feels pity for it. However, his feeling of survival dominates the feeling of sympathy and he is determined to kill the marlin. He justifies his killing on the ground that everything kills everything else in this world. It is the survival of the fittest that matters. Living in a hostile world, Santiago clutches to the boy Manolin, whose unconditional love and affection sustains him. Existentialists talk about the freedom of man, the conscious feeling of existence, free will, passion, authenticity and responsibility. All these elements are found in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and the character of Santiago exhibits all these traits in him.

Questions

1. How does Santiago embody a hero?
2. What does Manolin represent to Santiago?
3. How does Santiago lose the marlin?
4. What is the significance of Santiago dreaming about the lions?
5. Make a character sketch of Santiago.
6. Make a character sketch of Manolin.
7. What significant role does the sea play in *The Old Man and the Sea*.
8. Describe how Santiago catches the marlin.
9. Describe the relationship between Santiago and Manolin.
10. Comment on the presence of the absent characters in the novel and their impact on Santiago.
11. Enumerate on the return trip of Santiago.
12. Comment on the opening of the novel.
13. Would you consider *The Old Man and the Sea* a tragedy? Give

reasons.

14. Make a critical appreciation of *The Old Man and the Sea* exhibiting the characteristic traits of modernism.
15. Analyse *The Old Man and the Sea* as an existential novel.

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UNIT – V**Lesson 5.1 Prose : Alice Walker- In Search of my Mothers' Gardens****Structure**

- Alice Walker – An Introduction
- Walker's Life and Works
- Walker's Participation in Civil Rights Movement
- Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*– A Summary
- Summing up in brief Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden*

Learning Objectives

With this lesson, you should be able to

- Get an idea of the life and works of the great American writer, Alice Walker. The author's personal and academic background are given to have a better understanding of her work.
- Know Walker's involvement in the American Civil Rights Movement and the impact it had on her.
- Have a complete comprehension of Walker's prose, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.
- Walker as a Champion of Black Women.

Introduction**Alice Walker (1944-2014)****Alice Walker's Childhood and Education**

Alice Walker, a renowned African American poet, novelist, and activist was born on February 9, 1944 in rural Georgia. She was the eighth and youngest child of a sharecropper, Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker and Willie Lee Walker. In 1952, when Alice Walker was 8 years old, she was blinded in her right eye by BB gun pellet while playing with her brother. This accident was traumatic and it changed her from being a brassy, self-confident child into a shy, solemn, and solitary girl.



Alice had a passion for gender issues, which are largely reflected in her writings, and she grew up in an environment filled with poverty and racism. Her mother used to work as a maid for eleven-hour days, for a meagre amount of 17 dollars per week, and it was out of this hard-earned money that Alice Walker was sent to college.

Walker immersed herself in studies and performed well, flourishing in the academic environment. She won a scholarship to Spelman College after graduation and also received a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She became one of a chosen few young black students to attend the prestigious school.

Walker's Participation in Civil Rights Movement

Walker took active participation in many Civil Rights demonstrations and in 1962 had the privilege of being invited to the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. After completing her graduation in 1965, Walker became a teacher and a social worker along with being highly interested and involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Walker's Works

She was also interested in writing her own poetry and fiction as she was involved in teaching poetry in Jackson State College and Tongaloo College. In 1968, Walker published a collection of poetry, *Once: Poems* and married Mel Leventhal, a Human Rights Lawyer in the same year. She divorced him in the 1970s after giving birth to her daughter, Rebecca.

She also contributed to the ground-breaking feminist Ms. Magazine in the late 60s by writing about the unappreciated work of the African American author Zora Neale Hurston. She published her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* in 1970 and her second novel *Meridian* was published in 1976, six years later than her first.

The acclaimed novel, *The Color Purple* was published in 1982 and received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award. The novel is amazing for its portrayal of the Black woman Celie's struggles with poverty, racism, sexism and violence along with the female friendship that empowers her.

This novel was followed by the publication of collection of essays, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* in 1983, which comprised of 36 separate pieces of essays, articles, reviews, statements and speeches written between 1966 and 1982. Along with these, Alice Walker has also published a collection of poems, *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful* (1984), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), in addition to a few children's books and non-fiction work. Walker coined the term "womanist" to mean "A black feminist or feminist of color" in 1983.

Alice Walker is a contemporary writer who still plays a prominent role in society and politics. Her works are found in many popular anthologies of American fiction and poetry. In the essay, "In Search of our Mothers' Gardens" written in 1972, the African American poet and novelist, Alice Walker thinks about the lives of generations of African American women during the burdened period of slavery and racism.

