

Elective English - IV

DENG203



L OVELY
P ROFESSIONAL
U NIVERSITY



ELECTIVE ENGLISH—IV

Copyright © 2014, Shraddha Singh
All rights reserved

Produced & Printed by
EXCEL BOOKS PRIVATE LIMITED
A-45, Naraina, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110028
for
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara

SYLLABUS
Elective English—IV

Objectives:

- To introduce the student to different genres of literature.
- To improve students' comprehension ability.
- To improve analytical power of the student.

Sr. No.	Description
1	The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost, Seven Ages Of Man by William Shakespeare
2	The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Coleridge,
3	Animal Farm by George Orwell
4	Are the Rich Happy? by Stephen Leacock
5	An Astrologer's Day by R. K Narayan.
6	Before a Midnight breaks in storm by Rudyard Kipling
7	Daffodils by William Wordsworth, Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats.
8	Once there was a King by Rabindranath Tagore
9	The Conjurers Revenge by Stephen Leacock.
10	The Big Brother by Munshi Premchand

CONTENTS

Unit 1:	The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost	1
Unit 2:	The Seven Ages of Man by William Shakespeare	15
Unit 3:	The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Coleridge	30
Unit 4:	Animal Farm by George Orwell	61
Unit 5:	Are the Rich Happy? by Stephen Leacock	76
Unit 6:	Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats	91
Unit 7:	An Astrologer's Day by R.K. Narayan	116
Unit 8:	Before a Midnight Breaks in Storm by Rudyard Kipling	133
Unit 9:	Daffodils by William Wordsworth	155
Unit 10:	Once There was a King by Rabindranath Tagore	171
Unit 11:	The Conjurers Revenge by Stephen Leacock	195
Unit 12:	The Big Brother by Munshi Premchand	210

Unit 1: The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

- 1.1 About Robert Frost
 - 1.1.1 Early Years
 - 1.1.2 Adult Years
- 1.2 Robert Frost's Major Works
- 1.3 Poem – The Road Not Taken
 - 1.3.1 Explanation
 - 1.3.2 Critical Analysis
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 Keywords
- 1.6 Review Questions
- 1.7 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Robert Frost
- Describe the Robert Frost's major works
- Explain the theme of poem 'The Road Not Taken'
- Analyse 'The Road Not Taken'

Introduction

Robert Frost was a very famous and often-quoted American poet born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. Frost's interest in reading and writing poetry grew during his high school days in Massachusetts. Robert Lee Frost is greatly regarded for his command on American colloquial speech and for his lifelike depictions of rural life. Robert's first professional poem, "My Butterfly," was published in the New York newspaper 'The Independent' on November 8, 1894. "The Road Not Taken" is Robert's poem published in 1915 in the collection Mountain Interval. Printed in italics, it is the first poem in the volume. Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' is about a decisional crisis.

In this unit we will study about Robert Frost and the poem 'The Road Not Taken'.

Notes

1.1 About Robert Frost

Figure 1.1: Robert Frost



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Jb_modern_frost_2_e.jpg

Born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874, Robert Frost was a highly regarded American poet. He relocated to New England at a tender age of eleven. His interest in reading and writing poetry grew when he was in high school in Lawrence in Massachusetts. In 1892, Robert got admission in Dartmouth College. He later took admission in Harvard, but he never earned a formal degree. After leaving school, Robert floated through a series of occupations. He worked as a teacher, cobbler, and an editor of the Lawrence Sentinel. Robert, in 1895, married Elinor Miriam White. His wife, who died in 1938, was a major inspiration behind his poetry till she took her last breath. After their New Hampshire farm failed, the couple relocated to England in 1912. It was abroad that Robert met contemporary British poets such as Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas and Robert Graves and got influenced by them. During his stay in England, Robert became friends with poet Ezra Pound, who helped in promoting and publishing his work. About Robert, President John F. Kennedy said, "He has bequeathed his nation a body of imperishable verse from which Americans will forever gain joy and understanding." Robert Frost resided and taught in Massachusetts and Vermont for several years, before he died in Boston on 29th January, 1963. Robert Lee Frost is greatly regarded for his command on American colloquial speech and for his lifelike depictions of rural life. His work often employed settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to study complicated philosophical and social themes. A very famous and often-quoted poet, Robert Frost was honoured repeatedly during his lifetime and he received four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry.

1.1.1 Early Years

Robert Frost was born to Isabelle Moodie and journalist William Prescott Frost, Jr. His father descended from Nicholas Frost of Tiverton, Devon, England, who had sailed to New Hampshire in 1634 on the Wolfrana and his mother was of Scottish descent.

Frost's father started his career as a teacher. He later worked as an editor of the San Francisco Evening Bulletin which later merged into the San Francisco Examiner. He was also an unsuccessful candidate for city tax collector. After Frost's father's death in May 5, 1885, in due course time his family moved to Lawrence in Massachusetts with support from Robert's grandfather, William

Frost, Sr., who was a supervisor at a New England mill. In 1892, Frost graduated from Lawrence High School. Frost's mother joined the Swedenborgian Church and had Frost baptized in it, but he later left it as an adult.

In spite of his later association with rural life, Robert grew up in the city. His first poem was published in his high school's magazine. Frost also went to Dartmouth College to be accepted into the Theta Delta Chi fraternity. Frost went back to his hometown to teach and to do several jobs like delivering factory labour and newspapers. He did not enjoy any of these jobs and felt that he wanted to be a poet.

1.1.2 Adult Years

Robert sold his first poem, "My Butterfly: An Elegy" in 1894. This poem was published for fifteen dollars in the November 8, 1894 edition of the New York Independent. Proud of this achievement, he proposed Elinor Miriam White, for marriage but she showed reluctance because she wanted to finish college before they both got married. Frost after returning from his excursion to the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia, asked Elinor again for marriage. She agreed as she had graduated by then. They then married at Harvard University, where Robert did liberal arts studies for two years.

He performed well at Harvard, but left from there to support his family. Robert's grandfather shortly before his death purchased a farm in Derry, New Hampshire for Robert and his wife. Robert worked in that farm for a span of nine years. During this period, he would wake up and write early in the morning. He produced several poems that later became famous. Frost did not succeed in his farming career and returned to field of education. He taught as an English teacher at Pinkerton Academy from 1906 to 1911, then at the New Hampshire Normal School which is now called Plymouth State University in Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Robert sailed with his family to Great Britain in 1912, residing first in Glasgow before finally settling in Beaconsfield outside London. *A Boy's Will*, which was Robert's first book of poetry, was published next year. In England he made several significant connections with T.E. Hulme, Edward Thomas (a member of the Dymock Poets group) and Ezra Pound. Pound would be the first American to write a favourable review of Robert's work. Surrounded by his friends, Robert penned some of his best work during his stay in England.

As World War I began, Robert went back to America in 1915. He purchased a farm in Franconia, New Hampshire, where he indulged in teaching, writing and lecturing. This family farmhouse served as the family's summer home till 1938. It is preserved today as 'The Frost Place', a poetry conference site and museum at Franconia. During the years 1916–20, 1923–24, and 1927–1938, Robert taught English at Amherst College, Massachusetts, particularly inspiring his students to explain the sounds of human voice in their writings.

From 1921 to 1963, Robert spent nearly every summer and fall teaching at the Bread Loaf School of English of Middlebury College, at the mountain campus at Ripton, Vermont. He is recognised as a major influence upon the development of the school. Its writing programs; the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference gained immense popularity during Frost's term there. The college now owns and keeps his former Ripton farmstead near the Bread Loaf campus as a national historic site. Robert accepted a fellowship teaching post at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1921, where he lived till 1927. Frost was given a lifetime appointment at the University as a Fellow in Letters. The Robert Frost Ann Arbor home is now located at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn in Michigan. Robert returned to Amherst in 1927. He purchased a 5-acre (2.0 ha) plot in South Miami, Florida in 1940 and named it Pencil Pines. He spent his winters there.

Notes

Harvard's 1965 alumni directory shows that Robert got an honorary degree at Harvard. Robert also received honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford universities and from Bates College. Frost was also the first person to receive two honorary degrees from Dartmouth College. During Robert's lifetime the main library of Amherst College and the Robert Frost Middle School in Fairfax, Virginia were named after him.

When he was 86 years old, Robert spoke and performed a reading of his poetry at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration on 20th January, 1961. Around two years later, on 29th January, 1963, Frost died, in Boston, of problems from prostate surgery. Buried at the Old Bennington Cemetery in Bennington, Vermont, Frost's epitaph reads, "I had a lover's quarrel with the world."

Robert's poems are commented upon in the "Anthology of Modern American Poetry", Oxford University Press, where it is stated that behind a sometimes charmingly familiar and rural façade, Frost's poetry normally presents menacing and pessimistic undertones which normally are not analysed or recognised.

One of the unique collections of Robert materials, to which he himself contributed, is found in Massachusetts in the Special Collections department of the Jones Library in Amherst. The collection contains roughly twelve thousand items, including original letters and manuscript poems, photographs, correspondence along with audio and visual recordings.

1.2 Robert Frost's Major Works

Frost's work is mainly related to the life and landscape of New England. Although he was a poet of traditional verse forms and metrics who continued to be detached from the poetic fashions and movements of his time, Robert is everything besides a minor or simply regional poet. This writer of searching and often dark meditations on universal themes is a typically modern poet in his adherence to language as it is truly spoken, in the psychological complications of his portraits, and in the degree to which his work is filled with layers of irony and ambiguity.

Robert's first professional poem, "My Butterfly," was published in the New York newspaper *The Independent* on November 8, 1894.

By the time Robert returned to the United States in 1915, he had published two full-length collections, *North of Boston* and *A Boy's Will*, and his reputation as a renowned poet had established. Frost had become the most celebrated poet in America by nineteen-twenties. With each new work—consisting of *New Hampshire* (1923), *A Further Range* (1936), *Steeple Bush* (1947), and *In the Clearing* (1962)—Robert's fame and honours (along with four Pulitzer Prizes) increased.

In a review of *The Poetry of Robert Frost* in 1970, the poet Daniel Hoffman defines Robert's early work as "the Puritan ethic turned astonishingly lyrical and enabled to say out loud the sources of its own delight in the world," and comments on Robert's career as *The American Bard*: "He became a national celebrity, our nearly official Poet Laureate, and a great performer in the tradition of that earlier master of the literary vernacular, Mark Twain."

"The Road Not Taken" is Robert's poem published in 1915 in the collection *Mountain Interval*. Printed in italics, it is the first poem in the volume. Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* is about a decisional crisis. The narrator while walking through the yellow wood comes upon a fork in the road. He considers both paths and concludes that each path is equally appealing and well-travelled. After selecting one of the two roads, the narrator tells himself that he will return to this fork one day to travel on the other road. Though, he understands that it is unlikely that he will ever get the opportunity to return to this particular point in time as his choice of path will only result in other forks in the road and in other life changing decisions. The narrator ends on a nostalgic note, thinking to himself how different would things be if he had chosen the other road.



Did u know? "The Road Not Taken" is a lyric poem which means that the poem presents the feelings and emotions of the poet rather than telling a story or presenting a witty observation. Henry Holt and Company published the poem in 1916.

1.3 Poem – The Road Not Taken

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.

1.3.1 Explanation

The poet stands in the woods, considering a fork in the road. Its fall and the leaves are turning colours. There are two ways which are equally overlaid with un-trodden leaves and are equally damaged and shabby. The poet is unsure about the path he wants to take as he wishes he could go both ways. He then looks at both the ways and finally selects one, planning to take the other path some other day despite knowing that he may never have the opportunity to do so. He admits that someday in the future he will claim that he took the less-travelled road and that his decision was final.

Line 1

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

In this line, the poet describes a fork in the road. The yellow colour of the woods indicates that it's possibly fall and the leaves are turning colours. The word "Diverged" used in this line is another word for split. There's a fork in the road.

Lines 2-3

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

Notes

The poet wishes to take both roads at once, but since it's not possible to walk down both the roads together, he needs to choose the road he wants to walk on. The poet regrets that he cannot take the two roads at once and says that he is "sorry" he can't travel both roads. It is not possible to take both roads, so the poet stands there trying to choose the path he's going to take.

Lines 4–5

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

The poet shows his willingness to go down both paths and he's confused about which path to take. He's staring down one road to see where it goes. He is only able to see till the first bend, where the undergrowth, the greenery of the woods and the small plants block his view. It is here that we start thinking about the metaphorical meanings of this poem. If our poet is at a fork in the road of his life, and not at a real road, he could possibly be trying to look into his future with immense concentration. He still can't really predict the future, he is only able to see part of the path without knowing what surprises it could hold for him.

Line 6

Then took the other, as just as fair,

So after all this build up about one road, which he's stared at for a long time, our poet decides to take the other road. It's "as just as fair" is a tricky phrase used to describe the road. By combining the words "just" and "fair" in the same phrase, the poet is playing with words as both these words could have several meanings. However in this context, the poet talks about the road and his decision. He means the road is just as pretty, but that in the metaphorical world of this poem, he thinks he made the fair or correct choice. The poet seems to be choosing between two roads, or futures, that were different but possibly equally good.

Lines 7–8

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

The poet still seems unsure when he explains that the second path is better. It is reflected when he says that it is only "perhaps" better. Then the poet emphasises on why the path is better and says that it seems like it hasn't been walked on very much, because it's grassy and doesn't look worn. The traveller decides to take one of the roads "because it was grassy and wanted wear" which means he chose the road less travelled. He concludes that he wants his life to be different he chooses the road that has not been used by many travellers. The phrase "wanted wear" is not personification (it is alliteration, though). "Wanted," in this sentence simply means "lacked."

Lines 9–10

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

The poet of this poem is unable to come to a conclusion and he really can't seem to make up his mind! Just when we think he has finally declared about the path that is better, he changes his mind and confesses that maybe both the paths are equal. The "as for that" talks about the path being less worn. "The passing there" denotes traffic, probably on foot just like our poet, that may have worn the paths down.

Lines 11–12

Notes

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.*

The traveller again says that the paths are equal. Its morning and it seems like the poet is the first person travelling to this place in the morning hours. The poet says that the paths are covered with leaves, which haven't become black by steps crushing them.

Line 13

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

It looks like the traveller is already regretting his decision. He's saying that he'll return later to take the path he has missed. It indicates that he is trying to justify his decision. With an "Oh" at the beginning and an exclamation point at the end, Frost wants the reader to see the irony that he has no way to go back.

Lines 14–15

*Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

The poet realizes that his hopes to come back and try the other path may never come true.

The poet knows how "way leads on to way" – how one road leads to another, and then another, till you reach far away from where you began travelling. He doesn't think he'll ever be able to return to take the other road which he desires to take. The metaphorical meaning of this poem is that in any decision we make, we think that we can return to try a different option sometime later. However at times our decisions take us to other decisions, and gets impossible for us to retrace our steps and go back to the original decision.

Lines 16–17

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:*

Now we jump forward in time to a few years from now. We don't know exactly when, but we know that it's ages and ages "hence," or, from now. The usage of the word the "sigh" indicates that the man in the story looks into the future and thinks how happy he is that he took the road less travelled. This story holds immense significant, because the poet will narrate this story many years later.

Line 18

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

This line is a repetition of the first line of the poem, with the addition of the words "and I" and the removal of the word "yellow". This repetition reminds us what's important in the poem and helps to conclude the poem. It emphasises on the concept of making a choice between two different paths. The usage of words "and I" indicate that whatever the poet is about to say next is significant.

Line 19

I took the one less traveled by,

The poet, in this line, tells his readers that he took the road less travelled by. The declaration of the poet could be triumphant or regretful.

Notes

Line 20

And that has made all the difference.

At first it looks like this line is triumphant as the narrator chose the road that no one else did, and that is what made the difference in his life and helped succeed in life. An optimistic reader wants the line to read positively, but it can be read both ways. A “difference” in this line could simply mean either success or absolute failure. Remember, the poet is telling us about what he’s going to say in the future while narrating his story. From where he is now, he can’t tell by just looking down the path if the future this path leads him to will be good or bad. All he knows is that choice is significant as it will make all the difference in his life.

It looks like the poet of this poem is saying that his choice made all the difference while walking alone on the streets in the wind or while being surrounded by his grandchildren, by a fire in a cosy little house. At this point, he doesn’t know where the path chosen by him will take him.

Precisely, the poem includes four stanzas. In the first stanza, the speaker talks about his position. After walking the woods, the speaker comes to two roads. He stands and looks down as far as he can to see both the roads and make a decision about which one to take. He wants to travel on both the roads, but doubts if he can do that. So he continues to stare at both the roads for a long time trying to decide which road to take. In the second stanza, he states that he has finally decided to take the other path as it seems that the second path has less traffic than the first one. Then again he says that both the roads are actually very similar in condition and both are equally worn out. The third stanza talks about the possible differences between both the roads. He saw that the leaves had freshly fallen on both the roads. Then again he says that he may return to walk the first road sometime. Although he doubted if he could return as in life one thing or decision leads to another and time is short. The fourth stanza shows that there is the “what a relief” sigh and the “oh, dear” kind of sigh. Though, it is not very clear as to which one he really means. It is because the speaker himself cannot know how his choice will affect his future until after he has lived it.



Notes Robert wrote the poem on an autumn morning on a forest road. He got inspiration to write this poem from the scenery in rural Gloucestershire, England. During their stay in Great Britain from 1912 to 1915, Robert and his family had hired a cottage, Little Iddens, near Dymock, Gloucestershire, in the summer of 1914.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917), also a writer, was residing at a cottage just half a mile away from Frost’s cottage. Edward was a literary critic, nature writer and essayist. He had favourably reviewed Robert’s poetry and become one of Robert’s best friends. During their walks in lanes and forests, botany and poetry were their common topics of discussion. After being insisted by Robert, Edward began writing poetry. He later got great fame in this genre. Upon returning from their walks, Edward often expressed a wish that they had taken an alternate road to view its plants. In response to this, Robert started writing his poem “The Road Not Taken,” which he completed writing after he and his family went back to the United States.

Robert and Edward remained friends until Edward died fighting in World War I. In “The Road Not Taken,” the path through the “yellow wood” could be anywhere, but Robert may have been thinking about the Gloucestershire wilds when he began writing this poem.

1.3.2 Critical Analysis

Notes

Form

The poem "The Road Not Taken" includes four stanzas of five lines each. The rhyme scheme is ABAAB; the rhymes are masculine and strict, with the prominent exception of the last line (the -ence of difference is usually not stressed upon).

Analysis and Discussion

The poem is analysed from the stylistic perspectives by using the following devices; (a) figures of speech, (b) prosody and poetic form, (c) syntax and grammatical structures, and (d) diction and vocabulary as proposed by (Bradford, 1997: 15). The following shows the detailed stylistics analysis of the poem:

The Figures of Speech

Several figures of speech have been used in this poem. Firstly, it is a metaphor. In the poem, the diverging paths are compared to the choices that the poet makes. This indicates that a traveller comes to a fork in the road and he must decide which path he wants to take to continue his journey. After much debate, the traveller chooses the road that has been less travelled by. The figurative implication is not hidden. The poem lays emphasises on the tough choices that people need to make when traveling the road of life. The traveller regrets as he had to leave the possibilities of the road not chosen behind. He wishes to return to explore the other path but realises that he may never pass this way again.

Secondly, it is antithesis. After coming to the fork in the road the traveller wishes he could travel both roads without having to choose between anyone. The traveller realises that within the existing theories of our physical world, this is not possible and he instantly rejects the thought.

Another contradictory point is the two remarks in the second stanza about the road less travelled. On one hand, the traveller describes the road as wanting wear and grassy, after which he turns to say that both the roads are actually equally damaged. Maybe the road less travelled by makes travellers turn back.

Lastly, it is a personification. All practical people know that roads can't think and want. The description of the road wanting wear is a case of personification. Though, some people consider "wanting wear" as not being a personification, but rather older English meaning "lacking". So according to them it may be "Because it was grassy and lacked wear." The prosody and poetic form (b) level heading has been included in it. All the four above given heading from (a)–(d) has to be included.

In a poem, the use of language and rhythm as one of the prosodic elements help build up and arouse the readers' spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling and emotions (Norton, 1989: 163). This poem consists of four stanzas, each stanza contains five lines. Each is with a rhyme scheme of ABAAB. The basic rhythm is iambic tetrameter x / | x / | x / | x / | (x stands for unstressed) with some variations in the last meters of each line (Altenbend and Lewis, 1969: 197). For instance, the second line of the first stanza, "And sorry I could not travel both" has the following rhythm: x / | x / | x / | / x | / / |.

The entire poem has a lively and strong rhythm when each line starts but the rhythm gets stressed in the end of each line. This indicates that the rhythm becomes heavier and slower signifying the narrator's gloomy thoughts and bewilderment in such decisional crisis. For example, in First stanza's third line, "And be one traveler, long I stood" the rhythm mainly follows the one of iambic, but at the end of the line, the last foot constitutes the stressed ones.

Notes

It cannot be denied that the form of language is related to the content. Let us now take the poem's content into consideration. Each line of all the stanzas is related to the poet's thoughts. All these lines show the Robert's inner thought of choosing either one of the fork in the road. The changed heavier and slower rhythm goes perfectly with the poet's profound and careful considerations. So in the poem, wherever concerning the poet's mind, the rhythm changes.



Example: Sound Effects

Alliteration is the repetition of first letters. For instance Note the two 'L' sounds in this quote:

'lay in leaves'.

This sound helps to emphasise the amount of fallen leaves in the wood.

Note the two 'w' sounds in this quote:

'wanted wear'.

This sound helps to emphasise the smoothness of the fallen leaves in the wood.

The syntax or grammatical structures

In terms of grammatical structures or syntax, numerous grammatical devices are used in this poem to bring about the poetic effects. For example, in the first three lines, the word 'and' is repeated and appears at the beginning of each line. This repetition highlights the idea that two events are happening simultaneously. He captures the idea of a multitude of thoughts occurring simultaneously, that means picking from the several alternatives available.

Additionally, all verbs marked for tense in this poem (finite verbs) are in the past tense. The verbs in the first and last lines of the last stanza, that is 'shall be telling' and 'has made' are in present tenses. This shows the poet's self-reflection or personal reflection on what he did or carefully chose in the past and its result. So, it contributes to the notion that choice is unavoidable but he never knows what his choice indicates until he has lived it.

Considering grammatical structures when analysing poem, has shown that the linguistic features of a poem have lots to do with the meaning of the poem itself. It appears that the Robert Frost already knows that individuals look back in time wanting to say that they chose the correct road. Frost also knows that very few individuals want to admit that they wrong.



Caution Internal Rhyme and Cross Rhyme are different from each other.

Internal Rhyme is a word or sound rhyming within a line. Note how the word 'way' occurs twice in this line:

'how way leads on to way. Note the repetition of 'ages' in this line:' Somewhere ages and ages hence'.

Cross Rhyme on the other hand is a word or sound rhyming across two or more lines. Note the sound 'assy' repeated in this quote:

'Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
though as for that the passing there'.

The Diction and Vocabulary or Lexical Features

Notes

In relation to the vocabulary and diction, Leech (2001: 5) distinguishes “ordinary” language from poetic language. He has additionally specified that poetic language may violate or move away from the normally observed rules of the language in several ways. Moreover, each element of any portion of writing has a potential interpretive importance and its readers generally pick up the smallest details of a text and use these details to build a meaningful interpretation. An analysis of the lexical features is good to start with a more detailed linguistic study.

Firstly, let us study the open class words in the poem. Open class words can be defined as words which carry the majority of meaning in a language, as against grammatical words or closed class words such as prepositions and determiners. Closed class words act like sentence ‘glue’. They connect open class words in meaningful arrangements or sentences. (Ling131: Language and Style, 2009: 4)

Let us take specific instances from the poem. The speaker is travelling in a “yellow” wood. Yellow, in this context signifies perseverance, hope, happiness, etc. This high spirited tone is constant all through the poem. Considering that, it is right for the reader to think of the sigh as a satisfied sigh.

Moreover, the lexical features indicate that the poem has two known explanations; one is a literal interpretation, while the other is more ironic in nature. Readers usually understand the poem literally, as an expression of individualism. Critics consider the poem ironic – “The Road Not Taken,” is possibly a well-known example of Robert’s own claims to conscious irony. Moreover, Robert himself warned “You have to be careful of that one; it’s a tricky poem – very tricky”. Robert projected the poem as a gentle poke his good friend and fellow poet Edward Thomas, with whom he would walk several times in the woods near London. Edward always worried about what they could have possibly missed by not walking on the other road. Edward always complained at the end that they could have walked on the other road and appeared amused at this explanation of the poem as inspirational.



Task Write an essay about a time when you took a less travelled road.

Self Assessment

Choose the correct answer:

- In the poem the poet is standing:
 - at a crossing
 - at a crossing in autumn season
 - in a forest
 - where two roads cross
- Robert Frost sees before him:
 - a yellow forest and roads
 - two roads crossing
 - a dense forest
 - two roads diverging in a forest
- The phrase ‘yellow wood’ refers to
 - a wood painted yellow
 - autumnal forest
 - trees with infected flowers
 - wood that is yellow in colour

Notes

4. The speaker of the extract *I took the one less travelled by and that has made all the difference* is:
- (a) Robert Frost (b) John Keats
(c) Stephen Leacock (d) Munshi Premchand
5. The road in the poem stands for:
- (a) a long tedious journey (b) challenges
(c) choices in life (d) forward movement

1.4 Summary

- Born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874, Robert Frost was a highly regarded American poet. He relocated to New England at a tender age of eleven. His interest in reading and writing poetry grew when he was in high school in Lawrence in Massachusetts.
- Robert sold his first poem, “My Butterfly: An Elegy” in 1894. This poem was published for fifteen dollars in the November 8, 1894 edition of the New York Independent. Proud of this achievement, he proposed Elinor Miriam White for marriage.
- “The Road Not Taken” is Robert’s poem published in 1915 in the collection Mountain Interval. Printed in italics, it is the first poem in the volume.
- Robert Frost’s poem The Road Not Taken is about a decisional crisis. The poem consists of four stanzas. In the first stanza, the speaker describes his position. After walking the woods, the speaker comes to two roads, and he stands and looks down as far as he can to see both the roads and make a decision about which one to take.
- In the second stanza, he says that he has made the decision of choosing to take the other path, because it looks like it has less traffic than the first.
- The third stanza continues with the possible differences between the two roads.
- The fourth stanza shows that there is the “oh, dear” kind of sigh and the “what a relief” sigh. The sigh is because the speaker himself cannot know how his choice will affect his future until after having lived it.
- The rhyme scheme is ABAAB; the rhymes are masculine and strict, with the prominent exception of the last line (the -ence of difference is usually not stressed upon).
- Several figures of speech have been used in this poem. Firstly, it is a metaphor. In the poem, the diverging paths are compared to the choices that the poet makes. This indicates that a traveller comes to a fork in the road and he must decide which path he wants to take to continue his journey.
- In a poem, the use of language and rhythm as one of the prosodic elements help build up and arouse the readers’ spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling and emotions (Norton, 1989: 163).
- In terms of grammatical structures or syntax, numerous grammatical devices are used in this poem to bring about the poetic effects.
- In relation to the vocabulary and diction, Leech (2001: 5) distinguishes “ordinary” language from poetic language. He has additionally specified that poetic language may violate or move away from the normally observed rules of the language in several ways.

1.5 Keywords

Notes

Ambiguity: It is referred to as the quality of being open to more than one interpretation.

Crisis: It is a time of intense difficulty or danger.

Lexical: It means something that relates to the words or vocabulary of a language.

Personification: It means the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.

Poetic: Poetic means anything relating to or used in poetry.

Relocate: It means to move to a new place and establish one's home or business there.

Sigh: Emit a long, deep, audible breath expressing sadness, relief, tiredness, or similar.

Violate: It means to break or fail to comply with a rule or formal agreement.

1.6 Review Questions

1. Why is this poem written by Robert Frost called "The Road Not Taken"?
2. Throw light on Robert Frost's major works.
3. Throw light on Robert Frost's life.
4. Robert Frost says "I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference". What is 'the difference' that the poet mentions in this poem?
5. Describe the two roads which the poet comes across in "The Road Not Taken".
6. What is the dilemma faced by the poet-traveller?
7. Do you think the road the speaker took was really the less travelled one? Why?
8. In the first two lines "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both", what is meant by diverged? What does the yellow wood indicate?
9. What is the theme of the poem The Road Not Taken?
10. What appeals to you in the poem?
11. Write an essay that interprets the last line of the poem

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (d)
2. (d)
3. (b)
4. (a)
5. (c)

1.7 Further Readings



Books

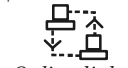
Edited by Wilcox E. J., Barron J. N., (2000) *Roads Not Taken: Rereading Robert Frost*, University of Missouri Press.

Notes

Fagan D. J. (2007) *Critical Companion to Robert Frost: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, Infobase Publishing.

Frost R. (2010) *The Road Not Taken, Birches, and Other Poems*, Coyote Canyon Press.

Frost R.(2008) *Selected Early Poems of Robert Frost*, Coyote Canyon Press.



Online links

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_Not_Taken

<http://www.essayforum.com/writing-feedback-3/interpretation-road-not-taken-robert-frost-2087/>

<http://literaturesummaries.blogspot.in/2012/11/summary-of-road-not-taken-by-robert.html>

Unit 2: The Seven Ages of Man by William Shakespeare

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

2.1 About William Shakespeare

2.1.1 Early Life

2.1.2 Married Life

2.1.3 Adult Years

2.1.4 Theatrical Beginnings

2.1.5 Writing Style

2.2 William Shakespeare's Major Works

2.2.1 Poetry

2.2.2 Tragedy Themed Plays

2.2.3 History Themed Plays

2.2.4 Comedy Themed Plays

2.3 Death

2.4 Controversy and Literary Legacy

2.5 Poem

2.5.1 Explanation

2.5.2 Analysis

2.5.3 The Structure of Poem

2.5.4 Figures of Speech

2.6 A Psychologist

2.7 A Humourist

2.8 Conclusion

2.9 Summary

2.10 Keywords

2.11 Review Questions

2.12 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about William Shakespeare
- Describe the Shakespeare's Theatrical Beginnings

Notes

- Explain the William Shakespeare’s major works
- Understand ‘The Seven Ages of Man’
- Analyse ‘The Seven Ages of Man’

Introduction

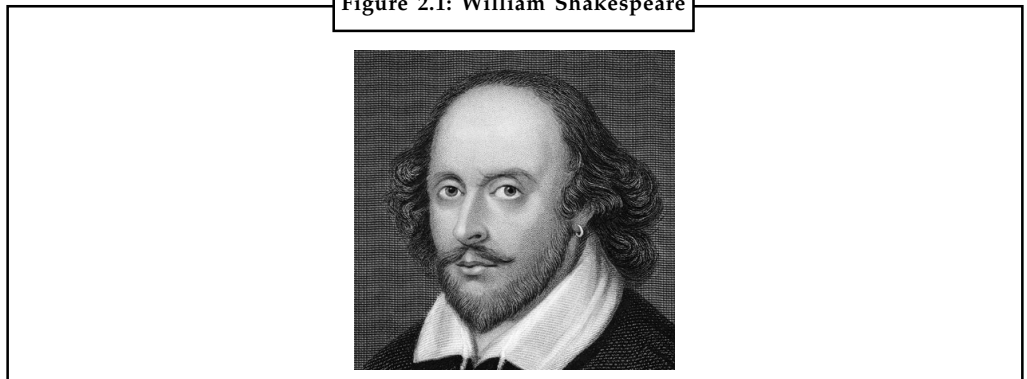
William Shakespeare’s birthday is assumed from his baptism on 23rd April, 1564. Born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, William Shakespeare is often called England’s national poet. Popularly known as the “Bard of Avon” Shakespeare was a very renowned English poet and playwright. An affair with Anne Hathaway who was eight years elder to him, led to pregnancy and a quick marriage in 1582. William’s eldest daughter, Susanna was born in May of 1583, and his twins Hamnet and Judith in January of 1585.