She reminisces on the kind of suppressed and depressed life that those women of the past including her mothers and grandmothers lived, and in a way, it could be said that Walker shows interest in searching their hidden artistic and literary talents that well went void because of slavery and cruel racist domination.

Alice Walker's "in Search of Our Mothers' Gardens"

Jean Toomer's Views of Black Women

Alice Walker's essay, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1972) opens with the author basing her arguments on the observations made

by Jean Toomer in *Cane*. Walker shows how the Black women of the past struggled hard to be a mother or a grandmother, emphasizing the fact that they struggled to even be a woman. She opens the essay with a quote from Jean Toomer's *Cane* where Jean Toomer, the American poet, who was commonly associated with the Harlem Renaissance for black women in the Post Reconstruction South, views African American women as generally lacking hope and characterised as being mere sex objects. This shows that in early literature by black men, women were viewed as ignorant and abused women who were mutilated in body and mind.

Despite possessing intense and deep spirituality, these black women were dimmed and confused by pain - pain of tortures and domination - and a forced kind of life. Being forced to lead a kind of life as prostitutes, wives, mothers these "crazy," "loony," pitiful women considered themselves as being hopeless. They lost their holistic personality and individuality in the process of being sexual objects and playing different roles, their bodies became shrines where no Gods resided. These women whom Walker thinks about are her "mothers" and "grandmothers" who stared at the world like lunatics and suicides.

Toomer perceives them as "exquisite butterflies trapped in an evil honey" toiling away their lives where their hard work and sacrifice went unrecognised and unacknowledged. They were simply looked at as "the mule of the world" who labored and toiled hard that caused black women to become emotionless and hopeless. They had spirits that had unbodied itself. Walker believes that the oppression and tortures they underwent made them turn down all the things that made them unique, beautiful, and genius.

Walker moves on to focus on the Black women in history, probably the mothers and grandmothers who lacked the freedom to pursue the matters of interest. They dreamt big dreams but were forbidden from pursuing their dreams as they were forced to enter "loveless marriages without joy, become prostitutes without resistance and become mothers of children without fulfilment."

Black women's potential for creative freedom is stifled by the different roles they are thrust upon in society. They have to play the role of obedient wives to their husbands, mothers to raise their children and housekeepers to maintain the household.

Toomer felt that black women were unhappy and felt unloved, and to him, they were “the mule of the world.” They had artists in them who are not recognised even by themselves. They were authors of unwritten poetry waiting to be disclosed. They knew that they would long be dead before their creativity was out.

Toomer felt that the future was nowhere, as they lived mechanical, sterile lives not able to release the “springs of creativity in them.” They had enormous spirituality in them, which is the basis of art and creativity, but despite this, they were driven insane, as they were unable to channelize their spirituality to creativity. The tension of repressing and suppressing their unused and unwanted talent drove them mad. They did not succeed much in throwing away the spirituality that scarred their souls.

Walker Shows Black Women as Possessing Artistic Streaks in Them

Walker here attempts at a close look at the history and lineage of how black women artist got to be artists despite the extreme “work-worn,” sexual abuse and hardship that their mothers and grandmothers had endured.

Walker asks “what did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in a grandmother’s time? In a great-grandmother’s day?” Walker goes on to state the different hardships and abuse that the black women had to undergo being kept as slaves. She states how the genius of a great-great-grandmother died because of a white man’s ignorance in abusing her physically or “was she required to bake biscuits for a lazy backwater tramp, when she cried her soul to paint watercolors of sunsets, or the rain falling on the green and peaceful pasture-lands? Or was her body broken and forced to bear children.”

Walker personalizes these women by referring to them as mothers and grandmothers. She proceeds further in bringing out how oppression and suppression has cost many talented black women to go unnoticed and unheard of.

She propounds how education was denied to black women in America leave alone the other forms of art like painting, sculpting, reading and writing. Walker cites Bessie Smith, Billy Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack and Aretha Franklin to note talent lost among the black race and culture.

She also states that with an understanding of loss of talents of the women mentioned above, it will be comprehensible to understand what would have happened to the powerless, suppressed lives of the "crazy," "sainted" mothers and grandmothers. They would have died stifling the possibilities of having become Poets, Novelists, Essayists, Short Story writers with them.