The Seven Ages of Man describes the seven phases in the life of a human being – from childhood to old age and finally death. In this poem, Shakespeare states that the world is nothing but a global stage and all men and women existing in this world are nothing but mere puppets in the hands of destiny.

In this unit we will study about William Shakespeare and the poem ‘*The Seven Ages of Man*’.

2.1 About William Shakespeare

Figure 2.1: William Shakespeare



Source: <http://www.hdwallpapers3d.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/William-Shakespeare-194895-1-402.jpg>

Born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon in England to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, William Shakespeare was a very renowned English poet and playwright. Often called England’s national poet and the “Bard of Avon”, Shakespeare was considered to be the greatest writer in the English language and the world’s most distinguished dramatist. His extant masterworks including several collaborations, include around 154 sonnets, 38 plays, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses. Shakespeare’s plays have been translated into several major living languages. His plays are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

2.1.1 Early Life

William Shakespeare’s birth records don’t exist but church records show that he was baptised at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. It is thus believed William was born on or near April 23, 1564. Scholars from across the world acknowledge this date as William Shakespeare’s birthdate.

During Shakespeare's time Stratford-upon-Avon was a market town located 103 miles west of London, divided by the River Avon and the country road. With two older sisters Joan and Judith, William was the third child of Mary Arden who was a local landed heiress and John Shakespeare who was leather merchant, William also had three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard and Edmund. William's father climbed the ladder of success before his birth and became a successful merchant. He also held official positions as bailiff and alderman. Records show that John's fortunes took a steep fall sometime in the late 1570s.

Limited records exist of William's childhood, and practically none about his education. Scholars believe that William Shakespeare completed his schooling from King's New School in Stratford. In this school he studied Greek and Latin and read about Roman dramatists. Scholars are also of the opinion that this school taught William reading, writing and the classics. Being a public official's child, William Shakespeare may be getting free tuitions. This lack of sufficient information about his education has led some people to doubt about the authorship of Shakespeare's works and also about whether William Shakespeare ever existed.

2.1.2 Married Life

At the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman about seven to eight years senior to him. They got married on November 28, 1582, in Worcester, in Canterbury Province. Shakespeare's wife Anne was from Shottery, a small village a mile west of Stratford. It is believed that while William was 18, Anne was 26 years of age when the two got married. Together they raised three children: Susanna, who was born in 1583, and twins Hamnet and Judith who were born in 1585, two years after the birth of their first child. Hamnet later died of unknown causes at age 11.

2.1.3 Adult Years

Not much is known about William's activities between 1585 and 1592. This is termed by scholars as the period of "Lost Years" which came after his twins were born. Nobody had any news of William and his works for seven long years. It is believed by scholars that William during this period may have gone into hiding for stealing from the local landlord, Sir Thomas Lucy. Another possibility could be that William may have taught at school during this period, but it seems more probable that shortly after 1585 he went to London to begin his apprenticeship as an actor. Due to the plague, the London theatres were usually shut between June 1592 and April 1594. Throughout this period, Shakespeare possibly got income from his patron, Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton. William dedicated his first two poems, Venus and Adonis (1593) and The Rape of Lucrece (1594) to Henry. The former was a long narrative poem which showed the rejection of Venus by Adonis, his death, resulting in the disappearance of beauty from the world. In spite of conservative objections to this poem's praise of sensuality, it became very popular. It was later printed six times for nine years after its publication.

2.1.4 Theatrical Beginnings

There is evidence that by 1592 William Shakespeare worked as an actor and a playwright in London to earn and had many of his plays produced. There is an article in the September 20, 1592 edition of a guide publication called the Stationers' Register written by London playwright Robert Greene that takes several jabs at William Shakespeare: "...There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country," Greene wrote about William Shakespeare.

Notes

A few scholars do not agree with the interpretation of this criticism. However, a majority of them believe that it was Greene's way of saying that William Shakespeare was becoming successful and was reaching above his rank, in order to match educated and well-known playwrights such as Thomas Nashe, Christopher Marlowe or Greene himself.

Documents show that by the early 1590s, William Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors which was a popular acting company in London. He then joined a group of Chamberlain's Men in 1599 as a managing partner. This group formed an organisation to build and operate a new playhouse: the Globe. The Globe became the most famous theatre of its time. William Shakespeare was finally able to buy house in Stratford called New House for his family from what he earned from the Globe. It was a long four-day ride by horse from Stratford to London, so it is believed that William Shakespeare spent a majority of his time in the city acting and writing visited home only once in a year during the 40-day Lenten period, when the theatres in London were closed. After the crowning of King James I, in 1603, the company's name got changed to the King's Men. This company became extremely popular. Records indicate that William Shakespeare had his works published and sold as famous literature. In 16th century, theatre culture was not appreciated much in England. Still a majority of aristocrats were good patrons of the performing arts and were friends with actors. In the beginning of his career, Shakespeare was able to befriend Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. William dedicated his first two published poems: "Venus and Adonis" (1593) and "The Rape of Lucrece" (1594) to Henry. In 1605, William Shakespeare bought leases of real estate near Stratford for 440 pounds. This doubled in value and earned him 60 pounds a year. Besides being a renowned artist, Shakespeare also became an entrepreneur. These investments allowed him to write his masterpieces without being interrupted. Fifteen of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare were published by 1597.

2.1.5 Writing Style

Popularly known as 'The Bard of Avon', English poet and playwright William Shakespeare wrote the famous 154 *Sonnets* and several highly successful often quoted dramatic works. William Shakespeare's early plays were written in the conventional style of the day. The complicated metaphors and rhetorical phrases did not always go well with the story's characters or its plot. Still, Shakespeare was very innovative and created a free flow of words. With very small degrees of difference, Shakespeare mainly used a metrical pattern that included lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, to write his plays. At the same time, several passages in all the plays deviate from pattern and use various forms of poetry or simple prose.

In all his plays and poems, William Shakespeare invented several words, usually by combining or twisting French, Latin and native roots. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Shakespeare's remarkable expansion of English language, comprises of words like birthplace, arch-villain, bloodsucking, stillborn, dewdrop, fanged, heart sore, courtship, hunchbacked, misquote, leapfrog, zany, pageantry, downstairs, radiance, schoolboy and watchdog.

2.2 William Shakespeare's Major Works

2.2.1 Poetry

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was considered to be a notable dramatist of his time. Evidence shows that both he and his contemporaries wanted to attain fame by writing poetry, not playwriting. It is believed that a majority of the Shakespearean Sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, but weren't published till 1609. That edition, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, includes 154 sonnets. All these sonnets were written in the form of three quatrains and a couplet that is now accepted as Shakespearean. These sonnets can be categorised into two groups: sonnets

1-126, which were addressed to a beloved friend, a handsome and noble young man, and sonnets 127-152, which were addressed to a malignant but fascinating “Dark Lady,” whom the poet loves. Dramatist Shakespeare made a profound intrigue to novices and scholars alike as to the identities of these people. Almost all of William Shakespeare’s sonnets study the inevitable decay of time, and the immortalisation of love and beauty in poetry. The dates, order, and authorship of the Sonnets have been a controversial topic of discussion.

2.2.2 Tragedy Themed Plays

After 1600, William Shakespeare wrote several tragedies like King Lear, Hamlet, Othello and Macbeth. In these tragedies, Shakespeare’s characters give strong impressions of human temperament that are universal and timeless. Probably the most famous of all these plays is Hamlet, which shows retribution, incest, moral failure and betrayal. These moral failures usually give twists and turns to Shakespeare’s plots, destroying the hero and his loved ones. A few of the tragedies written by Shakespeare are possibly inspired by his study of *Lives* by Greek historian and essay writer Plutarch and Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587). Some of these tragedies are also rewordings of earlier stories, and quite a few of these are based on Roman or English history. The dates mentioned below are when these tragedies were said to have been first performed, followed by estimated printing dates in brackets, listed in chronological order of performance. The tragedies written by him are mentioned below.

Titus Andronicus first performed in 1594 (printed in 1594),

Romeo and Juliet 1594-95 (1597),

Hamlet 1600-01 (1603),

Julius Caesar 1600-01 (1623),

Othello 1604-05 (1622),

Antony and Cleopatra 1606-07 (1623),

King Lear 1606 (1608),

Coriolanus 1607-08 (1623), derived from Plutarch

Timon of Athens 1607-08 (1623), and

Macbeth 1611-1612 (1623).

2.2.3 History Themed Plays

With the exception of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare’s first plays were mostly histories written in the early 1590s. William’s series of historical dramas which were based on the English Kings from John to Henry VIII were a remarkable as they dramatised the lives of kings and the changing political events of their times. Richard II, Henry VI (parts 1, 2 and 3) and Henry V dramatised the destructive results of corrupt and weak rulers. These have been interpreted by drama historians as Shakespeare’s way of justifying the origins of the Tudor Dynasty. No other playwright had ever attempted to create such challenging ambitious works. Some of these plays got printed on their own or in the *First Folio* (1623). These plays include:

King Henry VI Part 1 1592 (printed in 1594);

King Henry VI Part 2 1592-93 (1594);

King Henry VI Part 3 1592-93 (1623);

King John 1596-97 (1623);

Notes

King Henry IV Part 1 1597-98 (1598);

King Henry IV Part 2 1597-98 (1600);

King Henry V 1598-99 (1600);

Richard II 1600-01 (1597);

Richard III 1601 (1597); and

King Henry VIII 1612-13 (1623)

2.2.4 Comedy Themed Plays

Being the great writer that he was William Shakespeare also wrote several comedies during his early period. The several masterpieces written by him include:

Taming of the Shrew first performed 1593-94 (1623),

Comedy of Errors 1594 (1623),

Two Gentlemen of Verona 1594-95 (1623),

Love's Labour's Lost 1594-95 (1598),

Midsummer Night's Dream 1595-96 (1600),

Merchant of Venice 1596-1597 (1600),

Much Ado About Nothing 1598-1599 (1600),

As You Like It 1599-00 (1623),

Merry Wives of Windsor 1600-01 (1602),

Troilus and Cressida 1602 (1609),

Twelfth Night 1602 (1623),

All's Well That Ends Well 1602-03 (1623),

Measure for Measure 1604 (1623),

Pericles, Prince of Tyre 1608-09 (1609),

William Shakespeare in his final period also wrote numerous tragicomedies. These were graver in tone than the comedies but they weren't dark tragedies of Macbeth or King Lear because they end with forgiveness and reconciliation.

Tempest (1611),

Cymbeline 1611-12 (1623),

Winter's Tale 1611-12 (1623).

2.3 Death

Tradition says that William Shakespeare died on his birthday on 23rd April, 1616, though several scholars feel that this is a myth. Church records indicate that Shakespeare was interred at Trinity Church on April 5, 1616.

William Shakespeare in his will left a major part of his possessions to Susanna, his eldest daughter. Although eligible to get one third of his estate, not much seems to have gone to Shakespeare's wife, Anne, whom he gave his "second-best bed." This has spread rumour that maybe the couple was not close. Though, there isn't much evidence that the couple had a difficult marriage.

A few other scholars were of the opinion that the term “second-best bed” usually refers to the bed belonging to the household’s mistress and master —the marital bed—and the “first-best bed” was reserved for guests.

2.4 Controversy and Literary Legacy

Around 150 years after William Shakespeare’s death, questions arose about the authorship of his plays. Literary critics and scholars began floating names such as Edward de Vere, Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon as these were men with literary accreditation, better known backgrounds and inspiration. Much of this confusion reduced from the sketchy details of William Shakespeare’s life and the lack of contemporary primary sources. Official records from the Stratford government and the Holy Trinity Church record the birth and existence of a William Shakespeare, but none of these records prove that he was a playwright or an actor.

Sceptics also doubted as to how could somebody with such modest education write with the poetic power and intellectual perceptiveness which is displayed in William’s works. Numerous groups have emerged over centuries that have questioned the authorship of William Shakespeare’s works.

The most serious scepticism began in the 19th century as it was during this period that Shakespeare became very famous and admiration for him was at its highest. Critics were of the opinion that the only solid evidence surrounding Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon showed that he was a man who married at a young age and became successful in real estate. Members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society which was founded in 1957 argue that English aristocrat Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, was the actual author of the plays and poems of “William Shakespeare.” The Oxfordians mention de Vere’s wide-ranging knowledge of aristocratic society, his education, and the structural similarities between his poetry and that seen in the works credited to Shakespeare. They challenge and believe that William had neither the literary training nor the education to write such powerful prose and come up with such rich characters.

On the other hand, several Shakespearean scholars challenge that William wrote all his own plays. They said that other playwrights of the time came from modest backgrounds and had sketchy histories. Shakespearean scholars contend that Stratford’s New Grammar School curriculum of Latin and the classics was such that it could provide a good foundation for literary writers. Those supporting Shakespeare’s authorship also say that the lack of evidence about William Shakespeare’s life doesn’t mean that he didn’t exist. They point at evidence that shows his name on the title pages of published plays and poems. Instances exist of critics and authors of the time recognising William Shakespeare as author of plays like *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *King John*. Royal records from 1601 indicate that William was recognised as a member of the King’s Men theatre company which was formally called the Chamberlain’s Men and a Groom of the Chamber by the court of King James I, where the company performed seven of William’s plays. There is also strong incidental proof of personal relationships by contemporaries who interacted with Shakespeare as a playwright and an actor.



Notes Only eighteen of William Shakespeare’s plays were published separately in quarto editions during his time. A complete collection of Shakespeare’s works did not appear till the First Folio was published in 1623, many years after Shakespeare’s death. Nonetheless, William’s colleagues’ recognised Shakespeare’s achievements. In 1598, Francis Meres cited “honey-tongued” Shakespeare for his plays and poems, and the Chamberlain’s Men became the foremost dramatic company in London, installed as members of the royal household in 1603.

2.5 Poem

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

2.5.1 Explanation

The classical poem *The Seven Ages of Man*, is actually an extract from Shakespeare's delightful comedy "As You Like It". This masterwork of Shakespeare is a moral commentary on life written in a very exclusive manner. The poem *The Seven Ages of Man* covers a classical description on human behaviour and nature. This in turn reflects Shakespeare's profound knowledge of human psychology. In this poem, William Shakespeare makes a comparison between the world and a stage. According to him the world is similar to a stage or theatre, life is like acting and both men and women are similar to actors. According to him a man's life is divided into seven different phases.

The Seven Ages of Man describes the seven phases in the life of a human being – from childhood to old age and finally death. In this poem, Shakespeare states that the world is nothing but a global stage and all men and women existing in this world are nothing but mere puppets in the

hands of destiny. Similar to a stage's infrastructures, the world also has its own entrances and exits. According to the poet a man's life on earth is a big drama in which men and women play their respective parts before their death. Thus every individual plays several roles in his entire lifetime. The total number of acts performed or roles played by him in his entire lifetime constitute the seven ages or acts.

The first and the main act or stage of a man is the stage of infancy. It is in this stage that the man enters in this world as a baby who is entirely dependent on others. He makes his presence felt by crying loudly and vomiting any food or drink he does not like, at the nursing arms of his mother. This stage usually lasts till four years of age. This stage ends when the infant grows into a school child and starts going to school.

The second stage of a human life is the 'whining' schoolboy. It is in this stage that the boy learns to utter a sad, high-pitched, prolonged sound, as if in pain, supplication, fear or complaint. Shakespeare describes this boy as a boy having a face fresh and shiny like morning and his satchel; a small bag, sometimes with a shoulder strap hanging on his side while he walks to school. He moves slowly and stealthily like a snail as he doesn't want to go to school. In the beginning he refuses to go to school but gradually his thinking changes.

As time passes the schoolboy gets transformed into a youngster and enters in his third phase. The third stage is his early youth, when romance and love are in the air. This young individual sighs like a burning furnace and sings the unhappy songs of romance which are full of sadness and despair. He sings these woeful melodies to impress his lover. The impression of the lover's reply is seen in her eyebrows. This youngster then enters the fourth stage. This stage is that of a soldier and his life becomes full of compliances, commitments, obligations, oaths and vows. At this stage of his life, a man's courage and strength is at zenith. His beard is like a panther or leopard. He endlessly fights for his honour, a full presence of mind which is sharp and quick in quarrel and a heart to keep a dignified reputation. This individual seeks worldly name and fame, which is short lived. Temporary like a bubble, this fame disappears within no time. In this stage a man's thrust for getting honour never quenches.

The fifth stage is the adult-hood where a man tries to live a reasonable and justified life. With a fair round belly, with eyes penetrating and beard levelled to a formal cut, full of modern instances and intelligent sayings, the man acts his fifth part as a judge. He is conscious about his eating habits. He also shoulders the responsibility of taking right decisions to keep up with the ever changing times. In this stage the man becomes a perfect blend of morality, custom, education and religion. So this is the most powerful stage in a man's life.

The sixth stage is the middle-age. In this stage the man prepares himself for the next level in life that is old age. William Shakespeare narrates the exact events that take place in this stage of human life. In this stage, the man learns to relax from the hustles of life. He becomes weaker and begins spending more time in his house. He starts resembling a buffoon and an old person in his rugged old slippers. He gains extra skin. This is the 'pouch' the poet is talking about. In this stage the man loses many of the traits he used to possess once and witnesses many of his childish traits re-appear. He slowly loses his legs, vision and voice. He is gradually becoming weak and thin in his stature and can no longer fit into his clothes. As man grows old, his legs shrink and they become more immobile. He is unable to explore the world and that's why the world appears too big for the man. His voice changes from the high pitched voice of a child to a strong adult voice and returns back to higher tones during this stage. Like a child this man becomes naive and carefree, losing all his self-consciousness. He hangs his spectacles on his nose for reading. In his free time, he smokes his pipe and whistles his melodies.

The seventh and the most tragic stage in a man's life is old-age followed by death. In this stage the man enters the last act where he experiences his second childhood as he becomes dependent on people once again. This is also the stage of oblivion; the state where the man is completely

Notes

forgotten or unknown. He starts losing his ego and self-importance and returns to a childlike innocence. In this stage a man loses all of his strength and senses. His memory weakens and five senses start malfunctioning. He is overcome by senility and forgetfulness and loses his faculties of sight, hearing, smell and taste, slowly but surely. Then he finally departs from the world leaving behind a story rich in events.



Did u know? **All the world’s a stage**” is the phrase that starts a monologue from *As You Like It* written by William Shakespeare, spoken by the melancholy Jaques in Act II Scene VII. This speech compares the world to a stage and life to a play. It sets the seven stages of a man’s life, sometimes referred to as *The Seven Ages of Man*.

2.5.2 Analysis

Poet

Besides being the greatest dramatist of English literature, William Shakespeare is also a great poet. William’s supremacy as a poet lies in this speech which is taken from his very popular comedy “As you like it”.

Theme

In this poem William Shakespeare compares the world with the stage of drama. All human beings are like actors who come in this world to play their respective roles. They enter the stage of the world when they are born and exit from this stage when they die. During his life every man plays seven parts and goes through seven stages. At the first stage he is an infant. He cries loudly and vomits in his mother’s arms. In the second stage this individual is seen as a school boy walking slowly to school. In the third stage, the school going child grows to become a young lover. In the next stage this man becomes a soldier. At the fifth stage the man plays the role of a judge. At the sixth stage this man becomes a silly old man and this stage of a man’s life is marked with forgetfulness. At the seventh stage the man enters his second childhood which is followed by death.

Language

The simple and beautiful language of the poem enables even an ordinary reader to read and understand this poem well. His selection of words is really such that despite being in blank verse this poem is full of music and melody.

Style

This entire speech is in blank verse. The regularity in the pattern of lines and their rhythm gives a feeling that we are listening to poetry.



Task Write an essay about *The Seven Ages of Man* as described by William Shakespeare

2.5.3 The Structure of Poem

The Seven Ages of Man is a poem written by William Shakespeare in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter. It includes five meters or ten syllables. It is elaborately used by Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe in their masterworks. In this poem, the poet gives rhyme to a few lines. In last line of the poem, a regular rhythm of the verse can be seen. Five syllables are

heavily stressed upon – eyes, teeth, taste and the first and last syllables of everything. The five unstressed syllables are placed in front of stressed syllables. At the same time, one can also find the pause in the middle of the lines as well as at the end of lines. In several lines of the passage, a sentence ends in the middle of line and has a pause, before a new sentence begins. Several lines run on to the next with no pause. We find adequate regularity in the patterns of lines and their meters. Such regularity makes the readers believe that it is poetry with freedom. Moreover, to understand this dramatic masterpiece, one must read it out loudly. Undeniably, William Shakespeare was an immensely talented poetic craftsman. If his words are spoken in the right spirit, everything else appears right.

2.5.4 Figures of Speech

William Shakespeare makes use of several figures of speech with an immense beauty and charm. Figures of speech help to make beautify the language and make it decorative and figurative. Besides these functions, figures of speech also convey the poet's basic theme easily and clearly. Thus Shakespeare has made generous use of metaphor, simile, alliteration, symbols and rhythm:

- (i) **Simile:** The word simile comes from a Latin word 'similis' which means something similar. A Simile can thus be defined as a figure of speech in which two fundamentally unlike objects are openly compared, usually in a phrase introduced by like or as. In this poem, Shakespeare has used simile in three different places. In the second stage of his poem, Shakespeare compares a school boy not willing to go to school with a snail as it is the slowest creature. So the school boy moves slowly like the snail because he enjoys playing and doesn't want to attend school. In the third stage, Shakespeare compares the sound of furnace to the sighs taken in pain and grief of the lover. Another simile is used in the fourth stage, where according to the poet; the man becomes a soldier because he holds responsibility of taking correct decisions and takes oaths which he fulfils. This man's beard is compared with the stains of leopard. His beard is his honour and it seems dearer to him than even his life.
- (ii) **Metaphor:** It is an implied simile. It can be defined as a figure of speech in which a phrase or word that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison. A metaphor shows direct comparison of two things. In this poem, the poet directly compares the world with a stage, where all human beings come and play their respective roles. The poet also compares all men and women with actors who play their roles.
- (iii) **Alliteration:** It is the repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of each or most of the words in a sentence. The simplest way to use alliteration is to repeat the starting letter of the words. In *The Seven Ages of Man*, there is a good example of alliteration in the old age where the poet emphasises on shuddering of his legs. Despite his weak legs he doesn't refrain from fulfilling his duty or going his hobby.
- (iv) **Rhythm and Symbols:** Rhythm is opposite to alliteration. In Rhythm, the same word is repeated in a line. For instance: sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste and sans everything. In this instance the repetition of the word 'sans' displays rhythm. Symbol is yet another very interesting figure of speech. The poet uses a symbol to explain some specific thing more and more, so that the readers do not face any difficulty. William Shakespeare uses word exits which symbolises death. Entrances on the other hand symbolise birth, when an individual comes in this world to play his role. A soldier's beard is a symbol of bravery.



Example: "Even in the cannon's mouth" is a personification

Notes

2.6 A Psychologist

Shakespeare was a great psychologist. The job of a psychologist is to read the mind of human beings. This poem is loaded with such interpretations. The poet studies the psyche of mankind and accordingly divides a man's life into seven ages. In *The Seven Ages of Man*, Shakespeare describes the actual activities of an infant, unwilling school boy, a lover, soldier, and justice, old and childish man. He studies and opens their psyche of a human being at each stage. It appears that the poet himself entered all ages and examined each age thoroughly. He then describes each age very skilfully without any exaggerations.



Caution William Shakespeare wrote *The Seven Ages of Man* in the 16th century, when the social structure was unbalanced and crude. So don't be alarmed by the obvious sexism in the poem as not a single example is given from the female perspective.

2.7 A Humourist

Shakespeare is mild in humour. His way of describing the first five ages is very hilarious. However, in the last two ages, the poet's tone becomes sad as he describes the last days of man. The poet politely describes the stage of old age. While describing the age of a soldier, Shakespeare displays humour that is harsh to a certain extent. Then again, overall, his humour is appreciable and polite. Such disposition makes Shakespeare a great humourist and humanist. Indeed, he focuses on man and his problems. He additionally engages himself in finding various methods to solve these problems. One can see the poetic skills of the writer. Whenever the duke is plunged into a problem, the poet gives attention to him and comes up with a poem.

The Seven Ages of Man is taken from William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy 'As you like it'. In 'As you like it', Shakespeare has used polite and simple expression and language. His usage of phrases, blank verse, figures of speech and simple language make his style of writing stand out.

2.8 Conclusion

William Shakespeare was not just an immensely talented poet but also an extraordinary actor. The view of world being a stage and human beings being actors comes from a man who dedicated his entire life to theatre. This notion has a universal charm. *The Seven Ages of Man* is undoubtedly a beautiful and unique master piece created by William Shakespeare.

Self Assessment

State true or false:

1. Shakespeare says that every man goes through seven acts in his life time from birth to death.
2. Shakespeare considers the world as one huge stage.
3. William Shakespeare was not an actor.
4. *The Seven Ages of Man* is not taken from William Shakespeare's pastoral comedy 'As you like it'.
5. *The Seven Ages of Man* is a poem written by William Shakespeare in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter.

2.9 Summary

Notes

- Born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon in England to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, William Shakespeare was a very renowned English poet and playwright.
- William Shakespeare's birth records don't exist but church records show that he was baptised at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. It is thus believed William was born on or near April 23, 1564. Scholars from across the world acknowledge this date as William Shakespeare's birthdate.
- At the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman about seven to eight years senior to him. They got married on November 28, 1582, in Worcester, in Canterbury Province.
- The period between 1585 and 1592 is termed by scholars as the period of "Lost Years" which came after William Shakespeare's twins were born.
- Documents show that by the early 1590s, William Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors which was a popular acting company in London. He then joined a group of Chamberlain's Men in 1599 as a managing partner.
- In 1605, William Shakespeare bought leases of real estate near Stratford for 440 pounds. This doubled in value and earned him 60 pounds a year. Besides being a renowned artist, Shakespeare also became an entrepreneur. These investments allowed him to write his masterpieces without being interrupted.
- Fifteen of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare were published by 1597.
- The classical poem *The Seven Ages of Man*, is actually an extract from Shakespeare's delightful comedy "As You Like It". In this poem, William Shakespeare makes a comparison between the world and a stage. According to him the world is similar to a stage or theatre, life is like acting and both men and women are similar to actors.
- *The Seven Ages of Man* is a poem written by William Shakespeare in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter. It includes five meters or ten syllables.
- William Shakespeare makes use of several figures of speech with an immense beauty and charm. Figures of speech help to make beautify the language and make it decorative and figurative.
- Shakespeare was a great psychologist. In *The Seven Ages of Man*, Shakespeare describes the actual activities of an infant, unwilling school boy, and a lover, soldier, and justice, old and childish man.
- Shakespeare was a humourist. His way of describing the first five ages is very hilarious. However, in the last two ages, the poet's tone becomes sad as he describes the last days of man.

2.10 Keywords

Alliteration: It is the repetition of the same sounds or same kinds of sounds in stressed syllables or at the beginning of words.

Childish: It means of, like, or appropriate to a child. An individual who is silly and immature is often considered childish.

Delightful: Something or somebody who is charming is called delightful.

Notes

Hilarious: Something or somebody who is extremely amusing is called hilarious.

Humourist: A humourist is a person who speaks acts or writes in an amusing manner.

Infant: A very young child or baby is called an infant.

Metaphor: It is a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a phrase or word ordinarily used of one thing is applied to another.

Psychologist: A psychologist is a person who studies the mind and behaviour of other individuals.

Simile: It is a figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by 'as' or 'like'. Similes can be found anywhere from printed materials to oral conversations; in literature, language and music.

2.11 Review Questions

1. What is the theme of the poem 'Seven Ages of Man'?
2. What are the seven ages that William Shakespeare has mentioned in his poem?
3. How does the infant act in *The Seven Ages of Man*?
4. Talk about Shakespeare's childhood days.
5. What are the controversies attached to William Shakespeare and his works?
6. Explain the figures of speech used by Shakespeare in *The Seven Ages of Man*.
7. How was William Shakespeare a Psychologist?
8. How was William Shakespeare a Humourist?
9. Explain about the structure of the poem *The Seven Ages of Man*.
10. What is Shakespeare's concept of life?
11. How is a man's last stage of life described?
12. "Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth."
 - (a) Who is referred to here?
 - (b) What are the distinguishing features of the soldier?

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. True | 2. True |
| 3. False | 4. False |
| 5. True | |

2.12 Further Readings



Bohn H.G. (1863) *The Biography and Bibliography of Shakespeare*, London: Philobiblon Society.

Phillipps J.O.H. (1848) *The Life of William Shakespeare: Including Many Particulars Respecting the Poet and His Family Never Before Published*, J. R. Smith.

Notes

Shakespeare W. (1848) *Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man*, Van Voorst.

Shakespeare W. (2010) *The Seven Ages of Man: From Shakespeare's As You Like It*. The Artist's Ed, BiblioBazaar.



Online links

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_the_world's_a_stage

<http://www.meritnation.com/ask-answer/question/the-summary-of-the-seven-ages-by-william-shakespeare/the-seven-ages/2628986>

<http://intergiscs.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/the-seven-ages-of-man-reference-to-the-context-and-explanation/>

Unit 3: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Coleridge

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

3.1 About Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his Major Works

3.2 His Later Years and Death

3.3 Poem

3.3.1 Explanation

3.3.2 Critical Analysis

3.4 Summary

3.5 Keywords

3.6 Review Questions

3.7 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his major works
- Know How Samuel Taylor Coleridge died
- Describe ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’
- Analyse ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’

Introduction

Leader of the British Romantic movement, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772, in Devonshire, England. His father, a master of a grammar school and a vicar of a parish, married twice and had fourteen children. The youngest in the family, Samuel was a student at his father’s school. He was very passionate about reading. After his father’s death in 1781, Samuel went to Christ’s Hospital School in London, where he met his friend Charles Lamb. Coleridge died in London in 1834 after years of disappointment and discomfort.

Written by renowned English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is the longest major poem written in 1797–98. It was published in 1798 in the first edition of Lyrical Ballads. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a poem that brings into light the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage. This Mariner commits a heinous act that entirely changes his life. The Mariner should also understand his actions and perform his penance. The Mariner should also accept all of Gods’ creatures with arms wide open.

In this unit we will study more about Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’.

3.1 About Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his Major Works

Notes

Figure 3.1: Samuel Taylor



Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/91/SamuelTaylorColeridge.jpg>

Born in Devonshire in England in 1772, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a renowned English lyrical poet, philosopher and critic. His *Lyrical Ballads*, written with William Wordsworth, signalled the English Romantic movement. His *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is the most significant work of general literary criticism produced in the English Romantic period.

Samuel's father who was a clergyman, shifted with his family to London when Samuel was young. As a child Coleridge was already an extraordinary reader, and he engrossed himself to the point of gloomy fascination in romances and Eastern tales such as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. In 1781 Samuel's father died suddenly, and in the following year he entered Christ's Hospital in London, where he completed his secondary education. Samuel later remembered his school days in poems like "Frost at Midnight". Samuel later went to Cambridge but left from there without completing his studies. At school and university Samuel continued to read hungrily, mainly the works of visionary philosophy and imagination, and he was remembered by his schoolmates for his articulate and prodigious memory.

The French Revolution shook entire Europe during the politically charged atmosphere of the late eighteenth century, and France and England were at war. It was during this time that Samuel made a distinct mark for himself both as a significant young poet and as a political radical. His friends William Wordsworth and Robert Southey also became important figures during the time. Samuel became one of the most significant writers in England. Working together with Wordsworth on the innovative *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, Samuel helped in inaugurating the Romantic era in England; as Wordsworth described it in the 1802 preface to the third edition of the work, the idea of poetry underlying *Lyrical Ballads* twisted the recognised conventions of poetry upside down: Privileging plainly stated themes over elaborate symbolism, natural speech over poetic ornament, the experience of natural beauty over urban sophistication, and emotion over abstract thought, the book made way for two generations of poets, and it stands as one of the highlights of European literature.

While Samuel made significant contributions to *Lyrical Ballads*, it was much more Wordsworth's project than Samuel's. Therefore, while Wordsworth's poetic output can be understood in light of his preface to the 1802 edition of the volume, the preface's ideas must not be used to study and examine Samuel's work. While Wordsworth was considered to be the poet of nature, the purity of babyhood, and memory, Samuel came to be known as the poet of imagination, exploring the

Notes

relationships between the mind and nature as it exists as a distinct unit. Poems such as “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Kubla Khan” exhibit Samuel’s talent for creating strange, disturbing tales filled with magic and fantastic imagery; in poems such as “Dejection: An Ode,” and “Frost at Midnight” he thinks openly on the nature of the mind during its interaction with the creative source of nature.

Samuel got married in 1795 and spent most of the next decade residing near and travelling with William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. In 1799, Samuel met Sara Hutchinson and fell in love with her. Samuel became an opium addict and it is believed that “Kubla Khan” came from an opium dream. In 1816, Samuel moved in with the surgeon James Gillman in order to protect his health. During his stay with Gillman, Samuel penned many of his significant non-fiction works, which included the highly considered *Biographia Literaria*. Though he continuously wrote till he took his last breath in 1834, Romanticism was primarily a movement about youth, and today Samuel is remembered mainly for the poems he penned down in his twenties.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England. He was also a member of the Lake Poets. Samuel penned down poems like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as the major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. His critical work, including the one on Shakespeare, was very influential. Samuel also helped to introduce German idealist philosophy to an English-speaking culture. He invented several familiar words and phrases, including the celebrated suspension of disbelief. He was the main influence on Emerson, and American transcendentalism.

In the canon of English poetry, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s place rests on a reasonably small body of achievement: his contribution to the revolutionary publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1797 and a few poems he wrote in the late 1790s and early 1800s. In contrast to Wordsworth, Samuel’s work cannot be understood through the lens of the 1802 preface to the second edition of that book; although it looks like William Wordsworth’s in its romanticism of nature and its stress on human joy. Samuel’s poems frequently favour sound effects over the simplicity of common speech. The hypnotic drone of “Kubla Khan” and the intentional archaisms of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” do not imitate common speech, producing instead a more strikingly stylised effect.

Additionally, Samuel’s poems make the phenomena Wordsworth takes for granted, complicated: the simple unity between nature and the child and the adult’s recombination with nature through memories of childhood; in poems like “Frost at Midnight,” Samuel specifies the delicateness of the child’s innocence by linking to his own urban childhood. In poems like “Nightingale,” and “Dejection: An Ode” Samuel lays emphasis on the beauty of the natural world and the division between his own mind. Finally, Samuel frequently honours strange stories and unusual imagery over the ordinary, rustic simplicities. If William denotes the central pillar of early Romanticism, Samuel is still a significant structural support. Samuel’s stress on imagination, its creation of fantastic pictures and its independence from the outside world similar to those found in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* applied a deep influence on later writers such as Shelley; his representation of feelings of numbness and alienation helped to clearly define the Romantics’ idealised contrast between the joys of nature and the emptiness of the city where such feelings are felt. The sharp and sensitive understanding of these feelings also helped to form the stereotype of the suffering Romantic genius, a lot of times characterised by drug addiction: this figure of the bright yet sadly unable to attain his own ideals, the idealist, is the main pose for Samuel in his poetry.

Samuel’s depiction of the mind as it moves, whether in frenzy (“Kubla Khan”) or in silence (“Frost at Midnight”) also helped to describe the intimate emotionalism of Romanticism; while most of the poetry is made up of emotion remembered in tranquillity, the origin of Samuel’s poems frequently looks like emotion recollected in emotion. It is believed that Samuel not only retains a legitimate intellectual presence throughout his work but also maintains emotional

intensity and continuously applies philosophical pressure to his thoughts and ideas. Samuel, in his later years, worked a lot on politics and metaphysics, and a philosophical consciousness fills most of his verse—mainly poems such as “Dejection: An Ode,” and “The Nightingale” in which the relationship between nature and mind is well-defined via the specific rejection of misleading versions of it. According to Samuel, the mind cannot take its feeling from nature and cannot falsely instil nature with its own feeling; rather, the mind should be so filled with its own joy that it opens up to the independent, real “immortal” joy of nature.

In all his roles, social critic, as poet, literary critic, psychologist and theologian, Samuel Taylor Coleridge voiced a profound concern with explaining a fundamental creative principle that is essential to both the universe as a whole and human beings. Samuel believes that imagination is the epitome of this uniting force as it represents the means by which the twin human capabilities for non-rational and intuitive understanding and for discriminating and organising thought relating to the material world are resolved. It was because of this kind of reconciliation of opposites that Samuel successfully attempted, to combine a sense of the ideal and the universal with an acute observation of the specific and sensory in his own poetry and in his criticism.

A Selected Bibliography

Prose

- A Moral and Political Lecture* (1795)
- Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character* (1825)
- Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (1817)
- The Plot Discovered, or an Address to the People Against Ministerial Treason* (1795)
- The Statesman’s Manual, or The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight: A Lay Sermon* (1816)
- Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1932)
- Zapolya: A Christmas Tale* (1817)
- Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1973)
- Conciones ad Populum, or Addresses to the People* (1795)
- Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (1841)
- Essays on His Own Times; forming a second series of “The Friend,”* (1850)
- Hints towards the Formation of a more Comprehensive Theory of Life* (1848)
- On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830)
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Letters* (1987)
- Seven Lectures upon Shakespeare and Milton* (1856)
- Specimens of the Table Talk of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1835)
- The Friend: A Literary, Moral, and Political Weekly Paper* (1810)
- The Friend; A Series of Essays* (1812)
- The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1895)
- The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1957)
- The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1949)

Notes

Poetry

Arch (1798)

Arch (1800)

Biographia Literaria (1907)

Christabel: Kubla Khan, a Vision; The Pains of Sleep (1816)

Fears in Solitude (1798)

Lyrical Ballads, with a few Other Poems (1798)

Poems (1803)

Poems on Various Subjects (1796)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Oxford Authors (1985)

Selections from the Sybilline Leaves of S. T. Coleridge (1827)

Sibylline Leaves: A Collection of Poems (1817)

Sonnets from various authors (1796)

The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1969)

The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1912)

The Devil's Walk: A Poem (1830)

The Literary Remains in Prose and Verse of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1839)

The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge (1828)

Drama

Remorse, A Tragedy, in Five Acts (1813)

The Fall of Robespierre. An Historic Drama (1794)

Periodicals

The Watchman: A Periodical Publication (1796)

3.2 His Later Years and Death

A legend in his time, Samuel Taylor Coleridge died in 1834 after years of discomfort and disappointment. According to his friends and family, Samuel failed because of early expectations and because of hopes that got defeated by drugs and disease.

By 1811 Samuel became increasingly dependent on opium. This, along with immense pressure of work, led to arguments with Wordsworth and the irreparable breakdown of their friendship.

Samuel, in 1816 got treated for his opium addiction with Highgate surgeon James Gillman. Samuel started living with James and remained there until his death on 25 July 1834. This was a pleasant period in Samuel's life and he was called the 'sage of Highgate'.

An autopsy, conducted on Samuel's body at his own request, showed that he was suffering from an enlarged heart. In the last year of his life Samuel wrote his own epitaph.

Despite everything Coleridge is regarded as a powerful poet of lasting influence. As a poet, a political thinker and a Christian apologist, Samuel inspired several generations after his own.

3.3 Poem

Notes

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;

Notes

And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—

Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Notes

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;

Notes

Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!

I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her *ribs* through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, *her* looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;

Notes

With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;

I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,

Notes

And I blessèd them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,

The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

Notes

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

Notes

First Voice

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice

Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

First Voice

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Notes

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!

Notes

The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!

The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

Notes

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.



Did u know? **Imprisonment**

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is in many ways a portrait of imprisonment and its inherent loneliness and torment. The first instance of imprisonment occurs when the sailors are swept by a storm into the “rime.” The ice is “mast-high”, and the captain cannot steer the ship through it. The sailors’ confinement in the disorienting “rime” foreshadows the Ancient Mariner’s later imprisonment within a bewildered limbo-like existence. In the beginning of the poem, the ship is a vehicle of adventure, and the sailors set out in one another’s happy company. However, once the Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross, it quickly becomes a prison. Without wind to sail the ship, the sailors lose all control over their fate. They are cut off from civilization, even though they have each other’s company. They are imprisoned further by thirst, which silences them and effectively puts them in isolation; they are denied the basic human ability to communicate. When the other sailors drop dead, the ship becomes a private prison for the Ancient Mariner.

Even more dramatically, the ghost ship seems to imprison the sun: “And straight the sun was flecked with bars, / (Heaven’s Mother send us grace!) / As if through a dungeon-grate he peered / With broad and burning face.” The ghost ship has such power that it can imprison even the epitome of the natural world’s power, the sun. These lines symbolize the spiritual world’s power over the natural and physical; spirits can control not only mortals, but the very planets themselves. After he is rescued from the prison that is the ship, the Ancient Mariner is subject to the indefinite imprisonment of his soul within his physical body. His “glittering” eye represents his frenzied soul, eager to escape from his ravaged body. He is imprisoned by the addiction to his own story, as though trapped in the “rime” forever. In a sense, the Ancient Mariner imprisons others by compelling them to listen to his story; they are physically compelled to join him in his torment until he releases them.

3.3.1 Explanation

Three young men are getting dressed to go to a wedding, hoping to party and generally have a good time. They’re swaggering and laughing as they approach the door to the party. When they are about to enter the wedding, one of the three guests is suddenly detained by a grey haired old sailor. The Mariner starts narrating his story as if it was programmed in his brain, and the Wedding Guest gets impatient. The young Wedding Guest gets angry and demands that the old Mariner frees him. The Mariner obeys and lets the young guest go. However the young Wedding

Guest gets transfixed by the ancient Mariner's "glittering eye" as the magnetic glow of his eyes is even more powerful than his grip. The Wedding Guest can't do anything but quietly sit on a stone and hear the Mariner's strange story. The old sailor starts narrating his story. He says that he sailed on a ship out of his native harbour below the kirk, below the hill and below the lighthouse top into a sunlit and joyful sea. The wedding guest hears bassoon music coming from the direction of the wedding and pictures the bride entering the hall, but he feels helpless as he is unable to tear himself from the sailor's story. The ancient mariner recollects that as a massive storm rose up in the sea and chased the ship and took it southward, the voyage quickly darkened. The ship quickly came to a very cold land of surrounded by snow and mist where "ice, mast-high, came floating by"; the ship was hemmed inside this maze of ice. When the sailors left port and the ship sailed down near Antarctica to get away from a bad storm, the sailors got caught in a foggy ice field. The sailors then came across an Albatross which is a great sea bird. As the Albatross fluttered around the ship, the ice around the ship cracked and split. A wind from the south pushed the ship out of the chilly areas, into an unclear and foggy stretch of water. The Albatross followed the ship, which was a symbol of good luck for the sailors. Suddenly an upsetting and pained look comes on the Ancient Mariner's face. Seeing this troubled look on the Mariner's face, the wedding guest asks him, "Why look'st thou so?". At being asked this question the Mariner admits that he shot the Albatross with his bow and the bird died.

The Mariner continued to narrate his story and said that at first, the other Mariners got extremely angry with the ancient Mariner for killing the Albatross that made the winds blow. As soon as the Albatross died, the fog immediately lifted. The other sailors soon realised that the bird had actually brought the fog not the cool breezes. The sailors now congratulated the ancient Mariner for killing the Albatross. The wind pushed the ship in a quiet sea where the sailors were stuck; the winds died down, and the ship was "As idle as a painted ship / Upon a painted ocean." The ocean solidified, and the sailors did not have any water to drink. It looked like the sea were rotting and was filled with slimy and creepy creatures that crawled out of the sea and paced towards the surface. At night, the water burned blue, green, and white with death fire. A number of the Mariners dreamt that a spirit, nine fathoms deep, shadowed them underneath the ship from the land of snow and mist. The other sailors again blamed this Mariner for their troubles and hung the body of the Albatross around the Mariner's neck like a cross.

An exhausted time had passed; the Mariners became so thirsty and their mouths so dry, that they were barely able to speak. One day while looking westwards, the Mariner noticed a small particle on the horizon. It looked like a ship, moving their direction. Too dry-mouthed to make any utterances and tell the other sailors, the Mariner bit his own arm and sucked some blood so that he could dampen his tongue. He then cried out loud, "A sail! A sail!". Hearing this the sailors took a sigh of relief and smiled, being sure that they were saved. As the ship neared, they were shocked to see that it was a ghostlike, skeletal structure of a ship. Its crew consisted of two figures: Death and the Night-mare Life-in-Death, who takes the form of a pale woman with red lips and golden locks, and "thicks man's blood with cold." Death and Life-in-Death started throwing the dice, and the woman stood victorious, so she whistled thrice, making the sun sink to the horizon and the stars to immediately appear. When the moon rose, chased by a single star, the Mariners started dyeing one after the one except the Mariner. Each sailor cursed the Mariner "with his eye" before taking his last breath. The souls of the dead sailors jumped from their bodies and rushed to the Mariner.

The wedding guest says that he feels scared of the Mariner because of his skinny hand and his glittering eye. The Mariner assures the wedding guest to not feel scared as he was alive. The Mariner said that he was not amongst the men who died and that he is not a ghost, he is a living man. Being alone on the ship the Mariner was surrounded by two hundred dead bodies of the sailors. He was also surrounded by the slimy sea and the creepy creatures that crawled on its surface. The Mariner tried to pray but was discouraged by a "wicked whisper" that made his

Notes

heart “as dry as dust.” The Mariner shut his eyes as he was unable to stand the sight of the dead men, who all stared at him with the malice of their final curse. The Mariner tolerated the sight for seven days and seven nights, and yet he was still not able to die. Finally the moon rose, forming the ship’s shadow across the waters. Where the great shadow of the ship touched the waters, they burned red. Countless water snakes travelled through the silvery moonlight, sparkling; green, blue and black, the snakes curled and swam and became beautiful in the Mariner’s eyes. The Mariner then blessed these beautiful creatures in his heart and that very moment, he discovered that he was able to pray, and the corpse of the Albatross fell from his neck, falling “like lead into the sea.”



Task Recite the poem The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

The Mariner continues to tell his story to the Wedding-Guest. He says that after being freed from the curse of the Albatross, the Mariner was finally able to sleep. As he did so, the rains came and he got drenched in the rains. The moon came out making his way through the clouds. A host of spirits got into the dead men’s bodies. These spirits began to move around and carry out their old sailors’ jobs. The ship was pushed forward as the Mariner also joined in the work. The Wedding-Guest again says that he is getting scared of the Mariner, but the Mariner again tells the Wedding Guest that the men’s bodies were not occupied by cursed souls but by blessed spirits. At dawn, the bodies gathered around the pole, and sweet sounds of the spirits leaving their bodies rose up from their mouths. These spirits floated around the ship, singing like birds. These spirits are similar to an entire symphony of voices. After dawn, these spirits stop singing but the sails continuously make a pleasant sound like the sound of a stream following through a forest. The ship continually flowed forward until noontime and the Mariner feels that someone or something is moving the boat from underneath the ocean. He feels that the same spirit “nine fathoms deep” that previously caused problems near the Arctic has now decided to guide the ship up to the equator. At noon, though, the ship stopped, it then began moving backward and forward as if it were stuck in a tug of war. Finally, the ship broke free, and the Mariner fell to the deck with the shock of sudden speed and lost his consciousness. He heard two mysterious voices in the air. One voice asked him if he was the man who killed the Albatross, and the other voice stated gently that he had done penance for the crime he committed and would do more penance before all was corrected.

The two voices seem to be talking to each other while discussing the situation. The two voices in dialogue said that the moon overcame the sea, and allowed the ship to move. An angelic power shifted the ship northward at an amazingly fast pace. When the Mariner woke up from his trance, he saw all the dead sailors standing together, staring at him. A breeze rose up and pushed the ship back to its native country, back to the Mariner’s home. The Mariner identified the church, the hill, and the lighthouse. At this sight he was overwhelmed. The moonlight shined brightly across the bay, but the Mariner saw another set of lights soon appears. He saw shapes in “crimson” or red colours. As they reached closer to the bay, seraphs which are figures made of pure light came out of the corpses of the other mariners, which fell to the deck. All seraphs waved at the Mariner, who was strongly moved. Soon, the Mariner heard the sound of boat nearing him and he sees oars; the Pilot, the Pilot’s son, and the holy Hermit rowing towards him. The Mariner only expected that the Hermit will shrive (absolve) him of his sin, washing the blood of the Albatross off his soul.

The Hermit, a holy man who resided in the woods and liked talking to sailors from strange areas, had urged the Pilot and his son not to get scared and to row out to the ship. As soon as the Pilot and his son reached the Sailor’s ship, the ship sank in an unexpected whirlpool, leaving the Mariner floating and the Pilot’s rowboat spiralling in the wake. The Mariner was loaded

on-board the Pilot's ship, and the Pilot's son, who was very scared, laughed unbelievably and stated that the devil knows how to row. After making it back to the shore, the Mariner requested the Hermit to shrive him, and the Hermit told the Mariner to tell his story. After having narrated the story, the Mariner got free from the pain of his guilt. Though, the Mariner's guilt returned time and again and continued till the Mariner travelled to a new place to tell his tale again. The very instant he comes across the man to whom he is meant to tell his tale, he knows it. He doesn't have an option but to narrate the entire tale then and there to his chosen audience and the Wedding-Guest is one such individual.

The church doors opens, and the wedding party runs outside. The Mariner states to the Wedding-Guest that he who is fond of God's creatures leads a happier and a better life; he then leaves from the function. The Wedding-Guest walks away from the function, astonished, and wakes up the next morning only to be "a sadder and a wiser man."



Caution Always remember while reading this poem that conditions change really fast. In just one stanza the sailors decided that the albatross was not a good luck charm instead it brought with it bad luck for the sailors. It only takes a stanza for the weather to turn from delightful to frightful.



Example: Main Theme: Liminality

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" typifies the Romantic fascination with liminal spaces. A liminal space is defined as a place on the edge of a realm or between two realms, whether a forest and a field, or reason and imagination. A liminal space often signifies a liminal state of mind, such as the threshold of the imagination's wonders. Romantics such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats valorise the liminal space and state as places where one can experience the sublime. For this reason they are often – and especially in the case of Coleridge's poems - associated with drug-induced euphoria. Following from this, liminal spaces and states are those in which pain and pleasure are inextricable. Romantic poets frequently had their protagonists enter liminal spaces and become irreversibly changed. Starting in the epigraph to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Coleridge expresses a fascination with the liminal state between the spiritual and natural, or the mundane and the divine. Recall that this is what Burnet calls the "certain [and] uncertain" and "day [and] night."

In the Ancient Mariner's story, liminal spaces are bewildering and cause pain. The first liminal space the sailors encounter is the equator, which is in a sense about as liminal a location as exists; after all, it is the threshold between the Earth's hemispheres. No sooner has the ship crossed the equator than a terrible storm ensues and drives it into the poem's ultimate symbolic liminal space, the icy world of the "rime." It is liminal by its very physical makeup; there, water exists not in one a single, definitive state, but in all three forms: liquid (water), solid (ice), and gas (mist). They are still most definitely in the ocean, but surrounding them are mountainous icebergs reminiscent of the land. The "rime" fits the archetype of the Romantic liminal space in that it is simultaneously terrifying and beautiful, and in that the sailors do not navigate there purposely, but are rather transported there by some other force. Whereas the open ocean is a wild territory representing the mysteries of the mind and the sublime, the "rime" exists just on its edge. As a liminal space it holds great power, and indeed a powerful spirit inhabits the "rime."

As punishment for his crime of killing the Albatross, the Ancient Mariner is sentenced to Life-in-Death, condemned to be trapped in a limbo-like state where his "glittering eye"

Notes

tells of both powerful genius and pain. He can compel others to listen to his story from beginning to end, but is forced to do so to relieve his pain. The Ancient Mariner is caught in a liminal state that, as in much of Romantic poetry, is comparable to addiction. He can relieve his suffering temporarily by sharing his story, but must do so continually. The Ancient Mariner suffers because of his experience in the “rime” and afterwards, but has also been extremely close to the divine and sublime because of it. Therefore his curse is somewhat of a blessing; great and unusual knowledge accompanies his pain. The Wedding Guest, the Hermit, and all others to whom he relates his tale enter into a momentary liminal state themselves where they have a distinct sensation of being stunned or mesmerized.

3.3.2 Critical Analysis

Form

Written by Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is written in loose, short ballad stanzas commonly about four or six lines long however, seldom, as many as nine lines long. The meter is also loose to some extent, but odd lines are usually tetrameter, while even lines are called trimeter. (There are exclusions: In a five-line stanza, for example, lines one, three, and four may possibly have four accented syllables—tetrameter—while lines two and five have three accented syllables.)

The rhymes are normally alternated in an ABAB or ABABAB scheme. Here also there are several exceptions; for example, in the nine-line stanza in Part III, rhymes AABCCBDDDB are used. Various stanzas consist of couplets in this way—five-line stanzas, for instance, are rhymed ABCCB, frequently with an internal rhyme in the first line, or ABAAB, without any internal rhyme.

Commentary

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is a unique and exclusive poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is unique in its purposefully archaic language (“Eftsoons his hand drops he”), its thematic vagueness, its strange moral narrative, its length, and its odd scholarly notes written in small type in the margins, and the extended Latin epigraph that begins it, relating to the multitude of unclassifiable “invisible creatures” that live in the world. Its uniqueness makes it rather unusual from the works of its era; it doesn’t have much in common with other Romantic creations. Rather, the epigraph, the scholarly notes, and the archaic language combine to leave an impression (planned by Coleridge) that the “Rime” is a ballad of earlier times (like “Sir Patrick Spence,” which appears in “Dejection: An Ode”), republished with descriptive notes for a new audience.

Then again the explanatory notes confuse, rather than clarifying, the poem as a whole. There are also times when they clarify some unspoken action. At other times they interpret the content of the poem in a manner that appears odd or inappropriate to, the poem itself. For example, a note can be found in Part II, relating to the spirit that went behind the ship nine fathoms deep: “one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted.” What may Coleridge mean by presenting such figures as “the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus,” into the poem, as marginalia, and by suggesting that the verse itself must be interpreted through him?

This question has confused scholars since the very first time the poem was published in this form. Remarkably, the actual version of the “Rime,” in the 1797 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, did not consist of any side notes. There is surely a component of humour in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s

scholarly glosses—a bit of parody intended at the poets and writers of thoughtful glosses of this type; such phrases as “Platonic Constantinopolitan” appear consciously silly. It is said that the glosses are just a humorous irrelevancy intended to make the poem look archaic and that the most important text is the poem itself. This text is complicated, with Christian representation, in its moral lesson that “all creatures great and small” were made by Divinity and must be loved be it the Albatross or the slimy snakes in the decaying ocean and in its characters.

If a person agrees to this argument, then that person faces the job of learning the key to Samuel’s symbolism: what does the Albatross signify what do the spirits denote, and so on. Critics have made numerous clever efforts to do just that and have discovered in the “Rime” numerous thought-provoking readings, ranging from political allegory to Christian parable. However these readings are dulled by the fact that none of these (with the probable exception of the Christian reading, much of which is surely intended by the poem) appears crucial for the story itself. Any individual can take these explanations of the poem only if he/she disrespects the glosses almost completely.

Another interesting, although questionable, reading of the poem says that Samuel meant it as a commentary on the methods in which individuals understand the teachings of the past and the methods in which the past is simply incomprehensible. By filling his archaic ballad with rich symbolism that cannot be decoded in any particular, definitive manner and then inclosing that symbolism with side notes that pick at it and provide a very theoretical spiritual-scientific explanation of its classifications, Samuel builds tension between the unambiguous-but-ridiculous notes and the ambiguous poem, revealing a gulf between the “old” poem and the “new” attempt to understand the “old” poem. The message is that, although some moral lessons from the past are yet to be comprehended—“he liveth best who loveth best” is not difficult to comprehend—several other characteristics of its tales are not very simply grasped.

In any event, this first section of the poem takes the Mariner through the worst of his shows and trials, in action, the lesson that will be openly voiced in the second segment. The Mariner kills the Albatross in bad faith, exposing himself to the aggression of the forces governing the entire universe (the horrible Life-in-Death and the very un-Christian-seeming spirit beneath the sea). It is uncertain how these forces are linked to each other. Is it the Life-in-Death which is in league with the sunken spirit or is it that their instantaneous arrival is just a coincidence.

The Mariner, after being cursed, is able to get access to the favour of God and is able to get back his capability to pray—only by understanding that the things he considers monsters are strikingly beautiful in the eyes of God and that he must love them all just like he should have loved the Albatross he killed. In the final three books of the poem, the Ancient Mariner’s meeting with a Hermit will spell out this message clearly, and the reader will understand why the Mariner stopped the Wedding-Guest to tell him his entire tale.

This second section of the poem concludes the Ancient Mariner’s tale. In this section he happens to meet the host of seraph-like spirits who rather strangely rescue his ship by entering the dead bodies of the fallen mariners. It is here that the Mariner gets his moral salvation after confessing to the Hermit. He should continue making the following confessions throughout his life together with the one he has made to the Wedding-Guest. This section is devoid of much of the strange imagistic intensity that was seen in the first segment, and the mystical powers even begin to appear sympathetic (the sunken spirit from the land of mist and snow is referred to as “the lonesome spirit” in a side note). The more dreadful elements still come up sometimes, though; the insanity of the Pilot’s son and the sinking of the ship could have come from a gritty, dramatic story such as *Moby-Dick*, and the seraphs of the earlier scene remind us of fantastical works as *Paradise Lost*.

Notes

The figurative organisation of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is complex: one speaker makes judgments like “A sadder and a wiser man / He rose the morrow morn”; the side notes apparently written by a scholar, are different from this first speaker. The Mariner is independent of these two voices, and the Mariner’s words make up most of the poem and the Wedding-Guest also speaks openly. Furthermore, the several time frames combine somewhat intricately. Samuel makes the poem complicated at the very beginning of Part VI, when he presents a short dramatic dialogue to show the conversation between the two ghostly voices. This was a unique technique and influenced later writers, such as Melville, who frequently used dramatic dialogues in his equally complex story of the sea, *Moby-Dick*. Here in Samuel’s poem, this dialogue dives the reader abruptly into the role of the Mariner, listening to the voices around him instead of merely hearing them described. Confusing techniques like this one are used all through the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to make certain that the poem doesn’t become very abstract in its relationship between verse and side notes. So no matter how theoretical the level of the poem’s operation, its story continues to be convincing.



Notes **The Natural World: The Physical**

While it can be attractive and scary (often simultaneously), the natural world’s power and control in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is undeniable. In a move typical of Romantic poets both preceding and following Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and particularly typical of his colleague, William Wordsworth, Samuel highlights the way in which the natural world dwarfs and asserts its overwhelming power over man. Specifically in the 1817 text, in which Samuel includes marginal glosses, it is clear that the spiritual world controls and utilizes the natural world. Sometimes the natural world seems to be a character itself, based on the way it interacts with the Ancient Mariner. From the instant The Mariner offends the spirit of the “rime,” retribution comes in the form of natural phenomena. The wind dies, the sun strengthens, and it will not rain. The ocean becomes revolting, “rotting” and thrashing with “slimy” creatures and burning with strange fires. Only when the Ancient Mariner states love for the natural world—the water-snakes—does his punishment abate even slightly. It rains, but the storm is unusually awesome, with a thick stream of fire pouring from one huge cloud. A spirit, whether God or a pagan one, dominates the physical world in order to punish and inspire reverence in the Mariner. At the end, the Mariner speaks respect for the natural world as a way to remain in good standing with the spiritual world, because in order to respect Divinity, one must respect all of his makings. This is why he valorises the Hermit, who sets the example of both prayer and living in harmony with nature. In his final advice to the Wedding Guest, the Mariner confirms that one can access the sublime, “the image of a greater and better world,” only by seeing the value of the mundane, “the petty things of daily life.”

The Spiritual World: The Metaphysical

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” occurs in the natural, physical world—the ocean and the land. Though, the work has commonly been interpreted as an allegory of man’s association with the spiritual, metaphysical world. In the epigraph, Burnet speaks of man’s wish to “classify” things since Adam named the animals. The Mariner shoots the Albatross as if to prove that it is not an airy spirit, but rather a mortal creature; in a symbolic way, he tries to “classify” the Albatross. Like all natural things, the Albatross is closely tied to the spiritual world, and thus begins the Mariner’s penalty by the spiritual world by means of the natural world. Rather than addressing him directly; the mystical communicates through the natural. The sun, ocean and lack of rain and wind punish the Mariner and other sailors. When the dead men come alive to curse the Ancient Mariner with their eyes, things that

Contd....

Notes

are natural-their corpses-are occupied by a dominant spirit. Men (like Adam) feel the need to describe things, and the Mariner feels this need when he suddenly and inexplicably kills the Albatross, shooting it from the sky as though he needs to bring it into the definable, physical realm. It is mortal, but closely tied to the metaphysical, spiritual world-it even flies like a spirit because it is a bird.

The Ancient Mariner notices spirits in their pure form numerous times in the poem. Even then, they talk and not *to* him. When the ghost ship carrying Death and Life-in-Death sails by, the Ancient Mariner overhears them gambling. Then when he lies unconscious on the deck, he hears the First Voice and Second Voice discussing his fate. When angels appear over the sailors' corpses near the shore, they do not talk to the Ancient Mariner, but only guide his ship. In all these instances, it is unclear whether the spirits are real or figments of his imagination. The Ancient Mariner-and we the reader-being mortal beings, require physical affirmation of the spiritual. Coleridge's spiritual world in the poem balances between the religious and the purely fantastical. The Ancient Mariner's prayers do have an effect, as when he blesses the water-snakes and is relieved of his thirst. At the poem's end, he valorises the holy Hermit and the act of praying with others. However, the spirit that follows the sailors from the "rime", Death, Life-in-Death, the voices, and the angels, are not necessarily Christian archetypes. In a move typical of both Romantic writers and painters, Coleridge locates the spiritual and/or holy in the natural world in order to emphasize man's connection to it. Society can distance man from the sublime by championing worldly pleasures and abandoning reverence for the otherworld. In this way, the wedding reception represents man's alienation from the holy - even in a religious tradition like marriage. However, society can also bring man closer to the sublime, such as when people gather together in prayer.