Phillis Wheatley, a Black Slave Woman Writer

Walker brings in the case of Phillis Wheatley, a slave of the eighteenth century to provide an example of women similar to her mothers and grandmothers who endured difficulties without any hope of a better tomorrow. Phillis Wheatley is a black woman poet and a writer at her own right, but unfortunately, she was not able to do much with it because she was a black and a slave.

She suffered from a precarious health condition and it is a pity she did not even own herself. Here, Walker draws a comparison between Virginia Woolf and Phillis Wheatley where the two being women, experience difficulties in their growth as a creative writer or artist.

Comparison of Virginia Woolf Like White Women With Black Women

Virginia Woolf writes in her extended essay, "A Room of One's Own" that a woman in order to write fiction must definitely have a room of her own and enough money to support herself. She also states that any woman born with the gift of poetry in the sixteenth century would have been thwarted and hindered by "contrary instincts", and unable to foreground the talent would have lost her health and sanity.

Here, Walker says if it had been so difficult for a white woman who had not experienced such ghastly issues, like the threat of "chains, guns, the lash," owning one's own body and "submission to an alien religion" then what would be the plight of a black slave who had experienced all this and also had the experience of added disadvantages of being born as a black woman, "born or made a slave" and that too two centuries later than Walker had mentioned (18th Century).

Phillis Wheatley's futile attempts at expressing herself through poetry would have been washed away by forced labour and pregnancies.

Captured as a slave at seven, one wonders if she was even able to remember her home land as she had known it or as it really was because her masters, the wealthy, dotting whites instilled in her the "savagery" of Africa they had rescued her from. She was so thwarted and hindered by "contrary instincts" while trying to use her gift of poetry in an alien world that did not treat her well. She lost her health in due course of being a slave, and died of malnutrition and neglect, added to the mental agonies of displacement and slavery.

Alice Walker uses the story of Phillis Wheatley to bring about an understanding of African American women's predicament at that time when they were not allowed to use their artistic gifts and did not have the luxury of time to exercise the gifts, to use the talents and abilities to fully express themselves.

She shows how black mothers and grandmothers belonging to the earlier centuries led difficult lives that imprisoned them physically and mentally to a domestic life of slavery with no way of expressing their thoughts and emotions. The mothers and grandmothers were chained to life-long fate of hard labour and forced solitude. In the process of which they had lacked the opportunity to even know if they had the ability to have come up as poets, singers or actresses with their individual talent brought to the fore.

Wheatley experienced everything that Woolf dreaded, although, Wheatley was granted limited freedom of expression and education by her owners. Wheatley describes a "Goddess" in her poetry, which Walker perceives as her owner who had enslaved her. Wheatley appreciates her owner though she had been snatched away from her home and country, and been made a slave.

Walker calls Wheatley as a "sickly little black girl" who is not an "idiot or a traitor," who calls her owner as a goddess, but a woman who in a land of barbarians struggled to exercise her gift of poetry. According to Walker, society views black women as "the mule of the world" because they were burdened with everybody else's problems. They were hopeless and emotionless and this was the plight of many African American women, who experienced slavery, forced pregnancies, poverty and artistic suppression.

The reality of Phillis Wheatley and the account of Jean Toomer are evidences that black women's lives were thus and what is true of Phillis Wheatley is also true of many other African American women including

the mothers and grandmothers of Alice Walker.

Apart from being called "the mule of the world," black African American women are also called as "Matriarchs", "Superwomen", "Mean and Evil Bitches", "Castraters" and "Sapphires Mama." Walker states to be an artist and a black woman is condescending in the society even today but this should not stop black women from knowing and understanding their spirituality as it did numerous other black women.

Walker states that the black women must be fearless and look inwards to identify the talent they possess and bring out the creativity in them. They should not be like some of their great-grandmothers who succumbed to the stress and harshness of life and thereby, failed to understand the creativity they had. Albeit, there were a few ancestors who knew the creative power within them but who failed to make it known to the world.

Here, we understand that Walker is trying to map a literary history of black women, trying to trace back the talents when she says that she is searching for our mothers' Garden, which is actually a search for the far-reaching world of the creative literary women.

Walker's Mother

In attempting at this search, Alice Walker gives a personal account of her own mother who ran away from home to marry her father at the age of 17. Walker was the last child to her mother who was patient and enduring. She was an adept at making their clothes and working hard, labouring from sunrise to late night, both at home and in the fields. Walker says, "And yet it is to my mother and all our mothers who were not famous – that I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day."