Self Assessment

Choose the correct answer:

- Where does the poem's initial encounter occur?
 - In the open air
 - Inside a chapel
 - At a wedding reception
 - At sea
- The Wedding Guest is on his way to (do) what?
 - Divorce proceedings
 - A wedding ceremony
 - Propose to his beloved
 - A wedding reception
- What did the sailors do with the Albatross's corpse?
 - They ate it
 - They hung it around the Ancient Mariner's neck
 - They hung it from the main mast for good luck
 - They dropped it into the sea, where it sank like lead
- What sort of creatures appeared in the water after the Albatross's death?
 - Slimy and revolting
 - Beautiful yet frightening
 - Gorgeous and magical
 - Albatross-like

Notes

5. What accompanied the ship along with the Albatross?
 - (a) Fog and snow
 - (b) Mermaids
 - (c) Wind and mist
 - (d) Evil spirits
6. The ship sailed calmly and contently until:
 - (a) An albatross suddenly landed on the prow
 - (b) The sun began to set
 - (c) A ghost ship appeared on the horizon
 - (d) It crossed the equator

3.4 Summary

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England. He was also a member of the Lake Poets.
- **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** was a renowned English lyrical poet, philosopher and critic.
- His father, a master of a grammar school and a vicar of a parish, married twice and had fourteen children. The youngest in the family, Samuel was a student at his father's school. He was very passionate about reading.
- Samuel came to be known as the poet of imagination, exploring the relationships between the mind and nature as it exists as a distinct unit.
- Poems such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan" exhibit Samuel's talent for creating strange, disturbing tales filled with magic and fantastic imagery; in poems such as "Dejection: An Ode," and "Frost at Midnight" he thinks openly on the nature of the mind during its interaction with the creative source of nature.
- The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is the longest major poem written in 1797–98. It was published in 1798 in the first edition of Lyrical Ballads. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a poem that brings into light the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage.
- In all his roles, social critic, as poet, literary critic, psychologist and theologian, Samuel Taylor Coleridge voiced a profound concern with explaining a fundamental creative principle that is essential to both the universe as a whole and human beings.
- A legend in his time, Samuel Taylor Coleridge died in 1834 after years of discomfort and disappointment. According to his friends and family, Samuel failed because of early expectations and because of hopes that got defeated by drugs and disease.
- Written by Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is written in loose, short ballad stanzas commonly about four or six lines long however, seldom, as many as nine lines long.
- The rhymes are normally alternated in an ABAB or ABABAB scheme. Here also there are several exceptions; for example, in the nine-line stanza in Part III, rhymes AABCCBDDDB are used.
- "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a unique and exclusive poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is unique in its purposefully archaic language ("Eftsoons his hand drops he"), its thematic vagueness, its strange moral narrative, its length, and its odd scholarly notes written in small type in the margins, and the extended Latin epigraph that begins it, relating to the multitude of unclassifiable "invisible creatures" that live in the world.

3.5 Keywords

Notes

Couplet: A couplet can be defined as a pair of lines of meter in poetry. It normally includes two lines that rhyme and have the same meter.

Critic: A critic is a person who judges the merits of literary or artistic works, especially one who does so professionally. A person who expresses an unfavourable opinion of something is also called a critic.

Discomfort: Something that causes one to feel uncomfortable.

Epigraph: An epigraph is a short quotation or saying at the beginning of a book or chapter, intended to suggest its theme.

Hermit: A hermit is someone, often very religious, who lives his or her life in solitude. Trimeter

Mariner: A mariner is a person who navigates or assists in navigating a ship.

Tetrameter: In poetry, a tetrameter can be defined as "four measures." Verse written in tetrameter has four measures which are also called feet.

Theologian: A person who engages or is an expert in theology is called so.

3.6 Review Questions

1. Why is this poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"?
2. What is the "crime" committed by the Mariner in part 1?
3. Throw light on Samuel Taylor Coleridge major works.
4. Throw light on Samuel Taylor Coleridge life.
5. What saves the Ancient Mariner? How does he react to the natural world?
6. What appeals to you in the poem?
7. Talk about Samuel Taylor Coleridge's later years and death.
8. Why did the Mariner shoot the albatross?
9. Describe one supernatural element in the story.
10. Who does the Mariner ask for forgiveness and why?
11. What happens to the Mariner after his ship sinks?
12. Why was the Ancient Mariner made to suffer for killing the Albatross?
13. Make a case for why the Ancient Mariner stops and tells his tale to the Wedding Guest of all people. In your analysis, consider the Hermit, to whom the Ancient Mariner tells his tale for the first time.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (b) |
| 3. (b) | 4. (a) |
| 5. (c) | 6. (d) |

Notes

3.7 Further Readings



Books

Coleridge, S.T. (1857) *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, New York: D. Appleton & Co. 346 and 348, Broadway.

Potter, J.E., (1986-1987) *Beautiful for Situation: Bible Literature and Art in Modern Books for Children*, Children's Literature Association Quarterly, Volume 11, Number 4, Winter 1986-1987



Online links

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner

<http://www.literature-enrichment.com/summary/index.html>

http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner.html

<http://www.shmoop.com/rime-of-ancient-mariner/summary.html>

Unit 4: Animal Farm by George Orwell

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

4.1 Life and Works of George Orwell

4.2 Animal Farm

4.3 Symbolism/Interpretation

4.4 Summary

4.5 Keywords

4.6 Review Questions

4.7 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and works of George Orwell
- Know about dystopian and an allegorical novel Animal Farm
- Interpret Animal Farm

Introduction

Eric Arthur Blair (25 June 1903 – 21 January 1950), popular by his pen name George Orwell, was a renowned English author and journalist. His work displays his intelligence and wit, and his deep awareness of social injustice, a passion for clarity and simplicity in language, a belief in democratic socialism and an intense opposition to totalitarianism.

Considered perhaps the 20th century's best chronicler of English culture, George Orwell wrote literary criticism, fiction, poetry and polemical journalism. He is popularly known for the allegorical novella *Animal Farm* (1945) and the dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which together have sold more copies than any two books written by any other author of the 20th-century. Orwell's book *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), which gives an account of his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, is widely acclaimed, as are his several essays on literature, politics, culture and language. The Times in 2008, ranked George Orwell second on a list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945".

George Orwell's influence on political and popular culture endures, and many of his neologisms, along with the term *Orwellian* — a byword for manipulative social practices or totalitarian have entered the vernacular.

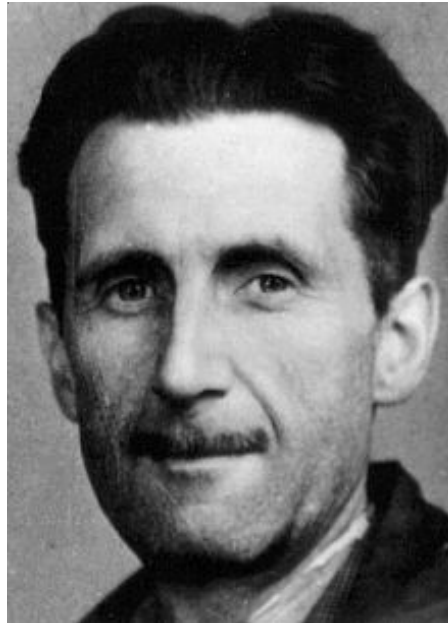
Animal Farm is a dystopian and an allegorical novel by George Orwell which was published in England on 17 August 1945.

In this unit we will study more about George Orwell and the book *Animal Farm*.

Notes

4.1 Life and Works of George Orwell

Figure: 4.1 George Orwell



Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/7e/George_Orwell_press_photo.jpg/220px-George_Orwell_press_photo.jpg

Born in 1903 in Motihari, Bengal in India, George Orwell spent his initial days in India, where his father was posted. George Orwell's father, Richard Walmesley Blair, worked in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. His mother, Ida Mabel Blair, grew up in Burma where her French father was involved in speculative ventures. Eric Arthur Blair had two sisters: Marjorie who was five years older to him and Avril who was five years younger to him. When Eric was one year old, his mother brought him and his older sister, Marjorie, to England and settled in Henley-on-Thames. Eric's father stayed in India and barely visited. Eric didn't know his father until he retired from the service in 1912. Even after that his father's retirement, the pair didn't form a strong bond. Eric thought that his was very dull and conservative.

One biography states that Orwell's first word was "beastly." He was a sick child, often fighting from flu and bronchitis. George Orwell reportedly composed his first poem when he was four years old. He later wrote, "I had the lonely child's habit of making up stories and holding conversations with imaginary persons, and I think from the very start my literary ambitions were mixed up with the feeling of being isolated and undervalued." His first literary successes came at the age of 11 when his poem got published in the local newspaper. Like most boys in England, George Orwell was also sent to a boarding school. In 1911 Orwell went to St. Cyprian's in the coastal town of Eastbourne, where he first tasted England's class system. On a partial scholarship, George Orwell realised that the school treated the richer students better than the poorer ones. In this school Orwell was distinguished among the other boys by his poverty, and in books he found comfort from his difficult situation. What he lacked in personality, he made up for in smarts. He grew up a withdrawn, eccentric boy, and he later wrote about his miseries of those years in his posthumously published autobiographical essay, *Such, Such Were the Joys* (1953).

George Orwell won scholarships to England's two top schools, Eton and Winchester, and chose the former. He stayed in Eton from 1917 to 1921. Aldous Huxley was one of his masters. It was

at Eton that Orwell published his first work in college periodicals. George Orwell decided to follow family tradition instead of taking a scholarship to a university. In 1922, he went to Burma and worked there as an assistant district superintendent in the Indian Imperial Police. Orwell served in several country stations and at first looked to be a model imperial servant. Yet from childhood he always wanted to become a writer, and when he understood how much against their will the Burmese were ruled by the British, he felt very ashamed of his role as a colonial police officer. He later narrated his experiences and his reactions to imperial rule in his novel *Burmese Days* and in two brilliant autobiographical sketches, "A Hanging" and "Shooting an Elephant" which were classics of expository prose.

George Orwell, on leave to England in 1927, decided never to return to Burma, and he resigned from the imperial police on January 1, 1928. Already in the autumn of 1927 he took a path that was to shape his character as a writer. Feeling guilty that the barriers of caste and race had prevented his mixing with the Burmese, he thought he could get rid of some of his guilt by immersing himself in the life of the outcast and poor people of Europe. Donning shabby clothes, he went into the East End of London to live in low-priced lodging houses among beggars and labourers. He also spent some time in the slums of Paris and worked as a dishwasher in French restaurants and hotels. Orwell also tramped the roads of England with professional beggars and joined the people of the London slums in their annual exodus to work in the Kentish hopfields.

These experiences gave Orwell enough material to write *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). In this book real life events are rearranged into something similar to fiction. Orwell got some initial literary recognition after the book got published in 1933, *Burmese Days* (1934), George Orwell's first novel established the pattern of his subsequent fiction in its interpretation of a conscientious, sensitive and emotionally isolated person who is at odds with an insincere and oppressive social environment. The most significant character of *Burmese Days* is a minor administrator who tries to escape from the narrow-minded and dull chauvinism of his fellow British colonialists in Burma. However, his sympathies and considerations for the Burmese end in an unexpected personal tragedy. The central character of George Orwell's next novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), is a sad and unfortunate spinster whose life is turned upside down when she suffers an attack of amnesia. *Keep the Aspidochelone*, first published in 1936, is a socially critical novel by George Orwell. This book is about a literarily inclined bookseller's assistant who hates the empty commercialism and materialism of middle-class life but in the end is reconciled to bourgeois prosperity by his forced wedding to the girl he loves.

George Orwell's revolt against imperialism led to his personal rejection of the bourgeois life-style and also to a political reorientation. Instantly after returning from Burma he started calling himself an anarchist and continued to do so for many years. During the 1930s, though, he started considering himself a socialist, although he was too libertarian in his thinking ever to take the further step which is common in the period in which he declared himself a communist.

George Orwell's first ever socialist book was an unorthodox, original political treatise called *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). It starts by unfolding his experiences during his stay with the poor and jobless mineworkers of northern England. He lived with them and observed their lives. The book ends in a series of sharp criticisms of prevailing socialist movements. The book includes mordant reporting with a tone of plentiful anger that was to describe George Orwell's subsequent text.

When *The Road to Wigan Pier* was being printed, George Orwell was in Spain. Orwell went to Spain to report on the Civil War and stayed there to become a part of the Republican militia, serving on the Aragon and Teruel fronts and he got the rank of second lieutenant. He was seriously injured at Teruel. Orwell's throat got damaged permanently affecting his voice and giving his speech a strange, convincing softness. In May 1937, after fighting in Barcelona against communists who tried overpowering their political opponents, Orwell with the fear of losing

Notes

his life had to flee to Spain. This dreadful experience made him so scared of communism, that he first expressed it in the vivid account of his Spanish experiences, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), which most people consider to be amongst his best works.

After going back to England, George Orwell displayed an absurdly conservative strain in writing *Coming Up for Air* (1939). In this masterpiece Orwell uses the nostalgic memories of a middle-aged man to study the decency of a past England and express his worries about a future threatened by fascism and war. When war happened, George Orwell was rejected for military service. Orwell instead became the head of the Indian service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In 1943, he left the BBC and became literary editor of the *Tribune*, a left-wing socialist paper linked with the British Labour leader Aneurin Bevan. At this period George Orwell was a creative journalist, who wrote several newspaper reviews and articles, along with serious criticism, like his classic essays on Charles Dickens and on boys' weeklies. Orwell also wrote several books about England (especially *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 1941) that included patriotic sentiment with the advocacy of a libertarian, decentralist socialism very different from that practiced by the British Labour Party.

In 1944 Orwell completed *Animal Farm*. It is a political tale based on the story of the Russian Revolution and its betrayal by Joseph Stalin. The story of *Animal Farm* revolves around a group of barnyard animals who takeover and chase their exploitative and unfair human leaders and set up a democratic society of their own. Ultimately the animals' power-loving and intelligent leaders, the pigs, disrupt the revolution. They then form a dictatorship whose bondage is much more heartless and oppressive than that of their previous human leaders. ("All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.") At first George Orwell had a tough time finding a publisher for his masterpiece, but when it finally got published in 1945, *Animal Farm* made Orwell very famous and wealthy.

Despite being one of Orwell's finest works, *Animal Farm* was filled with fantasy and wit and was very splendidly written. It was, however, outshined by yet another masterpiece written by him called *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949). This was the last book written by Orwell and he wrote this book as a warning after years of brooding on the twin threats of Stalinism and Nazism. The novel is set in an imagined future in which the entire world is dominated by three continuously fighting totalitarian police states. The novel's hero, the Englishman Winston Smith, is a minor party functionary in one of these states. His desire for truth and his decency leads him to silently rebel against the government, which spreads its rule by methodically misrepresenting the truth and uninterruptedly rewriting history to achieve its objectives. Smith has a love affair with a compatible woman, but they both get arrested by the Thought Police. The resultant torture, imprisonment and re-education of Smith are not just aimed at breaking him physically or making him surrender but to remove his spiritual dignity and his independent mental existence until he begins to love the figure he hated the most: the seeming leader of the party, Big Brother. Smith's surrender to the evil brainwashing practices of the prison officers is very tragic, but the book gets much of its power from the wide-ranging rigour with which it spreads the premises of totalitarianism to their logical end: the love of domination and power over others has attained its perfected expression in the continuous surveillance and ever-present dishonesty of an unquestionable and irresistible police state under whose rule every human quality is gradually being extinguished and suborned. George Orwell's warning of the possible dangers of totalitarianism created a deep impression on his equals and on succeeding readers. The book's title and a lot of its coined phrases and words such as "Big Brother is watching you," "newspeak," and "doublethink" became good examples for modern political abuses.

George Orwell wrote the last pages of *Nineteen Eighty-four* in a remote house on the Hebrides island of Jura, which he had taken from the profits he got after writing *Animal Farm*. He worked between short periods of hospitalisation for tuberculosis. He later died of tuberculosis in a London hospital in January 1950.

4.2 Animal Farm

Notes

The story takes place on a farm in England and is told by an all-knowing narrator in the third person. The novel begins when prize-winning boar, Old Major collects all animals of the Manor Farm for a meeting which was organised in the big barn. He narrates his dream and says that in his dream all animals stay together without being controlled or oppressed by any human beings. The Old Major then communicates to the animals that they should work towards making such a paradise and makes them learn a song called "Beasts of England," in which Old Major's dream is lyrically stated. The animals receive Old Major's dream with immense interest and enthusiasm. Three days later Old Major dies, but the speech gives a few intelligent animals a new outlook on life. After his death, three young pigs – Squealer, Napoleon and Snowball convert his core principles into a philosophy which they call Animalism. The rebellion begins when Mr. Jones returns home drunk one night and forgets to give food to the animals. All animals then break out of the barns and enter the house, where all the food is kept. On seeing this Mr. Jones takes out his shotgun, but it is too late as all the animals fall over him and push him out of the farm. These animals then destroy all crops, reins, nose rings and all other instruments that were used to suppress them. That same day all these animals celebrate their victory with an extra ration of food. The animals after defeating the farmer Mr. Jones in a battle, take his land. They rename the land and call it Animal Farm. The pigs make up the seven commandments, and they write them above the door of the big barn.

They are:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings is a friend.
3. No animal shall drink alcohol.
4. No animal shall wear clothes.
5. No animal shall kill another animal.
6. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
7. All animals are equal.

The animals also decide that no animal shall ever enter the farmhouse, and that no animal shall have contact with humans. These commandments can be summarised in the simple phrase: "Four legs good, two legs bad". The animals then start working towards fulfilling Old Major's dream. The cart-horse Boxer dedicates himself to the cause of fulfilling Major's dream with specific zeal and vigour, committing his strength to the prosperity and success of the Animal Farm. He adopts as a personal saying the confirmation "I will work harder."

Did You Know: *Animal Farm* is filled with songs, poems, and slogans, including Major's stirring "Beasts of England," Minimus's ode to Napoleon, the sheep's chants, and Minimus's revised anthem, "Animal Farm, Animal Farm." All of these songs serve as propaganda, one of the major conduits of social control. By making the working-class animals speak the same words at the same time, the pigs evoke an atmosphere of grandeur and nobility associated with the recited text's subject matter. The songs also erode the animals' sense of individuality and keep them focused on the tasks by which they will purportedly achieve freedom.

In the beginning, the Animal Farm flourishes. Snowball starts teaching the animals to read, while Napoleon takes charge of young puppies and educates them about the principles of Animalism. When Mr. Jones comes back to take his farm back, he again gets defeated by the animals, in this battle called the Battle of the Cowshed. The animals take the farmer's abandoned gun as a token of their triumph. As time goes by, Snowball and Napoleon start arguing and

Notes

raising questions about the farm's future. They begin struggling with one another for control and influence among other animals. Snowball devises a scheme to form an electricity-generating windmill, but Napoleon strongly opposes the idea. Snowball then gives a passionate speech at the meeting organised to vote on whether they should take up the project. Even though Napoleon gives only a brief response, he immediately makes a strange noise, and nine attack dogs—the puppies that Napoleon had taken away to “educate” them rush into the barn and chase Snowball from the farm. Napoleon, then takes up leadership of Animal Farm and announces that no more meetings will be conducted. From that very moment he declares that only the pigs will make all the decisions for the good of all animals.

Napoleon quickly changes his mind about the animals and the windmill, and says that animals particularly Boxer, should devote their efforts to completing the windmill. One day, after a storm, the animals see that the windmill collapsed. The human farmers in the region announce arrogantly that the walls made by the animals were too thin. However Napoleon states that Snowball had returned to the farm to damage the windmill. Napoleon stages a great purge, during which several animals who have supposedly taken part in Snowball's big conspiracy—which means that any animal opposing Napoleon's uncontested leadership shall meet immediate death at the teeth of the attack dogs. With his leadership unchallenged Boxer takes up the second maxim, “Napoleon is always right”. Napoleon then starts expanding his powers and begins rewording history to show that Snowball is an antihero. Napoleon also starts acting more and more like a human being. He starts sleeping in a bed, drinks whisky, and engages in trade with neighbouring farmers. The actual Animalist principles strictly prohibited such activities, but Napoleon's propagandist, Squealer, defends Napoleon and justifies all his actions in front of other animals, convincing them that Napoleon is a great leader and is doing good and making things better for everybody—despite knowing that the other animals are hungry, cold and overworked.

A neighbouring farmer, Mr. Frederick then cheats Napoleon in the purchase of some timber. He also attacks the farm and explodes the windmill, which was reconstructed at great expense. After the windmill's demolition, a pitched battle follows, during which Boxer gets badly injured. The animals defeat the farmers, but Boxer's wounds make him weaker than before. After falling while working on the windmill, Boxer realises that he is nearing his end. Boxer suddenly disappears and is nowhere to be found. Squealer feels that Boxer is no more and died in peace after being taken to the hospital. He praises the Rebellion with his last breath. In reality, Napoleon sold his long-suffering loyal worker to a glue maker so as to get money for whisky.

As years pass, the pigs become more and more like human beings in the Animal Farm. They start walking upright, wear clothes and carry whips. Ultimately, the seven principles of Animalism, known as the Seven Commandments and engraved on the side of the barn, get reduced to a single principle reading “all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” Napoleon then calls a human farmer named Mr. Pilkington for dinner and announces his intention to partner with the human farmers against the labouring classes of both the animal and the human communities. Napoleon also changes the name of the Animal Farm back to the Manor Farm, saying that this is the “correct” title. Seeing the party of elites through the farmhouse window, the common animals are no longer able to distinguish between the human beings and the pigs.



Notes *Animal Farm* is most famous in the West as a stinging critique of the history and rhetoric of the Russian Revolution. Retelling the story of the emergence and development of Soviet communism in the form of an animal fable, *Animal Farm* allegorizes the rise to power of the dictator Joseph Stalin. In the novella, the overthrow of the human oppressor

Contd...

Mr. Jones by a democratic coalition of animals quickly gives way to the consolidation of power among the pigs. Much like the Soviet intelligentsia, the pigs establish themselves as the ruling class in the new society.

The struggle for pre-eminence between Leon Trotsky and Stalin emerges in the rivalry between the pigs Snowball and Napoleon. In both the historical and fictional cases, the idealistic but politically less powerful figure (Trotsky and Snowball) is expelled from the revolutionary state by the malicious and violent usurper of power (Stalin and Napoleon). The purges and show trials with which Stalin eliminated his enemies and solidified his political base find expression in *Animal Farm* as the false confessions and executions of animals that Napoleon distrusts following the collapse of the windmill. Stalin's tyrannical rule and eventual abandonment of the founding principles of the Russian Revolution are represented by the pigs' turn to violent government and the adoption of human traits and behaviours, the trappings of their original oppressors.

Although Orwell believed strongly in socialist ideals, he felt that the Soviet Union realized these ideals in a terribly perverse form. His novella creates its most powerful ironies in the moments in which Orwell depicts the corruption of Animalist ideals by those in power. For *Animal Farm* serves not so much to condemn tyranny or despotism as to indict the horrifying hypocrisy of tyrannies that base themselves on, and owe their initial power to, ideologies of liberation and equality. The gradual disintegration and perversion of the Seven Commandments illustrates this hypocrisy with vivid force, as do Squealer's elaborate philosophical justifications for the pigs' blatantly unprincipled actions. Thus, the novella critiques the violence of the Stalinist regime against the human beings it ruled, and also points to Soviet communism's violence against human logic, language, and ideals.

The Societal Tendency toward Class Stratification

Animal Farm offers commentary on the development of class tyranny and the human tendency to maintain and re-establish class structures even in societies that allegedly stand for total equality. The novella illustrates how classes that are initially unified in the face of a common enemy, as the animals are against the humans, may become internally divided when that enemy is eliminated. The expulsion of Mr. Jones creates a power vacuum, and it is only so long before the next oppressor assumes totalitarian control. The natural division between intellectual and physical labour quickly comes to express itself as a new set of class divisions, with the "brainworkers" (as the pigs claim to be) using their superior intelligence to manipulate society to their own benefit. Orwell never clarifies in *Animal Farm* whether this negative state of affairs constitutes an inherent aspect of society or merely an outcome contingent on the integrity of a society's intelligentsia. In either case, the novella points to the force of this tendency toward class stratification in many communities and the threat that it poses to democracy and freedom.

The Danger of a Naïve Working Class

One of the novella's most impressive accomplishments is its portrayal not just of the figures in power but also of the oppressed people themselves. *Animal Farm* is not told from the perspective of any particular character, though occasionally it does slip into Clover's consciousness. Rather, the story is told from the perspective of the common animals as a whole. Gullible, loyal, and hardworking, these animals give Orwell a chance to sketch how situations of oppression arise not only from the motives and tactics of the oppressors but also from the naïveté of the oppressed, who are not necessarily in a position to be better educated or informed. When presented with a dilemma, Boxer prefers not to puzzle out the implications of various possible actions but instead to repeat to himself, "Napoleon is always right." *Animal Farm* demonstrates how the inability or unwillingness

Contd...

Notes

to question authority condemns the working class to suffer the full extent of the ruling class's oppression.

The Abuse of Language as Instrumental to the Abuse of Power

One of Orwell's central concerns, both in *Animal Farm* and in *1984*, is the way in which language can be manipulated as an instrument of control. In *Animal Farm*, the pigs gradually twist and distort rhetoric of socialist revolution to justify their behaviour and to keep the other animals in the dark. The animals heartily embrace Major's visionary ideal of socialism, but after Major dies, the pigs gradually twist the meaning of his words. As a result, the other animals seem unable to oppose the pigs without also opposing the ideals of the Rebellion. By the end of the novella, after Squealer's repeated reconfigurations of the Seven Commandments in order to decriminalize the pigs' treacheries, the main principle of the farm can be openly stated as "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." This outrageous abuse of the word "equal" and of the ideal of equality in general typifies the pigs' method, which becomes increasingly audacious as the novel progresses. Orwell's sophisticated exposure of this abuse of language remains one of the most compelling and enduring features of *Animal Farm*, worthy of close study even after we have decoded its allegorical characters and events.

4.3 Symbolism/Interpretation

The novel *Animal Farm* is a satire of the Russian revolution and is thus filled with symbolism. Normally, Orwell links some real characters with the characters of the book. Here is a list of the characters and things and their meaning:

Mr. Jones: Mr. Jones is Orwell's most obvious villain in *Animal Farm*. Orwell states that earlier Jones was a decent master to his animals. At this time the farm was flourishing. In the recent years however, the farm had tough times and there was opportunity to revolt. With the worldwide depression beginning in the United States, the stock market had crashed in October 1929. The depression spread throughout the world as American exports were very dependent on Europe. The U.S. was a major contributor to the world market economy. Germany along with the rest of Europe was particularly hard hit. The parallels between depression in the 1930s and crop failure of the farm are very clear. Only leaders and their followers enjoyed during this time period. In addition to the evils of capitalism, Mr. Jones represents Czar Nicholas II, the leader who ruled before Stalin (Napoleon). Jones is a representation of the old government, the last of the Czars. George Orwell says that Jones was losing his "edge". Actually, he and his men had started drinking. Old Major shows his feelings about Jones and his administration when he says, "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, and he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving and the rest he keeps for himself." So the old government and Jones are effectively uprooted by the animals. They didn't know that history will repeat itself with the pigs and Napoleon.

Old Major: Old Major is the first main character defined by George in *Animal Farm*. This "pure-bred" of pigs is the kind philosopher of change - a clear metaphor for Karl Marx. Old Major gives a solution to the animals' desperate difficulty under the Jones "administration" when he encourages a rebellion of sorts amid the animals. The definite time of the revolt is untold. It could possibly be the next day or several generations to come. Old Major's philosophy is an ideal. After Major's death which occurred three days after the barn-yard speech, the socialism he recognises is severely changed when Napoleon and the other pigs begin to dominate the other animals. It's interesting that George doesn't mention Snowball or Napoleon at any time during the entire speech given by old Major. The principles Old Major announced were not being

considered when the new government was being established after the successful revolt. It almost looks like the pigs fed off Old Major's inspiration and used it to their benefit instead of following the old Major's honest plan. This could be George's attempt to taunt Stalin, who people think completely ignored Marx's social and political theory. Using Old Major's apparent naivety, George shows that no society is perfect, there is no way to escape the evil grasp of capitalism and that no pure socialist civilisation can exist. Sadly, when Squealer and Napoleon take over, Old Major becomes distant fragment of the past in the minds of all farm animals.

Napoleon: Napoleon is George's main villain in *Animal Farm*. The name Napoleon is very suitable since Napoleon, the dictator of France, was considered Anti-Christ. Napoleon, the pig, is the most important character in the farm. Clearly a metaphor for Stalin, Comrade Napoleon denotes the human weaknesses of any revolution. George held that even though socialism is good as an ideal, it can never be effectively adopted due to the overpowering sins of human nature. For instance, though Napoleon looks to be a good leader at first, he is finally overcome by greed and soon becomes hungry for power. Stalin did this in Russia too, in Russia, leaving the unique equality of socialism behind, giving himself all the power and living in luxury while the common peasant was left to suffer. So, while his international and national status flowered, the welfare of Russia remained unaffected. George explains, "Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer—except, of course for the pigs and the dogs." Napoleon's true side becomes obvious after he slaughters animals for hatching a conspiracy against him. He also employs a pig to sample his food for him to be sure that no one is trying to poison him. Stalin, too, was a harsh dictator in Russia. After suspecting that several people in his empire were supporters of Trotsky (George's Snowball), Stalin systematically killed many of them. Towards the end of the novel, Napoleon doesn't pretend to lead a socialist state. After calling it a Republic and instituting his own version of the Beasts of England and the commandments, Comrade Napoleon quickly becomes somewhat a dictator who was never really even elected by the animals.

Squealer: Squealer is an interesting character in George's *Animal Farm*. He's first called the persuader and the manipulator. George narrates, "He could turn black into white." Several critics relate Squealer with the Pravda, the Russian newspaper of the 1930s. Propaganda was important for several publications, and since there was no radio or television, the newspaper was the main source of media information. So the control and domination of the Pravda was seized by Stalin and his new Bolshevik regime. Squealer, in *Animal Farm* is just like the newspaper which is like a bridge that forms links Napoleon and the other animals. When Squealer masks the evil intentions of the pigs, these intentions can be carried out without political disorder and with very little resistance. Some people are also of the opinion that Squealer represents Goebbels, who was the minister of propaganda for Germany. However, this would appear inconsistent with George's satire, which had to metaphor characters in Russia.

Snowball: In the early sections of the novel, George describes Snowball as a pig quite similar to Napoleon. Both pigs wanted a leadership position in the "new" political and economic system which is truly opposite to the entire supposed system of equality. As time passes, both ultimately realise that at least one of them will have to step down. George says that both Napoleon and Snowball always argued about nearly everything. "Snowball and Napoleon were by far the most active in the debates. But it was noticed that these two were never in agreement: whatever suggestion either of them made, the other could be counted to oppose it." George later makes the case stronger. "These two disagreed at every point disagreement was possible." Soon differences in their opinions, like whether or not to construct a windmill, become too big to be dealt with. Thus Napoleon decides to eliminate Snowball. Napoleon's decision appears impulsive but he was actually setting the stage for his own domination much before he actually began "dishing it out" to Snowball. For instance, in an effort to establish a private police force, Napoleon took the puppies away from their mothers. These dogs were trained to be later used to remove

Notes

Snowball, his competitor. Snowball in this context represents Leo Dawidowitsch Trotsky, Stalin's arch-rival in Russia. The parallels between Snowball and Trotsky are mysterious. Trotsky was also exiled to Mexico, where he spoke against Stalin. Stalin was afraid that Trotsky followers may try to kill him. The dictator of Russia tried hard to kill Trotsky as he had the fear of losing his leadership. Trotsky believed in communism, but was of the opinion that he could run Russia in a better manner. Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico by the Russian internal police, the NKVD - the precursor of the KGB. Trotsky was found dead in his villa in Mexico with a pick axe in his head.

Boxer: George cleverly used this name as a metaphor for the Boxer Rebellion in China in the early twentieth century. In red China this rebellion signalled the beginning of communism. Similar to the distorted Stalin view of socialism, this form of communism is present even today in China's oppressive socialist government. George uses Clover and Boxer to represent the proletariat, or untrained manual labour class in Russia. This lower class is obviously drawn to Stalin (Napoleon) because they feel that they may benefit most from his new system. Since Boxer and the other low animals are not used to the "good life," they aren't really in a position to make any comparisons between the life they had when governed by the czars (Jones) and Napoleon's government. Moreover, since the lowest class is usually not considered to be very intelligent, it is easy to convince them that they are getting a good deal. The proletariat is also fairly good at considering that communism is a good concept. Orwell supports this discussion when he narrates, "Their most faithful disciples were the two carthorses, Boxer and Clover. Those two had great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves, but having once accepted the pigs as their teachers, they absorbed everything that they were told, and passed it on to the other animals by simple arguments." Later, the significance of the proletariat is seen when Boxer falls and injures himself because of whom his work productivity decreases drastically. Despite the accident Boxer is taken for granted by the pigs, which send him away in a glue truck. Boxer really is the biggest poster-child for gullibility.

Pigs: Orwell uses the pigs to support and surround Napoleon. They represent Stalin's friends and the communist party loyalists, as well as possibly the Duma, or Russian parliament. Unlike other animals, the pigs live a luxurious life. They enjoy all the benefits of the society they help to control. The discrimination and true hypocrisy and insincerity of communism are stated here by Orwell, who disapproved of Marx's simplified view of a socialist, "utopian" society. Orwell obviously doesn't believe that such a society can ever exist. Toward the end of *Animal Farm*, Orwell highlights, "Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer except, of course, the pigs and the dogs."

Dogs: In his book, *Animal Farm*, Orwell uses the dogs to represent Stalin's bodyguards. The dogs are shown as arch-defenders of Napoleon and the other pigs. Even though these dogs don't speak, they still are a force the other animals have to deal with. Orwell in his book almost says that the dogs are mindless robots, so committed to Napoleon that they can't even speak for themselves. This argument is supported when Orwell states that Napoleon took six puppies away from their mother at a very initial stage in a suspicious manner. Napoleon uses his "secret dogs" for the first time to chase Snowball. This happens even before Snowball gets a chance to give a counter-argument to Napoleon's disapproval of the windmill. When Snowball tries to put his viewpoint across to Napoleon and the other animals, the dogs ferociously attack the pig, forcing him to run away, never to come back. Orwell narrates, "Silent and terrified, the animals crept back into the barn. In a moment the dogs came bounding back. At first no one had been able to imagine where these creatures came from, but the problem was soon solved: they were the puppies whom Napoleon had taken away from their mothers and reared privately. Though not yet full-grown, they were huge dogs, and as fierce-looking as wolves. They kept close to Napoleon. It was noticed that they wagged their tails to him in the same way as the other dogs

had been used to do to Mr. Jones." With the use of dogs Napoleon begins the evil use of force to maintain his power. Later, the dogs even end up killing the animals considered disloyal. Stalin also had his own force of "helpers". Besides followers Stalin needed a special police force to remove his opponents. This is how Trotsky was murdered.

Mollie: Mollie is amongst Orwell's minor characters, but she denotes something very significant. Mollie is one of the animals who doesn't agree to the new government under Napoleon. Mollie doesn't seem to be bothered about the politics of the entire situation. All she wants to do is to eat sugar and tie her hair with ribbons, things her social status will not allow. Lots of animals consider Mollie to be a conspirator when she gets patted by some human being from a neighbouring farm. Mollie is soon confronted by the "dedicated" animals, and she is forced to leave the farm. Mollie symbolises the usual middle-class skilled worker suffering from the new concept of communism. She will no longer get her sugar (nice salary) because she is now considered as low as the other animals, like Clover and Boxer. Orwell uses Mollie to describe individuals who aren't very open to new economics and new leaders after any rebellion. They represent those individuals who are always those resistant to change. This continues to dismiss the belief Orwell disliked and agreeing to which all animals act in a similar manner. The naivety of Marxism is criticised, and it is believed that socialism doesn't work for everybody and it is not perfect.

Moses: Moses is possibly Orwell's most interesting character in *Animal Farm*. This raven, first described as Mr. Jones's "especial pet", Moses is the only animal who doesn't work. Moses is probably the only character in the book who doesn't listen to Old Major's speech of rebellion. Orwell tells, "The pigs had an even harder struggle to counteract the lies put about by Moses, the tame raven. Moses, who was Mr. Jones's especial pet, was a spy and a tale-bearer, but he was also a clever talker. He claimed to know of the existence of a mysterious country called Sugarcandy Mountain, to which all animals went when they died. It was situated somewhere up in the sky, a little distance beyond the clouds, Moses said. In Sugarcandy Mountain it was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the year round, and lump sugar and linseed cake grew on the hedges. The animals hated Moses because he told tales and did no work but some of them believed in Sugarcandy Mountain, and the pigs had to argue very hard to persuade them that there was no such place." Orwell's view of the Church is represented by Moses. According to Orwell, the Church is simply a tool that dictators use to keep the working class amongst people productive and optimistic. To keep the animals working, Mr. Jones first used Moses and he was successful in a lot of ways before the rebellion. The pigs found it very difficult to get rid of Moses, since the fabrications about Heaven they thought will only take animals away from the equality of socialism. Then again Moses finds his place again as the pigs led by Napoleon become more and more like Mr. Jones. After being away for many years, he suddenly comes back and picks up from where he left. The pigs don't mind this time as by now the animals have understood that the "equality" of the rebellion is a farce. Thus Napoleon gives beer to Moses, and the entire circle is complete. It appears that Orwell offers a very cruel and cynical view of the Church. This shows that *Animal Farm* is not just an anti-communist effort meant to lead people into Christianity and capitalism. George Orwell found many loop-holes and a lot of hypocrisy in both the systems. It is interesting to note that the Russian government has just recently started allowing and supporting religion again. It appears that just like the pigs, the Kremlin officials of today are making efforts to keep their people interested, in the "old-fashioned" hope of an after-life and not in the ideology of communism.

Muriel: Muriel is a well-informed goat who reads the orders for Clover. Muriel represents the minority of working class individuals who are educated enough to take their own decisions and find serious and hypocritical problems with their leaders. For other animals, Muriel is not motivated enough to take action and go against Napoleon and his pigs.

Notes



Caution *Animal Farm* is on one level the novel is an allegory of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the story is just as applicable to the latest rebellion against dictators around the world. *Animal Farm* is short and contains few words that will hamper the reader's understanding. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is no Jim Henson-inspired comedy about a pig who just wants to be a sheepdog or bittersweet tale about interspecies love—it's a biting satire about tyrannical governments and a dark warning about the perils of Russian communism.

Old Benjamin: Old Benjamin is an elderly donkey. He is one of Orwell's most subtle and interesting characters on *Animal Farm*. He is described as somewhat unchanged since the rebellion. Old Benjamin continues to do his work the same way without becoming too upset or too happy about anything from the past. Benjamin says, "Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey." Even though the metaphoric relationship between Orwell's critique of communism and Benjamin is not clear, it is sensible to remember that during any rebellion there are those individuals who never totally accept the revolution. Such people are so pessimistic that they stop taking help from their leaders. Benjamin represents the older generation as the criticsers of any new revolt. Benjamin looks like the only animal who seems as though he couldn't care less about *Animal Farm* and Napoleon. It's almost as though he can look in the future, knowing that the revolution is just a momentary change, and will fail in the end. Old Benjamin is probably the only animal who doesn't expect anything very positive from the rebellion. His maturity level is very different compared to the other animals. The only time Benjamin shows concern about the others is when he sees Boxer being carried off in the glue truck. It looks like the old donkey finally comes out of his shell when he warns the others of Boxer's fate. Then the animals try saving Boxer, but it's too late. It looks like Old Benjamin finally confronts Napoleon. He finally reveals his knowledge of the pigs' hypocrisy. George Orwell states, "Only old Benjamin professed to remember every detail of his long life and to know that things never had been, nor ever could be much better or much worse; hunger, hardship, and disappointment being, so he said, the unalterable law of life."



Example: Allegory occurs when a character or event in a story represents some abstract idea. An example of allegory in *Animal Farm* is Old Major's Dream. The real life event that it represents is Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto. Another example is the Battle of the Cowshed. It represents the Russian Civil War, which ended in 1922 in real life

Rats & Rabbits: The rabbits and rats, considered to be wild animals, represent the socialist movement, the so-called "Mensheviki". In the very beginning of the novel the animals vote only if the rabbits and rats are companions.

Pigeons: The pigeons represent Soviet propaganda, not to Russia, but to other countries, such as England, Germany, France, and even the United States. Russia had made an iron curtain even before WWII. The Communist government raved about its advanced technology and its achievements, but it never allowed scientists or experts from outside the country to check on its validity. George also states that other farmers got worried and became suspicious when their animals started singing *Beasts of England*. Numerous Western governments have faced such problems with their people in this century. In the 1920s, there was a huge "Red Scare" in the United States. Joseph McCarthy was a legislative member of the government from Wisconsin in 1950s in the United States. He suspected that hundreds of people from ordinary people to famous actors in Hollywood were supporting and associating themselves with the communist regime. Things worsened to such an extent that the fear of communism became a phobia in the United States and anybody speaking against the government was thought to be a suspect.



Task Write an essay on the main characters in *Animal Farm*.

Notes

Self Assessment

Write the correct answer:

1. Which scene from *Animal Farm* shows that all of the animals WERE equal?
 - (a) Animals singing song of revolution
 - (b) Pigs moving into house
 - (c) Boxer sent to glue factory
 - (d) Snowball run out by dogs
2. Who was *Animal Farm* written by?
 - (a) George Orwell
 - (b) George Pappadopolis
 - (c) George Powell
 - (d) King George
3. Which character in *Animal Farm* did all of the animals look up to in the beginning of the book?
 - (a) Old Major
 - (b) Napoleon
 - (c) Mr. Jones
 - (d) Squealer
4. How does Napoleon express his contempt for Snowball's windmill plans?
 - (a) By spitting on them
 - (b) By giving a scathing speech
 - (c) By urinating on them
 - (d) By writing Snowball a letter
5. Who owns the farm where this story begins?
 - (a) Major
 - (b) Mr. Jones
 - (c) Orwell
 - (d) Benjamin
6. Which Russian leader does Snowball most resemble?
 - (a) Lenin
 - (b) Trotsky
 - (c) Stalin
 - (d) Gorbachev

4.4 Summary

- Eric Arthur Blair (25 June 1903 – 21 January 1950), popular by his pen name George Orwell, was a renowned English author and journalist.
- He is popularly known for the allegorical novella *Animal Farm* (1945) and the dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which together have sold more copies than any two books written by any other author of the 20th-century.
- One biography states that Orwell's first word was "beastly." He was a sick child, often fighting from flu and bronchitis. George Orwell reportedly composed his first poem when he was four years old.
- Like most boys in England, George Orwell was also sent to a boarding school. In 1911 Orwell went to St. Cyprian's in the coastal town of Eastbourne, where he first tasted

Notes

England's class system. On a partial scholarship, George Orwell realised that the school treated the richer students better than the poorer ones. In this school Orwell was distinguished among the other boys by his poverty.

- George Orwell won scholarships to England's two top schools, Eton and Winchester, and chose the former. He stayed in Eton from 1917 to 1921. Aldous Huxley was one of his masters. It was at Eton that Orwell published his first work in college periodicals.
- The story takes place on a farm in England and is told by an all-knowing narrator in the third person. The novel begins when prize-winning boar, Old Major collects all animals of the Manor Farm for a meeting which was organised in the big barn. He narrates his dream and says that in his dream all animals stay together without being controlled or oppressed by any human beings.
- The novel Animal Farm is a satire of the Russian revolution and is thus filled with symbolism. Normally, Orwell links some real characters with the characters of the book.

4.5 Keywords

Bronchitis: It is inflammation of the mucous membrane in the bronchial tubes. It typically causes bronchospasm and coughing.

Commandment: It can be defined as a rule which must be obeyed by one and all alike.

Narrator: A narrator is somebody who narrates something, especially a character who recounts the events of a novel or narrative poem.

Propaganda: A message designed to persuade its intended audience to think and behave in a certain manner can be defined as a propaganda.

Oppressive: It can be defined as the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. It can also be defined as an act or instance of oppressing, the state of being oppressed, and the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally or physically, by troubles, adverse conditions or people, and anxiety.

Rebellion: It can be defined as a refusal of obedience or order. It may also be seen as encompassing a range of behaviours aimed at destroying or taking over the position of an established authority such as a government.

Satire: It is the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Symbolism: The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities is called symbolism.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (a) |
| 3. (a) | 4. (b) |
| 5. (b) | 6. (b) |

4.6 Review Questions

1. Why does Old Major gather all the animals together?
2. Throw light on George Orwell's major works.

3. Throw light on George Orwell's life.
4. Who does Old Major consider as the only real enemy that the animals have?
5. What is the concept of Animalism?
6. What are the seven Commandments mentioned in Animal Farm?
7. What finally happens to Mollie?
8. What is Snowball's scheme for providing electrical power to Animal Farm?
9. What had Napoleon trained his dogs to do? Why?
10. To whom does Orwell relate Snowball and Napoleon to in real life?
11. To whom does Orwell relate Mr. Jones to in real life?
12. Describe Old Benjamin character in the book Animal Farm.

Notes

4.7 Further Readings



Books

- Akivaga S.K., *Notes on George Orwell's Animal Farm*, East African Publishers.
- Ball D. and Orwell G. (1984) *Animal Farm*, Barron's Educational Series.
- Friedman I. (2008) *Animal Farm Revisited: A Tribute to George Orwell*.
- Mitchell A. and Peaslee R. (1993) *The Play of George Orwell's Animal Farm*, Heinemann.



Online links

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_Farm
- <http://www.gradesaver.com/animal-farm/>
- <http://www.shmoop.com/animal-farm/summary.html>

Unit 5: Are the Rich Happy? by Stephen Leacock

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

- 5.1 About Stephen Butler Leacock
 - 5.1.1 Early Life
 - 5.1.2 Academic and Political Life
 - 5.1.3 Literary Life
 - 5.1.4 Memorial Medal for Humour
 - 5.1.5 Personal Life
 - 5.1.6 Death and Tributes
 - 5.1.7 Screen Adaptations
 - 5.1.8 Bibliography
- 5.2 Are the Rich Happy? by Stephen Leacock
 - 5.2.1 Analysis of Are the Rich Happy?
- 5.3 Summary
- 5.4 Keywords
- 5.5 Review Questions
- 5.6 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life of Stephen Butler Leacock
- Explain the works of Stephen Butler Leacock
- Understand the short story *Are the Rich Happy?*
- Analyse *Are the Rich Happy?*

Introduction

Stephen Butler Leacock (1869-1944), is a renowned author of sharp humour and satire. His short stories have some realistic irony exposing the social weaknesses of modern life. This Canadian author will always be remembered for his best-selling book *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) as well as the several awards and honours he received during his illustrious lifetime as professor, author, lecturer and humourist. Born in Swanmore, England, Stephen Leacock was one of 11 children of an unsuccessful farmer and a determined mother, a woman to whom Leacock no doubt owed his status-conscious and energetic nature. While teaching at the prestigious

Upper Canada College in Toronto in 1891, Leacock attained a modern language degree from the University of Toronto. After receiving a Ph.D. in political economy from the University of Chicago in 1903, Leacock joined the staff of McGill University, Montreal, as professor of economics and politics. Leacock's career as a humourist began when he had certain comic pieces published as *Literary Lapses* in 1910. This popular book was followed by two more books of comic sketches, *Nonsense Novels* (1911) and *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is now considered his best book. Leacock continued this frantic literary output for the rest of his career, producing more than 30 books of humour along with social commentaries and biographies. The Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour was established after his death to honour yearly an outstanding Canadian humourist.

"Are You Happy?" written by Stephen Leacock, first appeared in the collection *Further Foolishness: Sketches and Satires on the Follies of the Day* by Stephen Leacock (John Lane Company, 1916). **This essay observes the rich and whether they are happy. Mentioning personal experience and things he's perceived, Leacock assesses and criticises what the rich consider problems.**

In this unit we will study more about Stephen Butler Leacock and the essay *Are the Rich Happy?*

5.1 About Stephen Butler Leacock

Figure 5.1: Stephen Butler Leacock



Source: <http://fryeblog.blog.lib.mcmaster.ca/files/2010/03/leacock.jpg>

Stephen Butler Leacock, (30 December 1869 – 28 March 1944) was an English-born Canadian teacher, writer, political scientist, and humourist. In the early part of the 20th century he was the best-known humourist in the English-speaking world. He is well-known for his light humour along with criticisms of people's irrationalities. The Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour was named in Leacock's honour.

The recipient of several honorary degrees, awards and distinctions (the Lorne Pierce Medal, the Governor General's Award, a postage stamp issued in his honour, the Leacock Medal for Humour established in his honour), Stephen Leacock was world's best known English-speaking humourist in 1915-25.

5.1.1 Early Life

Stephen Leacock was born in Swanmore, Hampshire. Stephen was the third of eleven children born to (Walter) Peter Leacock (b.1848), who was born and grew up at Oak Hill on the Isle of

Notes

Wight, a land that his grandfather had bought after returning from Madeira where his family had made a wealth out of plantations and Leacock's Madeira wine, founded in 1760. Stephen's mother, Agnes, born at Soberton was the youngest daughter by his second wife Caroline Linton Palmer of the Rev. Stephen Butler, of Bury Lodge, the Butler estate that overlooked the village of Hambleton, Hampshire. Stephen Butler, after whom Leacock was named, was the brother of Sir Thomas Dacres Butler and maternal grandson of Admiral James Richard Dacres. Leacock's mother, Agnes was the half-sister of Major Thomas Adair Butler and Major Thomas had acquired the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny.

Peter's father, Thomas Murdock Leacock J.P., had by this time made plans to ultimately send his son out to the colonies. However after discovering that at age eighteen Peter had married Agnes Butler without his permission, virtually instantly Thomas shipped them out to South Africa where he had bought them a farm. The farm in South Africa was unsuccessful and Stephen's parents returned to Hampshire, where he was born. At the age of six, Stephen moved with his family to Canada. In Canada they settled on a farm near the village of Sutton, Ontario, and the shores of Lake Simcoe. Their farm in the town of Georgina in York County also failed, and the family was kept supported by finances sent from Leacock's paternal grandfather. His father became an alcoholic and in the fall of 1878, he journeyed west to Manitoba with his brother E.P. Leacock leaving behind Agnes and the children. This is the subject of Stephen's book *My Remarkable Uncle*, published in 1942.

Stephen Leacock, always of understandable intelligence, was sent by his grandfather to the elite private school of Upper Canada College in Toronto which was also attended by his elder brothers. Here he topped and in his class and was chosen the head boy. After graduating in 1887 Leacock returned home and found that his father had returned from Manitoba. Soon after that, Stephen's father left the family again never to return. There is disagreement about what happened to Peter Leacock. Some people suggest that he went to live in Argentina, while other sources show that he relocated to Nova Scotia and changed his name to Lewis.

Seventeen-year-old Leacock started at University College at the University of Toronto in 1887, where he was admitted to the Zeta Psi fraternity. His first year was financed by a small scholarship, but Leacock found he could not return to his studies the next year because of financial problems. He left the university to work as a teacher — an occupation he totally disliked — at Strathroy, Uxbridge and finally in Toronto. As a teacher at Upper Canada College, he was able to simultaneously attend classes at the University of Toronto. In 1891, Leacock earned his degree through part-time studies. During this time Stephen's first writing was published in *The Varsity*, a campus newspaper.



Task Make a list of Stephen Leacock's works.

5.1.2 Academic and Political Life

Disheartened with teaching, in 1899 Leacock began graduate studies at the University of Chicago under Thorstein Veblen, where he got a doctorate in political economy and political science. He moved from Chicago, Illinois to Montreal, Quebec, where he ultimately became the William Dow Professor of Political Economy and long-time chair of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.

He was closely related to Sir Arthur Currie, former commander of the Canadian Corps in the Great War and principal of McGill from 1919 till his death in 1933. In fact, Currie had been a student seeing Leacock's practice teaching in Strathroy in 1888. In 1936, Stephen was by force retired by the McGill Board of Governors—a doubtful prospect had Currie lived.

Leacock was both a partisan Conservative and social conservative. He opposed giving women the right to vote, hated non-Anglo-Saxon immigration and supported and reinforced the introduction of social welfare legislation. He was a faithful champion of the British Empire and the Imperial Federation Movement and went on lecture tours to take the cause forward.

Even though he was thought of as a candidate for Dominion elections by his party, the party failed to invite the author, lecturer, and maverick to stand for election. However, he would stump for local candidates at his summer home.

5.1.3 Literary Life

Early in his career, Stephen started writing fiction, humour, and short reports to supplement and finally exceed his regular income. His stories which were first published in magazines in the United States and Canada and later in novel form became very famous world-wide. In 1911, it was believed that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than of Canada. Also, Leacock became the most admired humourist in the English-speaking world between the years 1915 and 1925.

A humourist mainly admired by Leacock was Robert Benchley from New York. Stephen Leacock opened correspondence with Benchley, inspiring him in his work and importuning him to assemble his work and form a book. Benchley did so in 1922, and identified the troubles from north of the border.

Towards the end of his life, the American comedian Jack Benny narrated how he was introduced to Stephen Leacock's text by Groucho Marx when they were both young vaudeville comedians. Benny acknowledged Leacock's impact and, fifty years after first reading his works, still considered Leacock one of his favourite comic writers. He was confused as to why Leacock's work was no longer popular in the United States.

In summers, Stephen Leacock lived at Old Brewery Bay, his summer estate in Orillia, across Lake Simcoe from where he was raised and also bordering Lake Couchiching. Old Brewery Bay which was a working farm is now a museum and National Historic Site of Canada. As told by the local barber, Jefferson Short, Leacock got the material which would become *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), set in the thinly-disguised Mariposa.

Although he wrote scholarly articles and books related to his field of study, his political theory is almost forgotten. In 1937, Leacock was awarded the Royal Society of Canada's Lorne Pierce Medal, supposedly for his academic work.

"The proper punishment for the Hohenzollerns, and the Hapsburgs, and the Mecklenburgs, and the Muckendorfs, and all such puppets and princelings, is that they should be made to work; and not made to work in the glittering and glorious sense, as generals and chiefs of staff, and legislators, and land-barons, but in the plain and humble part of labourers looking for a job. (Leacock 1919: 9)"



Notes Stephen Leacock's two masterpieces are *SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN* (1912) and *ARCADIAN ADVENTURES WITH THE IDLE RICH* (1914) *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, by Stephen LEACOCK (Toronto, New York, London, 1912), is a series of vignettes dramatizing the comedy of day-to-day life in Mariposa, a bustling and big-time small town on the shores of the magnificent Lake Wissanotti. Thrumming with self-importance, endowed with a solemnly quirky populace, Mariposa is modelled on ORILLIA, Ont; for generations of readers, it has also been the centre of Leacock's fondest

Contd....

Notes

and most amusing portrait of small-town life. Leacock's humour depends on his gift for creating a straight-faced storyteller, an earnestly deadpan narrator who cannot imagine what his readers are laughing about. Nowhere is this gift more apparent than in Leacock's warm but gently mocking scrutiny of both the foibles and pretensions of his Mariposan Canadians. Arguably Stephen LEACOCK'S funniest book (1914), *Arcadian Adventures* is certainly one of his best and most popular works. It was published two years after *SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN* (1912), and numerous parallels between the two books in overall structure and detail make it a companion piece. The short story cycle portrays the full flowering in a large, unnamed American city (actually based on Montréal) of the seeds of corrupt materialism and individualism already detected in small-town Mariposa. The plutocrats who inhabit Plutoria Avenue pursue money and power, and unrestricted capitalism corrupts the city's social, religious, educational, and political institutions. *Arcadian Adventures* exposes to laughter and ridicule the human greed, hypocrisy and pride behind such things as stock-market scams, the rage for mystical experience, the back-to-nature vogue, financially expedient ecumenism and muck-raking politics. Unlike *Sunshine Sketches*, *Arcadian Adventures* shows sympathy not for those it satirizes but only for their hapless victims. In its bitter satire of the "conspicuous consumption" and leisure of the "idle rich," it shows the influence of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) by Thorstein Veblen, Leacock's teacher at the University of Chicago. As the book proceeds it becomes progressively darker; in its final chapter, "The Great Fight for Clean Government," the triumph of plutocratic totalitarianism grimly foreshadows the violence and tyranny of the 1920s and 1930s.

5.1.4 Memorial Medal for Humour

The Stephen Leacock Associates is a foundation hired to preserve the literary legacy of Stephen Leacock, and manage the annual award of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour. This award is a prestigious honour, given to encourage Canadian humour writing. This award is given to the person who is best in Canadian humour writing. Instituted in 1946, the foundation awarded the first Leacock Medal in 1947. The presentation happens in June each year at the Stephen Leacock Award Dinner, at the Geneva Park Conference Centre in Orillia, Ontario.

5.1.5 Personal Life

Leacock married Beatrix ("Trix") Hamilton, niece of Sir Henry Pellatt (who had built Casa Loma, the largest castle in North America) in 1900. In 1915 which is 15 years after their marriage — the couple had their only child, Stephen Lushington Leacock. While Leacock doted on his kid, it became obvious early on that "Stevie" suffered from a lack of growth hormone. Growing to become only four feet tall, the boy had a love-hate relationship with Leacock, who treated him like a child. In 1925, his wife Beatrix Hamilton died because of breast cancer.

One of Canada's leading humour writers, Stephen Leacock was born in England in 1869. His father, Peter Leacock, and his mother, Agnes Emma Butler Leacock, both belonged to affluent families. The family, consisting of eleven children, settled in Canada in 1876, living on a one hundred-acre farm in Sutton, Ontario. There Stephen Leacock was home-schooled until he joined Upper Canada College, Toronto. He then entered the University of Toronto to study literature and languages. Despite completing two years of study in one year, he was forced to leave the university because his father had abandoned the family. Instead, Leacock enrolled in a three-month course at Strathroy Collegiate Institute to become a qualified high school teacher.



Notes

Did u know? He grew up on a farm near Lake Simcoe, Ont, and was educated at Upper Canada College (where he taught for 9 years), the University of Toronto and the University of Chicago, where he studied economics and political science (PhD 1903). On the 15th of December, 1925, Leacock's wife Beatrix (Trix) died of breast cancer.

Leacock's first appointment was at Uxbridge High School, Ontario, but he was soon offered a post at Upper Canada College, where he continued from 1889 through 1899. At this point in time, he also started part-time studies again at the University of Toronto, graduating with B.A. in 1891. Though, Stephen Leacock's actual interests were turning towards economics and political theory. In 1899 Leacock was accepted for postgraduate studies at the University of Chicago, where he got his Ph.D. in 1903. Leacock married Beatrix Hamilton, an aspiring actress in 1900 and the Beatrix gave birth to a baby boy in 1915.

Stephen Leacock was offered a post at McGill University, where he continued till his retirement in 1936. In 1906, he wrote *Elements of Political Science*, which continued to be a standard college textbook for the next twenty years. It became Leacock's most profitable book. Leacock also began lecturing and public speaking, and he took an year's leave of absence in 1907 to speak in Canada on the topic of national unity. He usually spoke on the British Empire or on national unity for the rest of his life.

In 1894, Leacock started submitting articles to the Toronto humour magazine *Grip* and soon was publishing several humorous articles in American and Canadian magazines. In 1910, Leacock privately published the best of these as *Literary Lapses*. The book was spotted by a British publisher, John Lane, who brought out editions in New York and London, promising Leacock's future as a writer. This was established by *Nonsense Novels* (1911), and possibly his best book of humorous sketches, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Leacock's humorous style was reminiscent of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain at their brightest. However, his *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914) is a darker collection that ridicules city life. Collections of sketches continued to follow almost yearly at times, with a blend of parody, whimsy, satire and nonsense that was never bitter. Leacock was extremely popular in Canada, in Britain and the United States.

In later life, Leacock wrote on the art of humour writing and also published biographies of Dickens and Twain. After retirement, a lecture tour to western Canada led to his book *My Discovery of the West: A Discussion of East and West in Canada* (1937), for which he won the Governor General's Award. He also earned the Mark Twain medal and received several honorary doctorates. Other nonfiction books on Canadian topics followed and he began working on an autobiography. Leacock died in Toronto in 1944 of throat cancer. A prize for the best humour writing in Canada was named after him, and Leacock's house at Orillia on the banks of Lake Couchiching became the Stephen Leacock Museum.

5.1.6 Death and Tributes

Predeceased by Trix who had died of breast cancer in 1925, Leacock was survived by Stevie, who died in his fifties. According to his wishes, after dying of throat cancer, Leacock was buried in the St George the Martyr Churchyard (St. George's Church, Sibbald Point), Sutton, Ontario.

Soon after his death, Barbara Nimmo, his niece, benefactor and literary executor, published two major posthumous works: *The Boy I Left Behind Me* (1946) and *Last Leaves* (1945). His physical legacy was less valued, and his abandoned summer cottage became neglected. In 1958 it was saved from oblivion when it was declared a National Historic Site of Canada. Since then is being operated as a museum called the Stephen Leacock Memorial Home.

Notes

The Stephen Leacock Award was formed in 1947, to identify the best in Canadian literary humour. In 1969, the centennial of his birth, Canada Post distributed a six cent stamp with his image on it. The next year, the Stephen Leacock Centennial Committee had a plaque erected at his English birthplace and a mountain in the Yukon was named after him.

Numerous buildings in Canada are named after Leacock, including the Stephen Leacock Building at McGill University, Stephen Leacock Public School in Ottawa, a theatre in Keswick, Ontario, and a school in Toronto.

5.1.7 Screen Adaptations

Two of Stephen Leacock's short stories were adapted as National Film Board of Canada animated shorts by Gerald Potterton: *The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones* and *My Financial Career*. Based on *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, *Sunshine Sketches* aired on CBC Television in 1952-1953. It was the first Canadian broadcast of an English-language dramatic series, as it debuted on the first night that television was broadcast in Toronto. In 2012, a screen adaptation based on *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* was aired on CBC Television to celebrate both the 75th anniversary of the CBC and the 100th anniversary of Leacock's unique and original collection of short stories. The recent screen adaptation featured Gordon Pinsent as a mature Leacock.