Walker's Mother's Talents Including the Artistry of Gardening

Walker describes her mother's simple but appreciable talent of gardening. For Walker, her mother's ability to continue gardening despite her poor living condition portrays her mother's strong persona and ability to strive even in hardship. "She made all the clothes we wore, even my brothers' overalls. She made all the towels and sheets we used. She spent

the summers canning vegetables and fruits. She spent the winter evenings making quilts enough to cover all our beds.”

“During the “working” day, she laboured beside – not behind – my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup, and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption – by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children.”

In the midst of such overwork, Walker's mother used to narrate her stories to her children that Walker feels, that these talents of storytelling and creative writing, has been inherited by her from her mother. Walker feels that her mother, due to the many burdens of life would end her stories abruptly and without conclusion. However, that she was multi-talented occurred to Walker when she began noticing her mother's talent in floristry and gardening. Her mother looked brilliant and radiant as a creator while working with her "ambitious gardens" and her fame as a grower of flowers spread everywhere.

Walker remembers even the poverty of their household with screen of blooms of different varieties. Being an artist had been a daily part of her mother's life. Walker shows how black women cope with self-worth and self-respect with their enormous spirituality, in spite of the Himalayan hardships they underwent because of being born a black and the practice of slavery. The ability to hold on, even in very simple ways have been the ways of the black women for a very long time.

Walker concludes the essay with a poem for her mother who was strong and enduring. Walker feels that she has found her heritage and the source that guides her and leads her to "a love of beauty" and "a respect for strength." At the end of the essay, Walker reveals how she was found and understood herself while researching her heritage.

Black Women's Inheritance of Creativity From Their Mothers and Grandmothers

The talent of creativity and the love for beauty with high sensitivity and spirituality is the legacy she has inherited from her mother. Having understood this, Walker also arrives at an understanding that there had been mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers who had all been in possession of such creativity and have handed over the seeds of creativity

to their daughters. "And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read."

Thus, Walker understood that Phillis Wheatley's mother too would have been a poet and a storyteller, "though only her daughter's name is signed to the poems that we know." The theme and idea of legacy reoccurs towards the end of the essay where Walker believes that all black mothers and grandmothers had the creative spirit in them that they left the seeds of those to their daughters.

Summary of Alice Walker's in Search of Our Mothers' Gardens

Alice Walker:

1. Alice Walker born in February 9, 1944 is an Afro- American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist.
2. In 1982, she wrote the novel *The Color Purple*, for which she won the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize.
3. She also wrote the novels *Meridian* (1976) and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970).
4. She coined the term "womanist" to mean "A black feminist or feminist of color" in 1983.
5. The essay "*In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*" is part of a collection of literary pieces named *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*.
6. It discusses the black women writers' struggle for freedom of self-expression.
7. Alice Walker tries to search the roots of their creativity.
8. Alice Walker talks about her search of the African American women's suppressed talent and artistic skills.
9. Their talents and skills are lost because of slavery and a forced way of life.
10. Walker builds up her arguments from historical events as well as the collective experiences of African Americans, including her own.

The Observations of Jean Toomer, a Poet of the Early 1920s:

11. In the first paragraph of the essay, Walker mentions the experiences of an American writer called Jean Toomer.
12. Jean Toomer observed that Black women are unique because they possessed intense spirituality in them.
13. Their spirituality was intact in spite of the fact that their bodies had to endure various kinds of punishment in every single day of their lives.
14. Their intense spirituality and endurance made them Saints – crazy, pitiful saints.
15. Being black women, life was extremely hard for them, taking care of the household and children, continuous pregnancies, and a life of slavery.
16. The mothers and grandmothers at that time endured all of this without any hope of better tomorrow.
17. Because of this, they were not able to fully express themselves. They were held back by their racist society.

Black Women are the Mules of the World:

18. Alice Walker says that our grandmothers and mothers were “exquisite butterflies trapped in an evil honey, toiling away their lives in an era, a century, that did not acknowledge them, except as “the mule of the world”.
19. Their dreams could not be understood by anyone, not even by themselves. Thus, their creativity remained unknown and uncelebrated.
20. Their talents were crushed as they were into loveless marriages and became mothers of children. There was no fulfilment in their lives. Their lives were uneventful and joyless.
21. Their bodies were work-worn and sexually abused. They were forced into prostitution without resistance.
22. They were creators but their unused and unwanted talent made them insane.

What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers’ time?