5.1.8 Bibliography

Fiction

- *Literary Lapses* (1910)
- *Nonsense Novels* (1911)
- *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912)
- *Behind the Beyond* (1913)
- *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914)
- *Essays and Literary Studies* (1916)
- *Further Foolishness* (1916)
- *Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy* (1915)
- *Winsome Winnie* (1920)
- *Frenzied Fiction* (1918)
- *Over the Footlights* (1923)
- *The Hohenzollerns in America* (1919)
- *My Discovery of England* (1922)
- *The Garden of Folly* (1924)
- *College Days* (1923)
- *The Dry Pickwick* (1932)
- *Winnowed Wisdom* (1926)
- *The Iron Man and the Tin Woman* (1929)
- *Short Circuits* (1928)

Notes

- Afternoons in Utopia (1932)
- Hellements of Hickonomics in Hiccoughs of Verse Done in Our Social Planning Mill (1936)
- Too Much College (1939)
- My Discovery of the West (1937)
- Funny Pieces (1936)
- Model Memoirs (1938)
- How to Write (1943)
- My Remarkable Uncle (1942)
- Happy Stories (1943)
- Last Leaves (1945)

Non-fiction

- Elements of Political Science (1906)
- The Dawn of Canadian History (1914)
- Practical Political Economy (1910)
- Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks: Responsible Government (1907)
- Adventurers of the Far North (1914)
- The Mariner of St. Malo (1914)
- Economic Prosperity in the British Empire (1930)
- The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice (1920)
- Mackenzie, Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks (1926)
- The Economic Prosperity of the British Empire (1931)
- Humour and Humanity (1937)
- *Humour: Its Theory and Technique, with Examples and Samples* (1935)
- The Greatest Pages of American Humor (1936)
- Here Are My Lectures (1937)
- Our Heritage of Liberty (1942)
- Our British Empire (1940)
- While There Is Time (1945)
- *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future* (1941)
- *Montreal: Seaport and City* (1942)
- Canada and the Sea (1944)

Biography

- *Charles Dickens: His Life and Work* (1933)
- Mark Twain (1932)

Notes

Autobiography

- The Boy I Left Behind Me (1946)

Quotations

- “Professor Leacock has made more people laugh with the written word than any other living author. One may say he is one of the greatest jesters, the greatest humorist of the age.”

— A. P. Herbert

- “Lord Ronald ... flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions.”

— Nonsense Novels, “Gertrude the Governess”, 1911

- ““He is still inimitable. No one, anywhere in the world, can reduce a thing to ridicule with such few short strokes. He is the Grock of literature.”

— Evening Standard

- “Hockey captures the essence of Canadian experience in the New World. In a land so inescapably and inhospitably cold, hockey is the chance of life, and an affirmation that despite the deathly chill of winter we are alive.”

- Mr Leacock is as ‘bracing’ as the seaside place of John Hassall’s famous poster. His wisdom is always humorous, and his humour is always wise.”

— Sunday Times

- “I detest life-insurance agents: they always argue that I shall some day die, which is not so.”

5.2 Are the Rich Happy? by Stephen Leacock

Let me admit at the outset that I write this essay without adequate material. I have never known, I have never seen, any rich people. Very often I have thought that I had found them. But it turned out that it was not so. They were not rich at all. They were quite poor. They were hard up. They were pushed for money. They didn’t know where to turn for ten thousand dollars.

In all the cases that I have examined this same error has crept in. I had often imagined, from the fact of people keeping fifteen servants, that they were rich. I had supposed that because a woman rode down town in a limousine to buy a fifty-dollar hat, she must be well-to-do. Not at all. All these people turn out on examination to be not rich. They are cramped. They say it themselves. Pinched, I think is the word they use. When I see a glittering group of eight people in a stage box at the opera, I know that they are all pinched. The fact that they ride home in a limousine has nothing to do with it.

A friend of mine who has ten thousand dollars a year told me the other day with a sigh that he found it quite impossible to keep up with the rich. On his income he couldn’t do it. A family that I know who have twenty thousand a year have told me the same thing. They can’t keep up with the rich. There is no use in trying. A man that I respect very much who has an income of fifty thousand dollars a year from his law practice has told me with the greatest frankness that he finds it absolutely impossible to keep up with the rich. He says it is better to face the brutal fact of being poor. He says he can only give me a plain meal, what he calls a home dinner—it takes three men and two women to serve it—and he begs me to put up with it.

As far as I remember, I have never met Mr. Carnegie. But I know that if I did he would tell me that he found it quite impossible to keep up with Mr. Rockefeller. No doubt Mr. Rockefeller has the same feeling. On the other hand there are, and there must be, rich people somewhere. I run across traces of them all the time. The janitor in the building where I work has told me that he has a rich cousin in England who is in the South Western Railway and gets ten pounds a week. He says the railway wouldn't know what to do without him. In the same way the lady who washes at my house has a rich uncle. He lives in Winnipeg and owns his own house, clear, and has two girls at the high school.

But these are only reported cases of richness. I cannot vouch for them myself.

When I speak therefore of rich people and discuss whether they are happy, it is understood that I am merely drawing my conclusions from the people that I see and know.

My judgment is that the rich undergo cruel trials and bitter tragedies of which the poor know nothing.

In the first place I find that the rich suffer perpetually from money troubles. The poor sit snugly at home while sterling exchange falls ten points in a day. Do they care? Not a bit. An adverse balance of trade washes over the nation like a flood. Who have to mop it up? The rich. Call money rushes up to a hundred per cent, and the poor can still sit and laugh at a ten cent moving picture show and forget it.

But the rich are troubled by money all the time.

I know a man, for example—his name is Spugg—whose private bank account was overdrawn last month twenty thousand dollars. He told me so at dinner at his club, with apologies for feeling out of sorts. He said it was bothering him. He said he thought it rather unfair of his bank to have called his attention to it. I could sympathise, in a sort of way, with his feelings. My own account was overdrawn twenty cents at the time. I knew that if the bank began calling in overdrafts it might be my turn next. Spugg said he supposed he'd have to telephone his secretary in the morning to sell some bonds and cover it. It seemed an awful thing to have to do. Poor people are never driven to this sort of thing. I have known cases of their having to sell a little furniture, perhaps, but imagine having to sell the very bonds out of one's desk. There's a bitterness about it that the poor can never know.

With this same man, Mr. Spugg, I have often talked of the problem of wealth. He is a self-made man and he has told me again and again that the wealth he has accumulated is a mere burden to him. He says that he was much happier when he had only the plain, simple things of life. Often as I sit at dinner with him over a meal of nine courses, he tells me how much he would prefer a plain bit of boiled pork, with a little mashed turnip. He says that if he had his way he would make his dinner out of a couple of sausages, fried with a bit of bread. I forget what it is that stands in his way. I have seen Spugg put aside his glass of champagne—or his glass after he had drunk his champagne—with an expression of something like contempt. He says that he remembers a running creek at the back of his father's farm where he used to lie at full length upon the grass and drink his fill. Champagne, he says, never tasted like that. I have suggested that he should lie on his stomach on the floor of the club and drink a saucerful of soda water. But he won't.

I know well that my friend Spugg would be glad to be rid of his wealth altogether, if such a thing were possible. Till I understood about these things, I always imagined that wealth could be given away. It appears that it can not. It is a burden that one must carry. Wealth, if one has enough of it, becomes a form of social service. One regards it as a means of doing good to the world, of helping to brighten the lives of others, in a word, a solemn trust. Spugg has often

Notes

talked with me so long and so late on this topic—the duty of brightening the lives of others—that the waiter who held blue flames for his cigarettes fell asleep against a door post, and the chauffeur outside froze to the seat of his motor.

Spugg's wealth, I say, he regards as a solemn trust. I have often asked him why he didn't give it, for example, to a college. But he tells me that unfortunately he is not a college man. I have called his attention to the need of further pensions for college professors; after all that Mr. Carnegie and others have done, there are still thousands and thousands of old professors of thirty-five and even forty, working away day after day and getting nothing but what they earn themselves, and with no provision beyond the age of eighty-five. But Mr. Spugg says that these men are the nation's heroes. Their work is its own reward.

But after all, Mr. Spugg's troubles—for he is a single man with no ties—are in a sense selfish. It is perhaps in the homes—or more properly in the residences—of the rich that the great silent tragedies are being enacted every day—tragedies of which the fortunate poor know and can know nothing.

I saw such a case only a few nights ago at the house of the Ashcroft-Fowlers, where I was dining. As we went in to dinner, Mrs. Ashcroft-Fowler said in a quiet aside to her husband, "Has Meadows spoken?" He shook his head rather gloomily and answered, "No, he has said nothing yet." I saw them exchange a glance of quiet sympathy and mutual help, like people in trouble, who love one another.

They were old friends and my heart beat for them. All through the dinner as Meadows—he was their butler—poured out the wine with each course, I could feel that some great trouble was impending over my friends.

After Mrs. Ashcroft-Fowler had risen and left us, and we were alone over our port wine, I drew my chair near to Fowler's and I said, "My dear Fowler, I'm an old friend and you'll excuse me if I seem to be taking a liberty. But I can see that you and your wife are in trouble."

"Yes," he said very sadly and quietly, "we are."

"Excuse me," I said. "Tell me—for it makes a thing easier if one talks about it—is it anything about Meadows?"

"Yes," he said. "It is about Meadows."

There was silence for a moment, but I knew already what Fowler was going to say. I could feel it coming.

"Meadows," he said presently, constraining himself to speak with as little emotion as possible, "is leaving us."

"Poor old chap!" I said, taking his hand.

"It's hard, isn't it?" he said. "Franklin left last winter—no fault of ours; we did everything we could—and now Meadows."

There was almost a sob in his voice.

"He hasn't spoken definitely as yet," Fowler went on, "but we know there's hardly any chance of his staying."

"Does he give any reason?" I asked.

"Nothing specific," said Fowler. "It's just a sheer case of incompatibility. Meadows doesn't like us."

He put his hand over his face and was silent.

I left very quietly a little later, without going up to the drawing room. A few days afterwards I heard that Meadows had gone. The Ashcroft-Fowlers, I am told, are giving up in despair. They are going to take a little suite of ten rooms and four baths in the Grand Palaver Hotel, and rough it there for the winter.

Yet one must not draw a picture of the rich in colours altogether gloomy. There are cases among them of genuine, light-hearted happiness.

I have observed that this is especially the case among those of the rich who have the good fortune to get ruined, absolutely and completely ruined. They may do this on the Stock Exchange or by banking or in a dozen other ways. The business side of getting ruined is not difficult. Once the rich are ruined, they are—as far as my observation goes—all right. They can then have anything they want.

I saw this point illustrated again just recently. I was walking with a friend of mine and a motor passed bearing a neatly dressed young man, chatting gaily with a pretty woman. My friend raised his hat and gave it a jaunty and cheery swing in the air as if to wave goodwill and happiness.

“Poor old Edward Overjoy!” he said, as the motor moved out of sight.

“What’s wrong with him?” I asked.

“Hadn’t you heard?” said my friend. “He’s ruined—absolutely cleaned out—not a cent left.”

“Dear me!” I said. “That’s awfully hard. I suppose he’ll have to sell that beautiful motor?”

My friend shook his head. “Oh, no,” he said. “He’ll hardly do that. I don’t think his wife would care to sell that.”

My friend was right. The Overjoys have not sold their motor. Neither have they sold their magnificent sandstone residence. They are too much attached to it, I believe, to sell it. Some people thought they would have given up their box at the opera. But it appears not. They are too musical to care to do that. Meantime it is a matter of general notoriety that the Overjoys are absolutely ruined; in fact, they haven’t a single cent. You could buy Overjoy—so I am informed—for ten dollars.

But I observe that he still wears a seal-lined coat worth at least five hundred.



Caution Remember that in his essay *Are the Rich Happy?* Stephen Leacock only states the problems of the rich people; he doesn’t say that the rich are always unhappy.

5.2.1 Analysis of Are the Rich Happy?

From 1908 until his retirement in 1936, Leacock was the head of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. In his free time, Leacock published several best-selling collections of humorous tales and essays.

Written by Stephen Leacock, the satirical essay “Are You Happy?” initially appeared in the collection *Further Foolishness: Sketches and Satires on the Follies of the Day* by Stephen Leacock (John Lane Company, 1916). In this essay, Leacock anticipates F. Scott Fitzgerald’s observation that the “very rich . . . are different from you and me” (“The Rich Boy”).

This essay *Are You Happy?* studies the rich and whether they are happy. Referring to personal experience and things Leacock has perceived, he assesses and criticizes what the rich consider problems. He mentions that when they lose a servant, it’s a tragedy, and examining their

Notes

problems Leacock tries to figure out whether they are content or not. Leacock doesn't clarify if he believes the rich are happy but it's easy to assume that because even on the most concentrate financial issues, they end up bitter. Even though the essay is not dynamic, there's a lot of narration.



Example: The essay is a perfect example of an important literary device: sarcasm. Stephen portrays his opinion using sarcasm, it all depends on whether the reader gets it or not, but the sarcasm used and some irony is what makes the text worthwhile. Also because he uses personal experiences, the reader gets more engaged in the text and this helps him gain credibility.

Self Assessment

State true or false:

1. Stephen Butler Leacock is a renowned author of sharp humour and satire.
2. Stephen Leacock's best-selling book was *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.
3. The Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour was established to honour after his death annually an outstanding Canadian humourist.
4. From 1910 till 1933, Stephen Leacock headed the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec.
5. *Are the Rich Happy* written by Stephen examines the rich and whether they are happy.

5.3 Summary

- Stephen Butler Leacock (1869-1944), is a renowned author of sharp humour and satire. His short stories have some realistic irony exposing the social weaknesses of modern life.
- In 1891, while teaching at the prestigious Upper Canada College in Toronto, Leacock obtained a modern language degree from the University of Toronto. In 1903, after receiving a Ph.D. in political economy from the University of Chicago, he joined the staff of McGill University, Montreal, as professor of politics and economics.
- Stephen Leacock was born in Swanmore, Hampshire. He was the third of eleven children born to (Walter) Peter Leacock (b.1848), who was born and grew up at Oak Hill on the Isle of Wight, an estate that his grandfather had purchased after returning from Madeira where his family had made a fortune out of plantations and Leacock's Madeira wine, founded in 1760.
- Disillusioned with teaching, in 1899 he began graduate studies at the University of Chicago under Thorstein Veblen, where he received a doctorate in political science and political economy. He moved from Chicago, Illinois to Montreal, Quebec, where he eventually became the William Dow Professor of Political Economy and long-time chair of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.
- Early in his career, Leacock turned to fiction, humour, and short reports to supplement (and ultimately exceed) his regular income. His stories, first published in magazines in Canada and the United States and later in novel form, became extremely popular around the world. It was said in 1911 that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada.

Notes

- The Stephen Leacock Associates is a foundation chartered to preserve the literary legacy of Stephen Leacock, and oversee the annual award of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour.
- Predeceased by Trix (who had died of breast cancer in 1925), Leacock was survived by Stevie, who died in his fifties. In accordance with his wishes, after his death from throat cancer, Leacock was buried in the St George the Martyr Churchyard (St. George's Church, Sibbald Point), Sutton, Ontario
- A number of buildings in Canada are named after Leacock, including the Stephen Leacock Building at McGill University, Stephen Leacock Public School in Ottawa, a theatre in Keswick, Ontario, and a school in Toronto.
- Two Leacock short stories have been adapted as National Film Board of Canada animated shorts by Gerald Potterton: My Financial Career and The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones.
- Written by Stephen Leacock, this essay "Are the Rich Happy?" originally appeared in the collection Further Foolishness: Sketches and Satires on the Follies of the Day by Stephen Leacock (John Lane Company, 1916).
- This essay examines the rich and whether they are happy. Referring to personal experience and things he's perceived Leacock criticizes what the rich consider problems.

5.4 Keywords

Criticise: It means to indicate the faults of someone or something in a disapproving way.

Humorous: It is something that causes laughter and amusement.

Legacy: It can be defined as something left or handed down by a predecessor.

Magnificent: Something extremely beautiful, elaborate, or impressive.

Preserve: It means to maintain something in its original or existing state.

Prestigious: It means inspiring admiration and respect and having high status.

Satire: It can be defined as the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues

Supplement: It is a thing added to something else in order to complete or enhance it.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. True
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. True

5.5 Review Questions

1. Write an introductory paragraph about Stephen Leacock?
2. Throw light on Stephen Leacock life.
3. Talk about Stephen Leacock's later years and death.

Notes

4. What is the Stephen Leacock Associates?
5. Throw light on Stephen Leacock major works.
6. Talk about the academic life of Stephen Leacock.
7. What according to Stephen are the problems of the rich people?
8. Which literary device is used in the essay *Are the Rich Happy?* written by Stephen Leacock?
9. Where did this essay originally appear?
10. Write a summary of the essay *Are the Rich Happy?* in your own words.
11. Who was Barbara Nimmo? What did she do after Stephen's death?
12. How was the American comedian Jack Benny introduced to Leacock's writing?

5.6 Further Readings



Books

Davies R. (1970) *Stephen Leacock*, McClelland and Stewart.

Leacock S. (2005) *Further Foolishness: Sketches and Satires on the Follies of the Day*, Kessinger Publishing.

Leacock S. (2006) *Literary Lapses*, Echo Library.

Lynch G. (1988) *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*, McGill-Queen's Press.

MacMillan M. (2009) *Stephen Leacock*, Penguin Canada.



Online links

<http://leacock.ca/>

<http://leacock.ca/about/stephen-leacock/>

<http://www.editoreric.com/greatlit/authors/Leacock.html>

<http://www.online-literature.com/stephen-leacock/further-foolishness/16/>

Unit 6: Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

- 6.1 About John Keats
 - 6.1.1 Early Life
 - 6.1.2 Early Career
 - 6.1.3 Wentworth Place
 - 6.1.4 Isabella Jones and Fanny Brawne
 - 6.1.5 Last Months: Rome
 - 6.1.6 Death
 - 6.1.7 Reception
 - 6.1.8 Biographical Controversy
 - 6.1.9 Letters
- 6.2 John Keats's Works
- 6.3 Poem
 - 6.3.1 Explanation
 - 6.3.2 Analysis
- 6.4 Summary
- 6.5 Keywords
- 6.6 Review Questions
- 6.7 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about John Keats
- Explain major works of John Keats
- Have an enduring poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'
- Analyse the poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'

Introduction

A renowned English romantic poet John Keats was born in London on October 31, 1795. The eldest of four children, he lost his parents at a very young age. John's father, a livery-stable keeper, died when he was eight and his mother died six years later of tuberculosis. After his

Notes

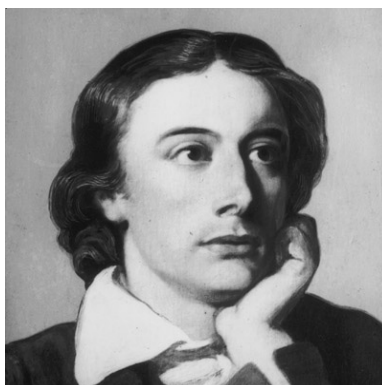
mother's death, John Keats's maternal grandmother chose two London merchants, John Rowland Sandell and Richard Abbey, as caretakers. Abbey, a well-to-do tea broker, assumed the bulk of this responsibility, while Sandell played only a trivial role. Abbey withdrew John Keats from the Clarke School, Enfield, when John was fifteen years of age, to apprentice with an apothecary-surgeon and study medicine in a London hospital. John Keats became a licensed apothecary in 1816, but he never practiced his profession, he instead decided to write poetry.

The poem written by John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", is amongst the most memorable and enduring of all the poems of the Romantic Period. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is famous for its deep meditation and convincing conclusions about the nature of beauty, mainly as beauty is depicted in artistic media.

In this unit we will study more about John Keats and the poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

6.1 About John Keats

Figure 6.1: John Keats



Source: <http://www.biography.com/imported/images/Biography/Images/Profiles/K/John-Keats-9361568-1-402.jpg>

John Keats was a famous English Romantic poet. He was amongst the most important figures of the second generation of romantic poets along with Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, in spite of the fact that his work only got published for four years before his death.

Even though his poems were not usually well received by critics during Keats life, his reputation grew after his death. By the end of the 19th century he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. He had an influential impact on a diverse range of later poets and writers. Jorge Luis Borges stated that his first encounter with Keats was the most significant literary experience of his life.

The poetry of Keats is characterized by sensual imagery, most notably in the series of odes. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular and most analysed in English literature.

6.1.1 Early Life

John Keats was born on 31 October 1795 to Thomas and Frances Jennings Keats. John Keats and his family appeared to have marked his birthday on 29 October; however baptism records give the birth date as the 31st. He was the first-born of four surviving children; George (1797–1841), Thomas (1799–1818) and Frances Mary "Fanny" (1803–1889). John Keats was born in central London though not much evidence is available of the exact location. His father first worked as

a hostler at the stables attached to the Swan and Hoop inn, an establishment he later managed and where the growing family lived for a few years. Keats thought that he was born at the inn, a birthplace of humble origins, but no evidence is available to support this. The Keats at the Globe pub now occupies the site, a few yards from modern day Moorgate station. Keats was baptised at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate and was sent to a local dame school as a child.

Keats parents couldn't afford Eton or Harrow, so in the summer of 1803 he was sent to board at John Clarke's school in Enfield, close to his grandparents' house. The small school had a generous, advanced outlook and a progressive curriculum more up-to-date than the larger, more prestigious schools. In the family atmosphere at Clarke's, Keats developed an interest in classics and history which would stay with him throughout his short life. The headmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, would become a significant influence, friend and mentor, introducing Keats to Renaissance literature including Tasso, Spenser and Chapman's translations. Keats is called a volatile character "always in extremes", given to fighting and indolence. At the age of 13 he started focusing his energy towards reading and study and won his first academic prize in midsummer 1809.

In April 1804, when Keats was eight old, his father deceased after fracturing his skull falling from his horse when returning from visiting John and his brother George at the school. Thomas died unheard. Frances married again two months later, but left her new spouse soon afterwards and the four children went to stay with their grandmother, Alice Jennings, in the village of Edmonton. In March 1810, Keats lost his mother at the age of 14. She died of tuberculosis leaving the children in their grandmother's custody. She appointed two caretakers, John Sandell and Richard Abbey, to take care of him. That autumn, Keats left Clarke's school to apprentice with Thomas Hammond, a surgeon and apothecary, neighbour and doctor of the Jennings family, and lodged in the attic above the surgery at 7 Church Street until 1813. Cowden Clarke, who remained a close friend of Keats, described this as "the most placid time in Keats's life".

6.1.2 Early Career

From 1814 John Keats had two inheritances held in trust for him until his 21st birthday: £800 willed by his grandfather John Jennings (about £34,000 in today's money) and a share of his mother's legacy, £8000 (about £340,000 today), to be equally distributed between her living children. It appears he was not told of either, since he never applied for any of the money. Historically, blame has often been put on Abbey as legal caretaker, but he may have also been unaware. William Walton, solicitor for John Keats's mother and grandmother, certainly knew and had a duty to communicate the information to Keats. It looks like he did not do so. The money would have made a crucial difference to the poet's expectations. Money was always a matter of great concern and difficulty for him, as he fought to stay out of debt and make his way in the world independently.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer
 Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies

Notes

When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific — and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"
October 1816

After finishing his apprenticeship with Hammond, John Keats registered as a medical student at Guy's Hospital (now part of King's College London) and began there in October 1815. In a month of starting, Keats was accepted as a dresser at the hospital, assisting surgeons during operations, and became almost equal to a junior house surgeon of today. It was an important promotion marking a different aptitude for medicine, the position increased workload and responsibility. His long and expensive medical training with Hammond and at Guy's Hospital led his family to accept that this would be his lifelong career which would assure financial security, and it look like that at this point Keats had an honest desire to become a doctor. Keats lodged near the hospital at 28 St Thomas's Street in Southwark, with other medical students.

Keats's training took up growing amounts of his writing time and he felt increasingly unsure about his medical profession. John Keats's first surviving poem, *An Imitation of Spenser*, had been written in 1814, when Keats was only 19 years of age. Now, powerfully drawn by ambition, encouraged by fellow poets such as Byron and Leigh Hunt, and beleaguered by family monetary crises, he suffered stages of depression. His brother George wrote that John "feared that he should never be a poet, & if he was not he would destroy himself". John Keats, in 1816 received his apothecary's licence making him eligible to practise as an apothecary, physician and surgeon, but before the end of the year he announced to his custodian that he was determined to be a poet and not a surgeon.

Although he continued working and his training at Guy's, John Keats was giving increasing time to the study of literature, experimenting with verse forms, mainly at this time sonnets., Leigh Hunt agreed to publish the sonnet *O Solitude* in his magazine *The Examiner* in May 1816. *The Examiner* was a leading liberal magazine back then. It is the first appearance of Keats's poems in print and Charles Cowden Clarke mentions it as his friend's red letter day, first proof that Keats's ambitions were valid and effective. In summers the same year, he went with Clarke to the seaside town of Margate to write. There he began *Calidore* and started the era of his great letter writing. After returning to London he took lodgings at 8 Dean Street, Southwark and braced himself for further study in order to become a member of the Royal College of Surgeons.

In October, Clarke familiarised Keats to the influential Hunt, a close friend of Byron and Shelley. Five months later *Poems*, the first volume of Keats verse, was published, which comprised of "Sleep and Poetry" and "I stood tiptoe", both poems powerfully influenced by Hunt. It was a serious failure, arousing little interest, although Reynolds studied it favourably in *The Champion*. Clarke commented that the book "might have emerged in Timbuctoo". Keats's publishers, Charles and James Ollier, felt embarrassed because of the book. Keats instantly changed publishers to Taylor and Hessey on Fleet Street. Unlike Olliers, Keats's new publishers were enthusiastic about his work. Within a month of the publication of *Poems* they were planning a new Keats volume and had given him an advance. Hessey became a stable friend to Keats and made the firm's rooms available for young writers to meet. Their publishing lists would come to include Coleridge, Hazlitt, Clare, Hogg, Carlyle and Lamb.

At Taylor and Hessey Keats met their Eton-educated lawyer Richard Woodhouse. Woodhouse, who advised the publishers on literary and legal matters, was extremely impressed by *Poems*. Though he noted that Keats could be "wayward, trembling, easily daunted", Woodhouse was

sure of Keats's genius, a poet to support as he became one of England's greatest writers. Soon after meeting, the two became close friends and Woodhouse started collecting Keatsiana, documenting as much as he possibly could about Keats's poetry, an archive that continues as one of the major sources of information on Keats's work. Motion casts him as Boswell to Keats' Johnson, continually promoting the writer's work, fighting his corner, encouraging his poetry on to greater heights. At the end, Woodhouse would be one of the few people to accompany Keats to Gravesend to embark on his final trip to Rome.

In spite of the unfavourable reviews of *Poems*, Hunt published the sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* and the essay *Three Young Poets* (Shelley, Keats and Reynolds), predicting great things to come. He introduced Keats to numerous prominent men in his circle, including editor of *The Times* Thomas Barnes, writer Charles Lamb, conductor Vincent Novello and poet John Hamilton Reynolds, who became a close friend. He was also meeting William Hazlitt frequently, an influential literary figure of the day. It was a significant turning point for Keats, establishing him in the public eye as a figure in, what Hunt termed 'a new school of poetry'. At this time Keats wrote to his friend Bailey: "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the imagination. What imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth". This would eventually transmute into the concluding lines of *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" – that is all/you know on earth, and all ye need to know". In early December, under the strong influence of his artistic friends, Keats said to Abbey that he had decided to give up medicine in favour of poetry, to Abbey's fury. Keats had spent a great deal on his medical training and had made numerous large loans that he could barely afford.

After leaving his training at the hospital, suffering from a series of colds, and unhappy with living in damp rooms in London, Keats relocated with his brothers into rooms at 1 Well Walk in the village of Hampstead in April 1817. Both George and John nursed their brother Tom, who was suffering from tuberculosis. The house was close to Hunt and others from his circle in Hampstead, as well as to Coleridge, respected elder of the first wave of Romantic poets. Around this time he got introduced to Charles Wentworth Dilke, Benjamin Bailey and James Rice.

Keats met and became engaged to Frances (Fanny) Brawne Lindon (9 August 1800 – 4 December 1865) also known for her betrothal to Keats, a fact largely unknown until 1878, when Keats's letters to her were published. Their engagement, lasting from December 1818 until Keats's death in February 1821, spanned some of the most poetically productive years of his life.

In June 1818, John Keats started a walking tour of Scotland, Ireland and the Lake District with his friend Charles Armitage Brown. They lived in Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky until 1841 when George's investments failed. Like Keats' other brother, they died poor and pained by tuberculosis. No effective treatment was available for the disease until 1921. In July, while on the Isle of Mull, Keats caught a bad cold and "was too thin and fevered to proceed on the journey". After his return south in August, Keats continuously nursed Tom, exposing himself to infection. Some biographers suggest that this is when tuberculosis, his "family disease", first took hold. Tom Keats died on 1 December 1818.

6.1.3 Wentworth Place

John Keats relocated to the newly built Wentworth Place which was owned by his friend Charles Armitage Brown. It was also on the edge of Hampstead Heath, ten minutes' walk south of his old home in Well Walk. The winter of 1818–19, despite being a problematic period for the poet, marked the beginning of his *annus mirabilis* in which Keats wrote his most mature work. He had been enthused by a series of recent lectures by Hazlitt on English poets and poetic identity and had also met William Wordsworth. Keats may have appeared to his friends to be living on comfortable means, but in reality he was borrowing frequently from Abbey and his friends.

Notes

He composed five of his six great odes at Wentworth Place in April and May and, even though it is discussed in which order they were written, "Ode to Psyche" opened the published series. Brown believed that "Ode to a Nightingale" was composed under a plum tree in a garden. Brown wrote, "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feelings on the song of our nightingale." Dilke, co-owner of the house, tirelessly denied the story, printed in Milnes' 1848 biography of Keats, considering it as pure delusion.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singing of summer in full-throated ease.

First stanza of "Ode to a Nightingale",
May 1819

"Ode on Melancholy" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" were inspired by sonnet forms and possibly written after "Ode to a Nightingale". John Keats's new and progressive publishers Taylor and Hessey issued *Endymion*, which Keats devoted to Thomas Chatterton, a work that he called "a trial of my Powers of Imagination". It was damned by the critics, giving rise to Byron's quip that Keats was ultimately "snuffed out by an article", signifying that he never truly got over it. A chiefly harsh review by John Wilson Croker appeared in the April 1818 edition of *The Quarterly Review*. "John Gibson Lockhart writing in *Blackwood's Magazine* defined *Endymion* as "imperturbable drivelling idiocy". With sharp sarcasm, Lockhart advised, "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr John, back to plasters, pills, and ointment boxes". It was Lockhart at Blackwoods who invented the defamatory term "the Cockney School" for Hunt and his circle, which consisted of both Keats and Hazlitt. The dismissal was as much political as literary, meant to upstart young writers deemed uncouth for their lack of education, non-formal rhyming and "low diction". They had not attended Eton, Harrow or Oxbridge and they were not from the upper classes.

John Keats in 1819, wrote *The Eve of St. Agnes*, "La Belle Dame sans Merci", *Hyperion*, *Lamia* and *Otho* (critically damned and not dramatised until 1950). The poems "Bards of passion and of mirth" and "Fancy" were inspired by the garden of Wentworth Place. In September, short of finances and in despair considering taking up a post as a ship's surgeon or journalism, he went to his publishers with a new book of poems. They were uninspired with the collection, finding the presented versions of "Lamia" confusing, and describing "St Agnes" as having a "sense of pettish disgust" and "a 'Don Juan' style of mingling up sentiment and sneering" saying it was "a poem unfit for ladies". The last volume Keats lived to see, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, was finally published in July 1820. It received much more recognition than had *Endymion* or *Poems*, finding favourable notices in both *Edinburgh Review* and *The Examiner*. It was recognised as one of the most significant poetic works ever published.

Wentworth Place now houses the Keats House museum.

6.1.4 Isabella Jones and Fanny Brawne

Notes

Keats became friends with Isabella Jones in May 1817, while on holiday in the village of Bo Peep, near Hastings. She is described as talented, beautiful and widely read, not of the top flight of society yet financially secure, a mysterious figure who would become a part of Keats's circle. All through their friendship Keats never hesitates to own his sexual attraction to her, though it looks like they enjoy circling each other rather than giving commitment. He writes that he "frequented her rooms" in the winter of 1818–19, and in his letters to George says that he "warmed with her" and "kissed her". It is uncertain how close they were, but Gittings and Bate suggest the meetings may show a sexual initiation for Keats. Jones' greatest significance may be as an inspiration and steward of Keats's writing. The themes of *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *The Eve of St Mark* may well have been suggested by her, the lyric *Hush, Hush!* ["o sweet Isabel"] was about her, and that the first version of "Bright Star" may have originally been for her. In 1821, Jones was one of the first in England to be notified of Keats's death.

Drafts and letters of poems propose that Keats first met Frances (Fanny) Brawne between September and November 1818. It is possible that the 18-year-old Brawne visited the Dilke family at Wentworth Place before she lived there. She was born in the hamlet of West End now in the district of West Hampstead, on 9 August 1800. Like Keats's grandfather, her grandfather kept a London inn, and both lost a number of family members to tuberculosis. She shared her first name with both Keats's mother and sister, and had a talent for dress-making and languages along with a natural theatrical bent. During November 1818 she developed closeness with Keats, but it was shadowed by the illness of Tom Keats, whom John was nursing through this period.

On 3 April 1819, Brawne and her widowed mother relocated into the other half of Dilke's Wentworth Place, and Keats and Brawne were able to meet daily. Keats began to lend Brawne books, such as Dante's *Inferno*, and they would read together. He gave her the love sonnet "Bright Star" (perhaps revised for her) as a declaration. It was a work in progress which he continued till the last months of his life, and the poem got linked with their relationship. "All his desires were concentrated on Fanny". From this point there is no more documented reference of Isabella Jones. Earlier before the end of June, he arrived at some sort of understanding with Brawne, far from a formal engagement as he still had too little to offer, with no financial stricture and prospects. John Keats tolerated countless conflict knowing his expectations as a struggling poet in increasingly hard passages would prevent marriage to Brawne. Their love remained unconsummated; jealousy for his 'star' began to gnaw at him. Darkness, depression and disease surrounded him, reflected in poems "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and *The Eve of St. Agnes* where love and death both stalk. "I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks;" he wrote to her, "...your loveliness, and the hour of my death".

In one of his several notes and letters, John Keats wrote to Brawne on 13 October 1819: "My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you – I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again – my Life seems to stop there – I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving – I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you ... I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion – I have shudder'd at it – I shudder no more – I could be martyr'd for my Religion – Love is my religion – I could die for that – I could die for you."

Tuberculosis took hold and he was told by his doctors to relocate to a warmer climate. In September 1820 Keats left for Rome knowing may never see Brawne again. After leaving he felt he was not able to write to her or read her letters, though he did correspond with her mother. He died there five months later. None of Brawne's letters to Keats survive; he demanded that her letters be destroyed after his death.

Notes

The news of his death reached London after one month, after which Brawne stayed in grief for six years. More than 12 years after his death, in 1833, she married and gave birth to three children; she outlived Keats by more than 40 years. The 2009 film *Bright Star*, written and directed by Jane Campion, focuses on Keats' relationship with Fanny Brawne.

6.1.5 Last Months: Rome

During 1820 Keats showed increasingly grave symptoms of tuberculosis, suffering two lung haemorrhages in the initial days of February. He lost lots of blood and was bled further by the attending physician. Hunt nursed him in London for much of the following summer. After being suggested by his doctors, he agreed to go to Italy with his friend Joseph Severn. On 13 September, they left for Gravesend and four days later boarded the sailing brig "Maria Crowther", where he made the last revisions of "Bright Star". The journey was a minor disaster: storms broke out followed by a dead calm that reduced the ship's progress. When they finally stopped in Naples, the ship was held in quarantine for ten days due to a supposed outbreak of cholera in Britain. Keats reached Rome on November 14, by then any hope of the warmer climate he wanted had disappeared.

John Keats wrote his last letter on November 30, 1820 to Charles Armitage Brown; "Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book – yet I am much better than I was in Quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the proing and conning of any thing interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having past, and that I am leading a posthumous existence".

He went into a villa on the Spanish Steps, today the Keats-Shelley Memorial House museum. In spite of being taken care of by Severn and Dr. James Clark, his health speedily deteriorated, and the medical attention he got may have hastened his death. In November 1820, Clark said that the source of his illness was "mental exertion" and the source was mainly in his stomach. Clark ultimately diagnosed consumption (tuberculosis) and placed John Keats on a starvation diet of an anchovy and a piece of bread a day, trying to reduce the blood flow to his stomach. He bled the poet; a standard treatment of the day, but perhaps contributing significantly to Keats's weakness. Keats's friend Brown writes: "They could have used opium in small doses, and Keats had asked Severn to buy a bottle of opium when they were setting off on their voyage. What Severn didn't realise was that Keats saw it as a possible resource if he wanted to commit suicide. He tried to get the bottle from Severn on the voyage but Severn wouldn't let him have it. Then in Rome he tried again ... Severn was in such a quandary he didn't know what to do, so in the end he went to the doctor who took it away. As a result Keats went through dreadful agonies with nothing to ease the pain at all."

On 10 December, Severn returned from an early walk and woke Keats. Instantly, the poet began coughing and then vomited blood, about two capfuls. Clark was summoned and promptly bled him. The loss of blood confused and dizzied Keats. When Clark left, Keats got out of his bed, tripped around the rooms, and said to Severn, "This day shall be my last." Severn became afraid of a suicide attempt and hid all sharp objects he could find along with the laudanum prescribed by Clarke. Keats was elated for the rest of the day, until a violent haemorrhage and bleeding weakened him into calm. For the next nine days he suffered from five severe haemorrhages and non-stop bleedings by Clark. The doctor visited regularly and put him on a strict diet, mainly fish. Keats pled for food, thinking he was being starved. Clark held no hope of recovery and admitted as much to Keats. The poet's thoughts turned again to suicide and he pled Severn for the laudanum, at first appealing to Severn's self-interest, but he was declined. Keats became angry; he raged at Severn for keeping him alive against his will. When Severn, not trusting himself, gave the bottle to Clark, Keats turned on the doctor asking "How long is this posthumous life of mine to last?"

6.1.6 Death

Notes

The first few months of 1821 marked a slow and steady deterioration into the last stage of tuberculosis. John Keats was covered in sweat and was coughing blood. Severn nursed him faithfully and observed in a letter how Keats sometimes cried upon waking to find himself still alive. Severn writes,

“Keats raves till I am in a complete tremble for him...about four, the approaches of death came on. [Keats said] ‘Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy; don’t be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come.’ I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seem’d boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept.”

John Keats died on 23 February 1821 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome. His last wish was to be placed under an unnamed tombstone which only had the words (in pentameter), “Here lies one whose name was writ in water.” Brown and Severn erected the stone, which under a relief of a lyre with broken strings, consists of the epitaph:

“This Grave / contains all that was Mortal / of a / Young English Poet / Who / on his Death Bed, in the Bitterness of his Heart / at the Malicious Power of his Enemies / Desired / these Words to be / engraven on his Tomb Stone: / Here lies One / Whose Name was writ in Water. 24 February 1821”

There is a difference of one day between the official date of death and that on the gravestone. Brown and Severn added their lines to the stone in protest at the critical reception of Keats’s work. Hunt blamed his death on the Quarterly Review’s scathing attack of “Endymion”. As Byron quipped in his narrative poem Don Juan;

*’Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.
(canto 2, stanza 60)*

Seven weeks after the funeral Shelley honoured Keats in his poem Adonais. Clark saw to the planting of daisies on the grave, saying that John Keats would have wanted it. For public health reasons, the Italian health authorities scraped the walls and burned the furniture in Keats’s room, and made new doors, windows and flooring. Joseph Severn is buried next to Keats and the ashes of Shelley, one of Keats’s most avid champions, are buried in the cemetery. Telling about the site today, Marsh wrote, “In the old part of the graveyard, barely a field when Keats was buried here, there are now umbrella pines, myrtle shrubs, roses, and carpets of wild violets”.

6.1.7 Reception

When Keats died at the age of 25, he had been writing poetry seriously for only nearly six years, from 1814 until the summer of 1820; and publishing for only four. In his lifetime, sales of Keats’s three volumes of poetry possibly amounted to only 200 copies. Keats first poem, the sonnet O Solitude came in the Examiner in May 1816, while his collection Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and other poems was published in July 1820 before he last visited Rome. The solidity of his poetic apprenticeship and maturity in such a short time is just one outstanding feature of Keats’s work.

Even though creative during his short career, and now amongst the most studied and admired British poets, his reputation is dependent on a small body of work, centred on the Odes, and only in the creative outburst of the last years of his short life was he able to show the inner intensity for which he has been praised since his death. John Keats was certain that he had not made a distinct mark in his entire lifetime. Aware that he was dying, he wrote to Fanny Brawne in

Notes

February 1820, "I have left no immortal work behind me – nothing to make my friends proud of my memory – but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd."

Keats's capability and talent was acknowledged by numerous significant contemporary allies such as Hunt **and** Shelley. His followers praised him for thinking "on his pulses", for having established a style which was more gorgeous in its effects, more heavily loaded with sensualities, more voluptuously alive than any poet who had come before him: 'loading every rift with ore'. Shelley often corresponded with Keats in Rome, and openly stated that Keats's death had been brought on by unfavourable reviews in the Quarterly Review. Seven weeks after the funeral he wrote Adonaïs, a depressed elegy, stating that Keats' early death was a public and personal tragedy:

*The loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit.*

Even though Keats wrote that "if poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all", poetry was not easy to him, his work the result of a thoughtful and continued classical self-education. He may have had an innate poetic sensibility but his initial works were clearly those of a young man learning his craft. His initial attempts at verse were usually unclear, lazily narcotic and lacking clarity. His poetic sense was constructed on the conventional tastes of his friend Charles Cowden Clarke, who first introduced him to the classics, and also came from the predilections of Hunt's Examiner, which Keats read as a boy. Hunt rejected the Augustan or 'French' school, dominated by Pope, and attacked the earlier Romantic poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, now in their forties, as vague, unsophisticated and crude writers. Actually, during Keats's few years as a published poet, the reputation of the older Romantic school was at its lowest ebb. Keats echoed these sentiments in his work, categorising himself with a 'new school' for a time, rather separating him from Coleridge, Wordsworth and Byron and providing the basis from the scathing attacks from Blackwoods and The Quarterly.

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.*

First stanza of "To Autumn",
September 1819

By the time of his death, John Keats had been linked to the faults of both old and new schools: the insignificance of the first wave Romantics and the unschooled affectation of Hunt's "Cockney School". Keats's posthumous reputation mixed the reviewers' caricature of the simple-minded bumbler with the appearance of the hyper-sensitive genius killed by high feeling, which Shelley later showed.

The Victorian sense of poetry as the work luxuriant fancy and indulgence offered a scheme into which Keats was posthumously fixed. Marked as the standard bearer of sensory writing, Keats

reputation grew gradually but remarkably. His writings had the complete support of the powerful Cambridge Apostles, whose members included the young Tennyson, later a popular Poet Laureate who started regarding Keats as the ultimate poet of the 19th century. Twenty-seven years after Keats's death in 1848, Richard Monckton Milnes wrote the first full biography, which helped to place Keats within the canon of English literature. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, together with Millais and Rossetti, were enthused by Keats, and painted scenes from his poems including "La Belle Dame sans Merci", 'Isabella' and 'The Eve of St. Agnes', attractive, lush and popular images which are closely linked to Keats's work.

In 1882, Swinburne wrote in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that "the Ode to a Nightingale, [is] one of the final masterpieces of human work in all time and for all ages". In the twentieth century, Keats continued to be the muse of poets such as Wilfred Owen, who kept his death date as a day of grief, Yeats and T.S. Eliot. Critic Helen Vendler specified the odes "are a group of works in which the English language find ultimate embodiment". Bate declared of *To Autumn*: "Each generation has found it one of the most nearly perfect poems in English" and M. R. Ridley claimed the ode "is the most serenely flawless poem in our language."

The main collection of the manuscripts, letters and other papers of Keats is in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Several other collections of material are archived at the British Library, Keats House, Hampstead, the Keats-Shelley Memorial House in Rome and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Since 1998 the British Keats-Shelley Memorial Association has once a year awarded a prize for romantic poetry.

6.1.8 Biographical Controversy

None of Keats' biographies were written by people who knew him. Soon after his death, his publishers said that they would speedily publish the remains and memoirs of John Keats but his friends denied to cooperate and argued with one another to the extent that the project was abandoned. Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and a few of his Contemporaries* (1828) provide the first biographical account, powerfully stressing on Keats's supposedly humble origins, a misunderstanding which still continues. Given that he was becoming an important figure within artistic circles, a series of other publications followed, together with anthologies of his various chapters, notes and letters. Though, initial accounts usually gave contradictory or very biased versions of events and were matters of dispute. His friends Brown, Severn, Dilke, Shelley and his caretaker Richard Abbey, his publisher Taylor, Fanny Brawne and various others issued posthumous commentary on Keats's life. These early writings coloured all subsequent biography and have become fixed in a body of Keats legend.

Shelley promoted Keats as somebody whose achievement could not be detached from agony, who was 'spiritualised' by his decline and too tuned to endure the harshness of life; the consumptive, suffering image commonly held today. Richard Monckton Milnes published the first full biography in 1848. Landmark Keats biographers include Robert Gittings, Sidney Colvin, Andrew Motion and Walter Jackson Bate. The idealised appearance of the heroic romantic poet who fought poverty and died young was inflated by the late arrival of an authoritative biography and the lack of correct likeness. Majority surviving portraits of Keats were painted after he died, and those who knew him said that they were not successful in capturing his intensity and unique quality.

6.1.9 Letters

John Keats' letters were first published in 1848 and 1878. During the 19th century, critics thought of them as unworthy of attention. During the 20th century they became nearly as respected and studied as his poetry, and are greatly regarded within the canon of English literary correspondence.

Notes

T.S. Eliot called them “certainly the most notable and most important ever written by any English poet.” Keats spent a lot of time considering poetry itself, its impacts and constructs, exhibiting a deep interest uncommon amongst his milieu that were more easily distracted by metaphysics, fashions, politics or science. Eliot said of Keats’s conclusions; “There is hardly one statement of Keats’ about poetry which ... will not be found to be true, and what is more, true for greater and more mature poetry than anything Keats ever wrote.”

Some of John Keats’s letters from the period before he joined his literary circle are existent. From spring 1817, though, there is a sufficient record of his impressive and prolific skills as a letter writer. Keats and his friends, critics, poets, novelists, and editors wrote to one another regularly, and Keats’ ideas are bound up in the ordinary, his everyday communications sharing parody, news and social commentary. They glitter with critical intelligence and humour. Born of an “unself-conscious stream of consciousness,” they are impulsive, filled with awareness of his own nature and his weak spots. When his brother George went to the United States, Keats wrote to him in detail, the body of letters becoming “the real diary” and self-revelation of Keats’s life, along with inclosing an exposition of his philosophy, and the first drafts of poems with some of Keats’s thoughts and his finest writing. Gittings calls them similar to a “spiritual journal” not written for a specific other, so much as for synthesis. Keats also revealed on the composition and background of his poetry, and certain letters often correspond to or anticipate the poems they describe. In February to May 1819 he produced many of his finest letters”. Writing to his brother George, Keats discovered the idea of the world as “the vale of Soul-making”, anticipating the great odes that he would write a few months later. In the letters, Keats created ideas such as the Mansion of Many Apartments and the Chameleon Poet, concepts that gained common currency and capture the public imagination, despite only making single appearances as phrases in his correspondence. The poetical mind, Keats argued:

has no self – it is everything and nothing – It has no character – it enjoys light and shade; What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion [chameleon] Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continuously in for – and filling some other Body – The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute – the poet has none; no identity – he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God’s Creatures.

He used the term negative capability to talk about the state in which we are “capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason ...[Being] content with half knowledge” where one trusts in the heart’s perceptions. He later wrote: “I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination – What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not – for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty” again and again turning to the question of what it means to be a poet. “My Imagination is a Monastery and I am its Monk”, Keats notes to Shelley. Keats wrote to Reynolds in September 1819 “How beautiful the season is now – How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it ... I never lik’d the stubbled fields as much as now – Aye, better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow the stubble plain looks warm – in the same way as some pictures look warm – this struck me so much in my Sunday’s walk that I composed upon it”. The final stanza of his last great ode: “To Autumn” runs:

*Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;*

Later, To Autumn became amongst the most highly regarded poems in the English language.

Notes

Several areas of Keats life and daily routine aren't described by him. He doesn't mention much about his financial straits or his childhood and is apparently embarrassed to discuss about these topics. There is a total absence of any reference to his parents. In his last year, as his health worsened, his worries often gave way to hopelessness and morbid obsessions. In 1870, the publications of letters to Fanny Brawne concentrated on this period and stressed on this tragic aspect, giving rise to widespread criticism at the time.

6.2 John Keats's Works

Written in 1819, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' was the third of the five 'great odes' of 1819, which are normally supposed to have been written in the following order – Psyche, Nightingale, Grecian Urn, Melancholy and Autumn. Of the five, Grecian Urn and Melancholy are simply dated '1819'. Critics have used vague references in Keats's letters and thematic progression to assign order. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the poet notices a relic of ancient Greek civilization, an urn painted with two scenes from Greek life.

Other works of John Keats include:

After dark vapours have oppressed our plains (1817) Addressed to Haydon (1816) text

Addressed to the Same (1816) text

As from the darkening gloom a silver dove (1814)

Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art (1819) A Song About Myself

Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl! text Bards of Passion and of Mirth text

Before he went to live with owls and bats (1817?)

Calidore: A Fragment (1816)

Dedication. To Leigh Hunt, Esq.

The Day Is Gone, and all its Sweets are Gone

Endymion: A Poetic Romance (1817)

Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds

A Dream, after reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca text

A Draught of Sunshine

Epistle to My Brother George

First Love

The Eve of St. Agnes (1819) text

The Eve of Saint Mark

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream (1819)

Fancy (poem)

Fragment of an Ode to Maia

Fill for me a brimming bowl (1814) text

Give me women, wine, and snuff (1815 or 1816)

God of the golden bow (1816 or 1817)

The Gothic looks solemn (1817)

Notes

Hadst thou liv'd in days of old (1816)
Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs (1815 or 1816)
Happy is England! I could be content (1816)
Hither, hither, love (1817 or 1818)

The Human Seasons
How many bards gild the lapses of time (1816)
Hymn To Apollo
Hyperion (1818)

I had a dove
I am as brisk (1816) I stood tip-toe upon a little hill (1816)
If By Dull Rhymes Our English Must Be Chain'd
Imitation of Spenser (1814) text

Isabella or The Pot of Basil (1818) text
In Drear-Nighted December
Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair
Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there (1816)
La Belle Dame sans Merci (1819) text
Lamia (1819)
Lines Written on 29 May, the Anniversary of Charles's Restoration, on Hearing the Bells Ringing (1814 or 1815)

Modern Love (Keats)
Lines on The Mermaid Tavern
Meg Merrilies

O Blush Not So!

O grant that like to Peter I (1817?)
Ode to Psyche (1819)
O come, dearest Emma! the rose is full blown (1815)
O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell (1815 or 1816)
Ode (Keats)

Ode on Indolence (1819)

Ode to a Nightingale (1819) text
Ode on Melancholy (1819) text
Ode to Apollo (1815)
Ode to Fanny

Oh Chatterton! how very sad thy fate (1815)

Old Meg (1818)

Notes

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer (1816) text
Oh! how I love, on a fair summer's eve (1816)
On a Leander which Miss Reynolds, My Kind Friend, Gave Me (1817)
On the Sea (1817) text
On Death text
On Fame text
On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt (1816 or 1817)
On Leaving some Friends at an Early Hour (1816)
On Peace (1814) text
On Sitting Down to read King Lear once again
On Receiving a Curious Shell, and a Copy of verses, from the Same Ladies (1815)

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles (1817)

On the Grasshopper and Cricket (1816)
On The Story of Rimini (1817)
On The Sonnet
The Poet (a fragment)
Stay, ruby breasted warbler, stay (1814)
A Prophecy – To George Keats in America
Robin Hood. To A Friend
Sharing Eve's Apple
A Song of Opposites
Sleep and Poetry (1816)

Specimen of an Induction to a Poem (1816)
Staffa

Stanzas
Think not of it, sweet one, so (1817)
This Living Hand
This pleasant tale is like a little copse (1817)
To —
To a Cat
To a Friend Who Sent Me Some Roses (1816)
To a Lady seen for a few Moments at Vauxhall
To A Young Lady Who Sent Me A Laurel Crown (1816 or 1817)
To Ailsa Rock
To Autumn (1819) text
To Lord Byron (1814) text
To Charles Cowden Clarke (1816)
To Fanny
To G.A.W. (Georgiana Augusta Wylie) (1816)
To Haydon with a Sonnet Written on Seeing the Elgin Marbles (1817)
To Leigh Hunt, Esq. (1817)
To George Felton Mathew (1815)

Notes

To Georgiana Augusta Wylie
To Haydon

To Homer
To Hope (1815)
To John Hamilton Reynolds
To Kosciusko (1816)

To My Brother George (epistle) (1816)
To My Brother George (sonnet) (1816)
To My Brothers (1816)
To one who has been long in city pent (1816)
To Sleep
To Solitude
To Some Ladies (1815)
To the Ladies Who Saw Me Crown'd (1816 or 1817)
To the Nile
Two Sonnets on Fame
Unfelt, unheard, unseen (1817)
When I have fears that I may cease to be (1818) text
Where Be Ye Going, You Devon Maid?
Where's the Poet?
Why did I laugh tonight?
Woman! when I behold thee flippant, vain (1815 or 1816)
Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition (1816)
Written on a Blank Space
Written on a Summer Evening

Written Upon the Top of Ben Nevis
Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt Left Prison (1815)
You say you love; but with a voice (1817 or 1818)



Notes It's hard to believe that Keats wrote six of the greatest English Romantic odes in a period of 3-6 weeks. They were all written in the year 1819. Keats wrote poetry for a total of about 6 years, he died when he was 25 – it's almost too extraordinary to contemplate. How did this young man, whose work, in his time, was highly criticized as “uncouth” and “raw” ever write these wonderful poems? This is one of those six odes. “Ode on a Grecian Ode” is based on a series of paradoxes and opposites:

- the discrepancy between the urn with its frozen images and the dynamic life portrayed on the urn,
- the human and changeable versus the immortal and permanent,
- participation versus observation,
- life versus art.

6.3 Poem

Notes

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

Notes

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."



Task Recite the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

6.3.1 Explanation

In the first stanza, the poet stands before an ancient Grecian urn and addresses it. He is engrossed with its depiction of pictures frozen in time. It is the "still unravish'd bride of quietness," the "foster-child of silence and slow time." The poet also describes the urn as a "historian" that tells a story. He wonders about the figures on the side of the urn. He asks about the legend these figures depict and from where they come. He stares at a picture that appears to depict a group of men following a group of women and wonders what their story could be: "What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? / What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?" In the second stanza, the speaker looks at one more picture on the urn, this time of a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover under a glade of trees. The poet says that the piper's "unheard" melodies are sweeter than mortal melodies because they remain natural and unaffected by time. He tells the youth that, though he can never kiss his lover because he is frozen in time, he should not mourn, because her beauty will never fade. In the third stanza, he sees the trees surrounding the lovers and feels happy that they will never shed their leaves. He is happy for the piper as his songs will be "for ever new," and content that the love of the girl and the boy will last forever, unlike mortal love, which lapses into "breathing human passion" and ultimately vanishes, leaving behind only a "burning forehead, and a parching tongue." In the fourth stanza, the speaker observes another picture on the urn, this one is of a group of villagers leading a heifer to be foregone. He wonders where they are going ("To what green altar, O mysterious priest...") and from where they have come. The speaker here pictures their little town, empty of all its citizens, and tells it that its streets will "for evermore" be silent, for those who have left it, frozen on the urn, may never return. The speaker in the final stanza, again addresses the urn itself, saying that it, like Eternity, "doth tease us out of thought." He feels that when his generation is long dead, the urn will continue to be there, telling future generations its enigmatic lesson: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." The speaker says that that is the one thing the urn knows and is by far the only thing it needs to know.

Stanza 1

Keats calls the urn an "unravish'd bride of quietness" because it has been there for centuries without going through any changes (it is "unravished") as it sits quietly on a shelf or table. The poet also calls it a "foster-child of silence and time" because it is has been adopted by time and silence, parents who have talked about on the urn eternal stillness. Additionally, Keats feels that

the urn is a “sylvan historian” as it records a pastoral scene from long ago. (“Sylvan” means anything pertaining to forests or woods.) This scene tells a story (“legend”) in pictures framed with leaves (“leaf-fring’d”)—a story that the urn tells more attractively with its images than Keats does with his pen. Keats wonders if the scene is set either in Arcady or Tempe. Tempe is a valley in Thessaly, Greece—between Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa—that is favoured by Apollo, the god of poetry and music. Arcady is Arcadia, a scenic region in the Peloponnese (a peninsula making up the southern part of Greece) where inhabitants live in carefree simplicity. Keats wonders whether the images he sees represent gods or humans. And, he asks, who are the reluctant (“loth”) maidens and what is the activity taking place?

Stanza 2

Using oxymoron and paradox to open the second stanza, Keats praises the silent music coming from the timbrels and pipes and considers it far more pleasing than the audible music of real life, for the music from the urn is for the spirit. Keats then notes that the young man playing the pipe beneath trees must always continue to be an etched figure on the urn. Like the leaves on the tree, this young man is fixed in time. They are ever green and will never die. Keats also says that the bold young lover (who may be the piper or another person) can never embrace the maiden next to him even though he is very close to her. Still, Keats says, the young man should not grieve, as his lady love will continue to be beautiful forever, and their love—although unfulfilled—will continue through all eternity.

Stanza 3

Keats addresses the trees, calling them “happy, happy boughs” as they will never shed their leaves. He then addresses the young piper, calling him “happy melodist” as his songs will also continue forever. Also, the young man’s love for the maiden will remain forever “warm and still to be enjoy’d / For ever panting, and for ever young. . . .” In contrast, Keats says, the love between a woman and a man in the real world is imperfect, as it brings sorrow and pain and desire that cannot be fully quenched. The lover comes away with a “burning forehead, and a parching tongue.”

Stanza 4

Keats inquires about the images of individuals approaching an altar to sacrifice a “lowing” (mooring) cow, one that has never borne a calf, on a green altar. Do these simple folk come from a little town on a river, a seashore, or a mountain topped by a peaceful fortress. Wherever the town is, it will be empty forever as all of the town’s inhabitants are here participating in the festivities depicted on the urn. Like the other figures on the urn, townspeople are frozen in time and cannot escape the urn and go back to their houses.

Stanza 5

In the third stanza, John Keats addresses the urn as an “attic shape.” Attic here refers to Attica, a region of east-central ancient Greece in which Athens was the main city. Here shape refers to the urn. So, attic shape is an urn that was crafted in ancient Attica. The poet says that the urn is beautiful, and is adorned with “brede” (braiding, embroidery) depicting marble women and men enacting a scene in the tangle of forest tree branches and weeds. As individuals look upon the scene, they think about it carefully as they would ponder eternity trying so hard to understand its meaning that they exhaust themselves of thought. Keats calls the scene a “cold pastoral!” in part as it is made of cold, unchanging marble and in part, maybe, because it frustrates the poet with its unfathomable mysteries, as does eternity. Keats was suffering from tuberculosis during this time. This disease had earlier killed his brother, and he was no doubt much occupied with thoughts of eternity. Keats was also passionately in love with a young woman, Fanny Brawne, but was not able to act conclusively on his feelings—although she reciprocated his love—because he thought his dubious financial situation and his lower social status stood in the way.

Notes

Thus, he was like the cold marble of the urn who was fixed and immovable. Keats states that even when death claims him and all those of his generation, the urn will stay. And it will tell the next generation what it has told Keats: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.” It means that one must not try to look beyond the beauty of the urn and its images, which are representations of the eternal, since nobody can see into eternity. The beauty itself is sufficient for a human; that is the only truth that a human can fully understand. The poem ends with an endorsement of these words, saying they make up the only axiom that any human being actually needs to know.



Did u know? “Ode on a Grecian Urn” is a romantic ode, a dignified but highly lyrical (emotional) poem in which the author speaks to a person or thing absent or present. In this famous ode, Keats addresses the urn and the images on it. The romantic ode was at the pinnacle of its popularity in the nineteenth century. It was the result of an author’s deep meditation on the person or object. The romantic ode evolved from the ancient Greek ode, written in a serious tone to celebrate an event or to praise an individual. The Greek ode was intended to be sung by a chorus or by one person to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The odes of the Greek poet Pindar (circa 518-438 BC) frequently extolled athletes who participated in athletic games at Olympus, Delphi, the Isthmus of Corinth, and Nemea. Bacchylides, a contemporary of Pindar, also wrote odes praising athletes. The Roman poets Horace (65-8 BC) and Catullus (84-54 BC) wrote odes based on the Greek model, but their odes were not intended to be sung. In the nineteenth century, English romantic poets wrote odes that retained the serious tone of the Greek ode. However, like the Roman poets, they did not write odes to be sung. Unlike the Roman poets, though, the authors of nineteenth century romantic odes generally were more emotional in their writing. The author of a typical romantic ode focused on a scene, pondered its meaning, and presented a highly personal reaction to it that included a special insight at the end of the poem (like the closing lines of “Ode on a Grecian Urn”).

6.3.2 Analysis**Form**

“Ode on a Grecian Urn” follows the same ode-stanza structure as the “Ode on Melancholy,” though it differs more in the rhyme scheme of the last three lines of every stanza. Every stanza in “Grecian Urn” is ten lines long, metered in a fairly specific iambic pentameter, and divided into a two part rhyme scheme, the last three lines of which are variable. The first seven lines of each stanza follow an ABABCDE rhyme scheme; however the second occurrences of the CDE sounds follow a different order. In stanza one, lines seven through ten are rhymed DCE; in stanza two, CED; in stanzas three and four, CDE; and in stanza five, DCE, just as in stanza one. As in other odes (especially “Autumn” and “Melancholy”), the two-part rhyme scheme (the first part made of AB rhymes, the second of CDE rhymes) forms the sense of a two-part thematic structure also. The first four lines of every stanza roughly define the subject of the stanza, and the last six roughly explain or develop it. As in other odes, this is only a common rule, true of some stanzas more than others; stanzas such as the fifth do not connect thematic structure and rhyme scheme closely at all.