23. Alice Walker says that these mothers and grandmothers were under the burden of slavery. They had to work really hard for survival in

plantations, bakeries, factories etc. Their bodies were broken and they were forced to bear children in big numbers that were usually sold.

24. Becoming an artist and practice of art was a punishable crime for black men and women in America. They are not allowed to read, write, sing, paint, sculpt etc.
25. They cannot voice out their thoughts and emotions.
26. These “crazy”, “sainted” black women could have become great novelists, poets, singers, actors, essayists and short-story writers. However, their talents remained suppressed and stifled.
27. In spite of all these odds and unfavorable conditions, they kept their creativity alive for centuries.
28. Artists like Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin mentioned to prove that Black women kept their creativity alive.

Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784): A Black Slave Girl Poet:

29. Like a reference to Toomer, so is another reference made to a black poet, Phillis Wheatley, a Black slave girl with precarious health.
30. She was captured at the age of seven from Africa and brought to America in 1761. She was sold to a wealthy merchant named John Wheatley.
31. Phillis is a poet and a writer at her own right, but unfortunately, she was not able to do much with it because she was a slave.
32. She lost her health, and eventually her life without fully expressing herself through her gift for poetry.
33. She was poor and had to take care of several children. She was suffering from malnutrition, neglect and mental agonies. She died at very young age.
34. Phillis Wheatley is now taken as a symbol of Afro-American feminist creativity and resistance.

Virginia Woolf's “A Room of One's Own”

35. Alice Walker quotes the great British novelist Virginia Woolf's famous essay “A Room of One's Own.”
36. Virginia Woolf says that in order to write fiction, a woman must have two things: (i) A room of her own with lock and key (ii) Enough

money to support herself.

37. This was also requirement in the case of Black women who desired to become poets and novelists. However, the Black women were not free individuals, and it is a pity that they did not own even their own bodies, as they were slaves of the whites.
38. Phillis Wheatley also needed financial security and her own space to prolong her success as a poet. But her poverty and slavery was the reason of her short success.

Black Grandmothers & Alice Walker's Mother:

39. Just like how Walker brought in Toomer and Wheatley to base her arguments, she also presents the true accounts of black women to prove her point. She talks of the life of her own mother.
40. It is true that slavery, forced pregnancies, poverty, and artistic suppression were the realities for the black women in the past.
41. Still, the black grandmothers and mothers have been passing down a collective knowledge and creativity down from one generation to another in different ways.
42. To prove this point, she gives the example of a special quilt made by an anonymous Black woman of Alabama, some hundred years ago. This quilt is made of bits and pieces of worthless rags. It portrays the story of Crucifixion of Christ.
43. Alice Walker has also experienced poverty in her childhood. She was born and raised by hardworking parents. They had to work day and night to provide for the family.
44. She says that her mother may not be a poet or a novelist, but she was an artist in the truest sense.
45. Her mother's artistic side and creativity were manifested in her gardens and the beautiful flowers she used to grow.

Conclusion:

46. This essay is written to foreground the creative and artistic talents of African American women during Walker's mothers' and grandmothers' time.
47. These Black women were unable to express their talents and develop it to its full potential. This essay is written to inform us about their stories, and of her discovery of her mother's garden.

48. Walker was glad to know that the talent of creativity and the love for beauty with high sensitivity and spirituality is the legacy she has inherited from her mother.
49. Walker believes that all black mothers and grandmothers had the creative spirit in them that they left the seeds of those to their daughters.
50. Walker states that the black women must be fearless and look inwards to identify the talent they possess and bring out the creativity in them. They should not be like some of their great-grandmothers who succumbed to the stress and harshness of life and thereby, failed to understand the creativity they had. Albeit, there were a few ancestors who knew the creative power within them but who failed to make it known to the world.

Questions

1. Why does Walker stress the point that black women have been seen as "the mule of the world?"
2. Why does Alice Walker search for her mother's garden?
3. How does Walker deal with race and gender in "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens?"
4. According to Walker, what change occurred in her mother as she worked in her garden in "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens?"
5. According to Walker, what are the ways African-American women maintained "creative spirit?"
6. What are the main points in Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens?"
7. Describe the kind of life Walker's mother led while Walker was growing up.
8. Explain the impact her mother's life had on her upbringing.
9. What secret does Walker wish to discover by examining her mother's life and the lives of other women like her?
10. In what two ways does Walker's mother express her creativity and how does this change her demeanour?

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