Caution Deconstruction—taking a view that literary works are disorganized, illogical, incoherent, essentially indeterminate, and employing a methodology of analysing works to find mistakes, inconsistencies, gaps, and contradictions—could, as a theory, have been

based solely on “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” because Keats himself had already written into his text those very incongruities and discordances that Deconstruction was established to expose. The poem has in fact been deconstructing itself for more than 180 years, but for many readers it took 1970s theorizing to make it permissible to say so in class. We now understand, even with the most admired poems, that some conflicts are *not* resolved into agreement, that some closures are not really achieved, and that readers who demand agreement and closure must supply them interpretively, compensating for lacks in the actual texts themselves.

Notes

Themes

If the “Ode to a Nightingale” depicts the speaker’s engagement with the fluid expressiveness of music, the “Ode on a Grecian Urn” shows the speaker’s attempt to engage with the static immobility of sculpture. The Grecian urn, passed down through uncountable centuries to the time of the speaker’s viewing, exists outside of time in the human sense as it does not age, it does not die, and is certainly alien to all such ideas. In the speaker’s thought, this creates an intriguing paradox for the human figures carved into the side of the urn: They are free from time, but they are concurrently frozen in time. They don’t have to confront aging and death as their love is “for ever young”, and neither can they have experiences like the youth can never kiss the maiden; the figures in the procession can never return to their homes.

In the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the speaker attempts thrice to engage with scenes carved into the urn; each time he asks dissimilar questions of it. In the first stanza, he observes the picture of the “mad pursuit” and tries to understand the real story which lies behind the picture: “What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?” Of course, the urn can never tell him the whos, whats, whens, and wheres of the stories it depicts, and the speaker is forced to abandon this line of questioning.

The speaker examines the picture of the piper playing to his lover beneath the trees, in the second and third stanzas. In these stanzas, the speaker makes an effort to imagine what the experience of the figures on the urn must be like; he tries to identify with them. He is attracted to their escape from temporality and fascinated with the eternal newness of the piper’s unheard song and the eternally unchanging beauty of his lover. He thinks that their love is “far above” all transient human passion, which, in its sexual expression, unavoidably leads to an abatement of intensity—when passion is satisfied, all that remains is a wearied physicality: a sorrowful heart, a “burning forehead,” and a “parching tongue.” The speaker’s recollection of these conditions appears to remind the speaker that he is unavoidably subject to them, and he abandons his attempt to identify with the figures on the urn.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker tries to think about the figures on the urn as though they were experiencing human time, visualising that their procession has an origin (the “little town”) and a destination (the “green altar”). Then again all he can think is that the town will be deserted forever: If these people have left their origin, they will never return to it. In this sense the speaker challenges the limits of static art; if it is impossible to learn from the urn the whos and wheres of the “real story” in the first stanza, it is impossible ever to know the origin and the destination of the figures on the urn in the fourth stanza.

It is true that the speaker shows some progress in his successive attempts to get engrossed in the urn. His idle inquisitiveness in the first attempt leads to a more intensely felt identification in the second, and in the third, the speaker leaves his own worries behind and thinks of the processional mainly on its own terms, thinking of the “little town” with a generous feeling. However, all his attempts eventually fail. The third attempt fails just because there is nothing left to say—once the speaker confronts the silence and eternal emptiness of the little town, he has reached the limit of static art; on this subject, and there is nothing more the urn can tell him.

Notes

In the final stanza, the speaker talks about the conclusions drawn from his three attempts to engage with the urn. He is overwhelmed by its existence outside of temporal change, with its ability to “tease” him “out of thought / As doth eternity.” If human life is a series of “hungry generations,” as the speaker suggests in “Nightingale,” the urn is a self-contained and separate world. It can be a “friend to man,” as the speaker says, but it cannot be mortal; the kind of aesthetic connection the speaker experiences with the urn is ultimately insufficient to human life.

The final two lines, in which the speaker visualises the urn speaking its message to mankind—“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” have proved to be amongst the most difficult to interpret in the Keats canon. After the urn utters the enigmatic phrase “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” nobody can be sure about who “speaks” the conclusion, “that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” It may possibly be the speaker addressing the urn, and it could be the urn addressing mankind. If it is the speaker addressing the urn, then it would look like it is indicating his awareness of its limitations: The urn need not know anything beyond the equation of truth and beauty, but the problems of human life make it impossible for such a self-sufficient and simple phrase to express adequately anything about necessary human knowledge. If it is the urn addressing mankind, then the phrase has rather the weight of a significant lesson, as though *beyond* all the complications of human life, all humans need to know on earth is that truth and beauty are one and the same. It is largely a matter of personal interpretation.

Figures of Speech

The main figures of speech used in the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* are metaphor and apostrophe in the form of personification.

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which an author speaks to a person or thing present or absent. A metaphor on the other hand, is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things without using the word like, as, or than. Personification is a kind of metaphor that compares an object with a human being. In effect, it treats an object as a person, it is thus called personification.

Apostrophe and metaphor/personification occur concurrently in the opening lines of the poem when Keats addresses the urn as “Thou,” “bride,” “foster-child,” and “historian” (apostrophe). In speaking to the urn this way, he suggests that it is a human (metaphor/personification). Keats also addresses the trees as persons in the third stanza and continues addressing the urn as a person in the fifth stanza.



Example:

Assonance - Thou foster-child of silence and slow time

Alliteration - Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, / Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

Anaphora - **What** men or gods are these? **What** maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? **What** struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? **What** wild ecstasy?

Self Assessment

Choose the correct answer:

1. According to the text, which of the following lines from John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” are possibly the most discussed and debated in English poetry?

- (a) "The child is father of the man."
 (b) "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."
 (c) "A motion and a spirit, that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things."
 (d) "What men or gods are these? What maidens loth? What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?"
2. The poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" describes images of antiquity, not for their order, balance, and harmony but rather for Romantic values. Keats finds the vase images
- (a) dreamlike, tormented, and melancholic
 (b) eternal, unchangeable, and silent
 (c) ghastly, ghostly, and surreal
 (d) erotic, suggestive, and ideal
3. English Romantic poet John Keats was born on in London.
 (a) October 31, 1795 (b) November 07, 1799
 (c) January 31, 1795 (d) December 01, 1879
4. After his mother's death, Keats's maternal grandmother appointed two London merchants, as his guardians.
 (a) Richard and John (b) William and John
 (c) James and Claire (d) Ruskin and Florida
5. John Keats died of
 (a) Aids (b) Fever
 (c) Dengue (d) Tuberculosis

6.4 Summary

- English Romantic poet John Keats was born on October 31, 1795, in London. The oldest of four children, he lost both his parents at a young age. His father, a livery-stable keeper, died when Keats was eight; his mother died of tuberculosis six years later. After his mother's death, Keats's maternal grandmother appointed two London merchants, Richard Abbey and John Rowland Sandell, as guardians. John Keats was an English Romantic poet. He was one of the main figures of the second generation of romantic poets along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, despite his work only having been in publication for four years before his death.
- The poem by John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", is one of the most memorable and enduring of all the poems to come from the Romantic Period.
- From 1814 Keats had two bequests held in trust for him until his 21st birthday: £800 willed by his grandfather John Jennings (about £34,000 in today's money) and a portion of his mother's legacy, £8000 (about £340,000 today), to be equally divided between her living children. It seems he was not told of either, since he never applied for any of the money. Historically, blame has often been laid on Abbey as legal guardian, but he may well have also been unaware.

Notes

- John Keats moved to the newly built Wentworth Place, owned by his friend Charles Armitage Brown. It was also on the edge of Hampstead Heath, ten minute's walk south of his old home in Well Walk. The winter of 1818–19, though a difficult period for the poet, marked the beginning of his *annus mirabilis* in which he wrote his most mature work. He had been inspired by a series of recent lectures by Hazlitt on English poets and poetic identity and had also met Wordsworth. Keats may have seemed to his friends to be living on comfortable means, but in reality he was borrowing regularly from Abbey and his friends.
- Keats befriended Isabella Jones in May 1817, while on holiday in the village of Bo Peep, near Hastings. She is described as beautiful, talented and widely read, not of the top flight of society yet financially secure, an enigmatic figure who would become a part of Keats's circle. Throughout their friendship Keats never hesitates to own his sexual attraction to her, although they seem to enjoy circling each other rather than offering commitment. He writes that he "frequented her rooms" in the winter of 1818–19 and in his letters to George says that he "warmed with her" and "kissed her". It is unclear how close they were, but Bate and Gittings suggest the trysts may represent a sexual initiation for Keats.
- During 1820 Keats displayed increasingly serious symptoms of tuberculosis, suffering two lung haemorrhages in the first few days of February. He lost large amounts of blood and was bled further by the attending physician. Hunt nursed him in London for much of the following summer. At the suggestion of his doctors, he agreed to move to Italy with his friend Joseph Severn. On 13 September, they left for Gravesend and four days later boarded the sailing brig "Maria Crowther", where he made the final revisions of "Bright Star".
- Written in 1819, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' was the third of the five 'great odes' of 1819, which are generally believed to have been written in the following order – Psyche, Nightingale, Grecian Urn, Melancholy, and Autumn. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the speaker observes a relic of ancient Greek civilization, an urn painted with two scenes from Greek life.

6.5 Keywords

Apostrophe: It can be defined as an exclamatory rhetorical figure of speech, when a speaker or writer breaks off and directs speech to an imaginary person or abstract quality or idea. In dramatic works and poetry written in or translated into English, such a figure of speech is often introduced by the exclamation "O".

Attraction: It is the action or power of evoking interest in or liking for someone or something.

Civilisation: It is the stage of human social development and organisation which is considered most advanced.

Oxymoron: An oxymoron (plural oxymora) is a figure of speech that combines contradictory terms.

Paradox: It can be defined as a statement that apparently contradicts itself and yet might be true. Several logical paradoxes are known to be invalid arguments but are still valuable in promoting critical thinking.

Physician: A person qualified to practise medicine, especially one who specializes in diagnosis and medical treatment as distinct from surgery.

Piper: A person who plays a pipe, especially an itinerant musician is called a piper.

Tuberculosis: It is an infectious bacterial disease characterised by the growth of nodules (tubercles) in the tissues, especially the lungs.

6.6 Review Questions

Notes

1. Throw light on the major works of John Keats.
2. Throw light on the life of John Keats.
3. Talk about John Keats and Isabella Jones.
4. How did John Keats spend the last few months of his life in Rome and his death?
5. What does the title of the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* refer to?
6. What is the poet examining in the first stanza?
7. What scenes and images are depicted on the Urn?
8. What does the word “brede” mean in the last stanza? Why is the urn “overwrought”?
9. What religious ritual is depicted on the urn in stanza four?
10. In stanza three, what will never happen to the painted tree’s leaves?
11. Why is the urn a “friend to man”?
12. Do you agree when the urn says that this statement is all humanity knows on earth? Do you agree when the urn says this is all we need to know?
13. Critically analyse the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (b) |
| 3. (a) | 4. (a) |
| 5. (d) | |

6.7 Further Readings



Books

Kaufmann S. and Wiedenmann S., *Keats: Ode to a Nightingale – A Grecian Urn. A Comparison*.

Keats J. (1991) *Lyric Poems*, Courier Dover Publications.

Keats J. (2004) *Ode On A Grecian Urn And Other Poems*, Kessinger Publishing.

Keats J. (2011) *Poems of John Keats*, Penguin Adult.



Online links

<http://sarmada.hubpages.com/hub/THEMES-IN-JOHN-KEATS-ODE-ON-A-GRECIAN-URN>

<http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html>

<http://www.shmoop.com/ode-grecian-urn/summary.html>

Unit 7: An Astrologer's Day by R.K. Narayan

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

7.1 About R.K. Narayan

7.1.1 Early Years

7.2 Turning Point and Major Works of R.K. Narayan

7.2.1 Later years

7.3 Writing Style

7.4 The Works and Achievements of R.K. Narayan

7.5 Summary – An Astrologer's Day

7.5.1 Critical Analysis

7.5.2 Atmosphere

7.5.3 Characterisation

7.5.4 Narrative Techniques

7.5.5 Figurative Language

7.5.6 Societal Satire

7.5.7 Astrology as a Profession

7.5.8 Illustration

7.6 Summary

7.7 Keywords

7.8 Review Questions

7.9 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about R.K. Narayan
- Describe the R.K. Narayan's writing style
- Explain the Works and Achievements of R.K. Narayan
- Summarise the story "An Astrologer's Day"
- Analyse "An Astrologer's Day"

Introduction

Notes

Indian author R.K. Narayan, full name **Rasipuram Krishna swami Iyer Narayanaswami**, is widely known as one of India's greatest English language novelists known for his unpretentious and simple writing style, often compared to William Faulkner. Despite being nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature several times, Narayan did not win the honour ever. His popular works include *The Financial Expert*, *The English Teacher* and *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

'An Astrologer's Day and other Stories' are a collection of short stories written by R.K. Narayan. 'An Astrologer's Day' is the first story from the collection. "An Astrologer's Day" takes place in a small place in India in 1947.

In this unit we will study more about R.K. Narayan and the story "An Astrologer's Day".

7.1 About R.K. Narayan

Figure 7.1: R.K. Narayan



Source: <http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/worldlit/india/Narayan.jpg>

Popularly known as R.K. Narayan, Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanaswami is among the best known and most widely read Indian novelists writing in English. He created the imaginary town of Malgudi, where realistic characters in a typically Indian setting lived amid unpredictable events.

7.1.1 Early Years

R.K. Narayan was born on October 10, 1906 in Madras and died in 13 May 2001. His father was a school headmaster, and Narayan did some of his studies at his father's school. As his father's job entailed frequent transfers, Narayan spent part of his childhood under the care of his maternal grandmother, Parvati. During this time his best friends and playmates were a peacock and a mischievous monkey. His grandmother gave him the nickname of *Kunjappa*, a name that stuck to him in family circles. She taught him arithmetic, mythology, classical Indian music and Sanskrit. While living with his grandmother, Narayan studied at a succession of schools in Madras, including the Lutheran Mission School in Purasawalkam, C.R.C. High School, and the Christian College High School. Narayan was an avid reader, and his early literary diet included Dickens, Wodehouse, Arthur Conan Doyle and Thomas Hardy. At the age of twelve, Narayan participated in a pro-independence march, for which he was reprimanded by his uncle as the family was apolitical and considered all governments wicked.

Notes

Narayan moved to Mysore to live with his family when his father was transferred to the Maharajah's Collegiate High School. The well-stocked library at the school, as well as his father's own, fed his reading habit, and he started writing as well. After completing high school, Narayan failed the university entrance examination and spent a year at home reading and writing; he subsequently passed the examination in 1926 and joined Maharaja College of Mysore. It took Narayan four years to obtain his Bachelor's degree, a year longer than usual. After being persuaded by a friend that taking a Master's degree would kill his interest in literature, he briefly held a job as a school teacher; however, he quit in protest when the headmaster of the school asked him to substitute for the physical training master. The experience made Narayan realise that the only career for him was in writing, and he decided to stay at home and write novels. His first published work was a book review of *Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England*. Subsequently, he started writing the occasional local interest story for English newspapers and magazines. Although the writing did not pay much, he had a regular life and few needs, and his friends and family respected and supported his unconventional choice of career. In 1930, Narayan wrote his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, which was not liked by his uncle. This novel was rejected by a many publishers. With this book, Narayan created Malgudi, a town that creatively reproduced the social sphere of the country. This town ignored the limits imposed by colonial rule, it also grew with the various socio-political changes of British and post-independence India.

7.2 Turning Point and Major works of R.K. Narayan

While vacationing at his sister's house in Coimbatore, in 1933, Narayan met and fell in love with Rajam, a 15-year-old girl who lived nearby. Despite several financial and astrological obstacles, Narayan managed to get permission from the girl's father and married her. Following his marriage, Narayan became a reporter for a Madras based paper called *The Justice*, dedicated to the rights of non-Brahmins. The publishers were thrilled to have a Brahmin Iyer in Narayan adopting their cause. Earlier, Narayan had sent the manuscript of *Swami and Friends* to a friend at Oxford, and about this time, the friend showed the manuscript to Graham Greene. Greene recommended the book to his publisher, and it was finally published in 1935. Greene also counselled Narayan on shortening his name to become popular amongst the English-speaking audience. The book was semi-autobiographical and built upon many incidents from his own childhood. Reviews were positive but sales were few. Narayan's next novel *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), was inspired in part by his experiences at college, and dealt with the theme of a rebellious adolescent transitioning to a rather well-adjusted adult; it was published by a different publisher, again at the recommendation of Greene. His third novel, *The Dark Room* (1938) was about domestic disharmony, showcasing the man as the oppressor and the woman as the victim within a marriage, and was published by yet another publisher; this book also received good reviews. In 1937, Narayan's father died, and Narayan was forced to accept a commission from the government of Mysore as he was not making any money.

In his first three books, Narayan highlights the problems with certain socially accepted practices. The first book has Narayan focusing on the plight of students, punishments of caning in the classroom, and the associated shame. The concept of horoscope-matching in Hindu marriages and the emotional toll it levies on the bride and groom is covered in the second book. In the third book, Narayan addresses the concept of a wife putting up with her husband's antics and attitudes.

Rajam died of typhoid in 1939. Her death affected Narayan deeply and he remained depressed for a long time; he was also concerned for their daughter Hema, who was only three years old. The bereavement brought about a significant change in his life and was the inspiration behind his next novel, *The English Teacher*. This book, like his first two books, is autobiographical, but more so, and completes an unintentional thematic trilogy following *Swami and Friends* and

The Bachelor of Arts In subsequent interviews, Narayan acknowledges that *The English Teacher* was almost entirely an autobiography, albeit with different names for the characters and the change of setting in Malgudi; he also explains that the emotions detailed in the book reflected his own at the time of Rajam's death.

Bolstered by some of his successes, in 1940 Narayan tried his hand at a journal, *Indian Thought*. With the help of his uncle, a car salesman, Narayan managed to get more than a thousand subscribers in Madras city alone. However, the venture did not last long due to Narayan's inability to manage it, and it ceased publication within a year. His first collection of short stories, *Malgudi Days*, was published in November 1942, followed by *The English Teacher* in 1945. In between, being cut off from England due to the war, Narayan started his own publishing company, naming it Indian Thought Publications; the publishing company was a success and is still active, now managed by his granddaughter. Soon, with a devoted readership stretching from New York to Moscow, Narayan's books started selling well and in 1948 he started building his own house on the outskirts of Mysore; the house was completed in 1953.

After *The English Teacher*, Narayan's writings took a more imaginative and creative external style compared to the semi-autobiographical tone of the earlier novels. His next effort, *Mr. Sampath*, was the first book exhibiting this modified approach. However, it still draws from some of his own experiences, particularly the aspect of starting his own journal; he also makes a marked movement away from his earlier novels by intermixing biographical events. Soon after, he published *The Financial Expert*, considered to be his masterpiece and hailed as one of the most original works of fiction in 1951. The inspiration for the novel was a true story about a financial genius, *Margayya*, related to him by his brother. The next novel, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, loosely based on a fictional visit to Malgudi by Mahatma Gandhi, deals with the protagonist's romantic feelings for a woman, when he attends the discourses of the visiting Mahatma. The woman, named Bharti, is a loose parody of Bharati, the personification of India and the focus of Gandhi's discourses. While the novel includes significant references to the Indian independence movement, the focus is on the life of the ordinary individual, narrated with Narayan's usual dose of irony.

In 1953, his works were published in the United States for the first time, by Michigan State University Press, who later (in 1958), relinquished the rights to Viking Press. While Narayan's writings often bring out the anomalies in social structures and views, he was himself a traditionalist; in February 1956, Narayan arranged his daughter's wedding following all orthodox Hindu rituals. After the wedding, Narayan began travelling occasionally, continuing to write at least 1500 words a day even while on the road. *The Guide* was written while he was visiting the United States in 1956 on the Rockefeller Fellowship. While in the U.S., Narayan maintained a daily journal that was to later serve as the foundation for his book *My Dateless Diary*. Around this time, on a visit to England, Narayan met his friend and mentor Graham Greene for the first time. On his return to India, *The Guide* was published; the book is the most representative of Narayan's writing skills and elements, ambivalent in expression, coupled with a riddle-like conclusion. The book won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1958.

Occasionally, Narayan was known to give form to his thoughts by way of essays, some published in newspapers and journals, others not. *Next Sunday* (1960), was a collection of such conversational essays, and his first work to be published as a book. Soon after that, *My Dateless Diary*, describing experiences from his 1956 visit to the United States, was published. Also included in this collection was an essay about the writing of *The Guide*.

Narayan's next novel, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, was published in 1961. The book was reviewed as having a narrative that is a classical art form of comedy, with delicate control. After the launch of this book, the restless Narayan once again took to travelling, and visited the U.S. and

Notes

Australia. He spent three weeks in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne giving lectures on Indian literature. The trip was funded by a fellowship from the Australian Writers' Group. By this time Narayan had also achieved significant success, both literary and financial. He had a large house in Mysore, and wrote in a study with no fewer than eight windows; he drove a new Mercedes-Benz, a luxury in India at that time, to visit his daughter who had moved to Coimbatore after her marriage. With his success, both within India and abroad, Narayan started writing columns for magazines and newspapers including *The Hindu* and *The Atlantic*.

In 1964, Narayan published his first mythological work, *Gods, Demons and Others*, a collection of rewritten and translated short stories from Hindu epics. Like many of his other works, this book was illustrated by his younger brother R.K. Laxman. The stories included were a selective list, chosen on the basis of powerful protagonists, so that the impact would be lasting, irrespective of the reader's contextual knowledge. Once again, after the book launch, Narayan took to travelling abroad. In an earlier essay, he had written about the Americans wanting to understand spirituality from him, and during this visit, Swedish-American actress Greta Garbo accosted him on the topic, despite his denial of any knowledge. Narayan's next published work was the 1967 novel, *The Vendor of Sweets*. It was inspired in part by his American visits and consists of extreme characterizations of both the Indian and American stereotypes, drawing on the many cultural differences. However, while it displays his characteristic comedy and narrative, the book was reviewed as lacking in depth. This year, Narayan travelled to England, where he received the first of his honorary doctorates from the University of Leeds. The next few years were a quiet period for him. He published his next book, a collection of short stories, *A Horse and Two Goats*, in 1970. Meanwhile, Narayan remembered a promise made to his dying uncle in 1938, and started translating the Kamba Ramayanam to English. *The Ramayana* was published in 1973, after five years of work. Almost immediately after publishing *The Ramayana*, Narayan started working on a condensed translation of the Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata. While he was researching and writing the epic, he also published another book, *The Painter of Signs* (1977). *The Painter of Signs* is a bit longer than a novella and makes a marked change from Narayan's other works, as he deals with hitherto unaddressed subjects such as sex, although the development of the protagonist's character is very similar to his earlier creations. *The Mahabharata* was published in 1978.

7.2.1 Later Years

Narayan was commissioned by the government of Karnataka to write a book to promote tourism in the state. The work was published as part of a larger government publication in the late 1970s. He thought it deserved better, and republished it as *The Emerald Route* (Indian Thought Publications, 1980). The book contains his personal perspective on the local history and heritage, but being bereft of his characters and creations, it misses his enjoyable narrative. The same year, he was elected as an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and won the AC Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature. Around the same time, Narayan's works were translated to Chinese for the first time.

In 1983, Narayan published his next novel, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, about a tiger and its relationship with humans. His next novel, *Talkative Man*, published in 1986, was the tale of an aspiring journalist from Malgudi. During this time, he also published two collections of short stories: *Malgudi Days* (1982), a revised edition including the original book and some other stories, and *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories*, a new collection. In 1987, he completed *A Writer's Nightmare*, another collection of essays about topics as diverse as the caste system, Nobel Prize winners, love, and monkeys. The collection included essays he had written for magazines and newspapers since 1958.

Living alone in Mysore, Narayan developed an interest in agriculture. He bought an acre of agricultural land and tried his hand at farming. He was also prone to walking to the market every afternoon, not so much for buying things, but to interact with the people. In a typical afternoon stroll, he would stop every few steps to greet and converse with shopkeepers and others, most likely gathering material for his next book.

In 1980, Narayan was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, for his contributions to literature. During his entire six-year term, he was focused on one issue—the plight of school children, specifically the heavy load of school books and the negative effect of the system on a child's creativity, which was something that he first highlighted in his debut novel, *Swami and Friends*. His inaugural speech was focused on this particular problem, and resulted in the formation of a committee chaired by Prof. Yash Pal, to recommend changes to the school educational system.

In 1990, he published his next novel, *The World of Nagaraj*, also set in Malgudi. Narayan's age shows in this work as he appears to skip narrative details that he would have included if this were written earlier in his career. Soon after he finished the novel, Narayan fell ill and moved to Madras to be close to his daughter's family. A few years after his move, in 1994, his daughter died of cancer and his granddaughter Bhuvaneshwari (Minnie) started taking care of him in addition to managing *Indian Thought Publications*. Narayan then published his final book, *Grandmother's Tale*. The book is an autobiographical novella, about his great-grandmother who travelled far and wide to find her husband, who ran away shortly after their marriage. The story was narrated to him by his grandmother, when he was a child.

During his final years, Narayan, ever fond of conversation, would spend almost every evening with N. Ram, the publisher of *The Hindu*, drinking coffee and talking about various topics until well past midnight. Despite his fondness of meeting and talking to people, he stopped giving interviews. The apathy towards interviews was the result of an interview with *Time*, after which Narayan had to spend a few days in the hospital, as he was dragged around the city to take photographs that were never used in the article.

In May 2001, Narayan was hospitalised. A few hours before he was to be put on a ventilator, he was planning on writing his next novel, a story about a grandfather. As he was always very selective about his choice of notebooks, he asked N. Ram to get him one. However, Narayan did not get better and never started the novel. He died on 13 May 2001, in Chennai at the age of 94.

7.3 Writing Style

Narayan's writing style was simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like, thereby providing a greater ability to relate to the topic. Unlike his national contemporaries, he was able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without having to modify his characteristic simplicity to conform to trends and fashions in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Critics have considered Narayan to be the *Indian Chekhov*, due to the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humour in tragic situations. Greene considered Narayan to be more similar to Chekhov than any Indian writer. Anthony West of *The New Yorker* considered Narayan's writings to be of the realism variety of Nikolai Gogol.

Notes



Notes **An Astrologer's Day Style – Point of View**

The story adopts the traditional mode of third-person omniscience. In other words, the author/ narrator relates the entire story to the reader, but since the entire plot is dependent on the revelation taking place at the end, the narrator does not reveal all the aspects of character at the beginning. While the narrator is forthcoming about all the peripheral goings-on in the story, s/he is careful not to reveal to the reader anything more than would be evident to any passerby. The reader sees the plot as it is being enacted, despite the presence of the omniscient narrator. The use of dialogue throughout the story serves the function of providing multiple points of view without altering the overall authority of the narrator. **Politics** – Another aspect of Narayan's work that has been consistently pointed out in criticism is the author's refusal to engage with the historical and political events of the time. The author does not completely disregard politics, but that is always less important than the ordinary lives of the people who live in Malgudi.

According to Pulitzer Prize winner Jhumpa Lahiri, Narayan's short stories have the same captivating feeling as his novels, with most of them less than ten pages long, and taking about as many minutes to read. She adds that between the title sentence and the end, Narayan provides the reader something novelists struggle to achieve in hundreds more pages: a complete insight to the lives of his characters. These characteristics and abilities led Lahiri to classify him as belonging to the pantheon of short-story geniuses that include O. Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor. Lahiri also compares him to Guy de Maupassant for their ability to compress the narrative without losing the story, and the common themes of middle-class life written with an unyielding and un pitying vision.

Critics have noted that Narayan's writings tend to be more descriptive and less analytical; the objective style, rooted in a detached spirit, providing for a more authentic and realistic narration. His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, provided a unique ability to fuse characters and actions, and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of the reader. A significant contributor to his writing style was his creation of Malgudi, a stereotypical small town, where the standard norms of superstition and tradition apply.

Narayan's writing style was often compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humour and energy of ordinary life while displaying compassionate humanism. The similarities also extended to their juxtaposing of the demands of society against the confusions of individuality. Although their approach to subjects was similar, their methods were different; Faulkner was rhetorical and illustrated his points with immense prose while Narayan was very simple and realistic, capturing the elements all the same.



Did u know? Among Indian authors, Narayan has probably received the most attention. Apart from a few essays that have expressed some reservation about Narayan's refusal to engage with political social realities, all others have been largely adulatory. Book-length studies of his work have dealt with various aspects of his work, including myth, humour, religion, identity, and so forth. Surprisingly, much more attention has been paid to the novels than to the short stories, although Narayan has published several collections over a career that spans more than six decades. It is to his credit that any major study of Indian writing in English would include at least a chapter on the work of Narayan.

7.4 The Works and Achievements of R.K. Narayan

Notes

Felicited with Sahitya Akademi Award for *The Guide* in 1958; Padma Bhushan in 1964, R.K. Narayan is one of the most famous and widely read Indian novelists. His stories were grounded in a compassionate humanism and celebrated the humour and energy of ordinary life. R.K. Narayan was born in Madras, South India, in 1906, and completed his education from Maharaja's College in Mysore. His first novel, *Swami and Friends* and its successor, *The Bachelor of Arts*, are both set in the enchanting fictional territory of Malgudi and are only two out of the twelve novels he based there. In 1958 Narayan's work '*The Guide*' won him the National Prize of the Indian Literary Academy, his country's highest literary honour.

In addition to his novels, Narayan has authored five collections of short stories, including *A Horse and Two Goats*, *Malgudi Days*, and *Under the Banyan Tree*, two travel books, two volumes of essays, a volume of memoirs, and the re-told legends *Gods, Demons and Others*, *The Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*. In 1980 he was awarded the A.C. Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature and in 1982 he was made an Honorary Member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Most of Narayan's work, starting with his first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935), captures many Indian traits while retaining a unique identity of its own. He was sometimes compared to the American writer William Faulkner, whose novels were also grounded in a compassionate humanism and celebrated the humour and energy of ordinary life.

Narayan who lived till age of ninety-four, died in 2001. He wrote for more than fifty years, and published until he was eighty seven. He wrote fourteen novels, five volumes of short stories, a number of travelogues and collections of non-fiction, condensed versions of Indian epics in English, and the memoir *My Days*.



Task Write an essay about the awards won by R.K. Narayan during his career.

7.5 Summary – An Astrologer's Day

"An Astrologer's Day" was first published in the newspaper *The Hindu* and then was made the title story of a collection of short stories which appeared in 1947—the year that India gained its independence. R.K. Narayan's first collection of short stories, entitled *Malgudi Days*, appeared in 1941. Two other collections followed quickly: *Dodu and Other Stories* in 1943 and *Cyclone and Other Stories* in 1944. By the time this collection was published, he was already a well-known novelist, both in India and the West. The endorsement given by the eminent British novelist Graham Greene, who wrote an introduction to Narayan's novel *The Financial Expert* (1952), made a great deal of difference to his popularity in the West. By the 1950s he was known as one of the three major writers of India, the other two being Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. "An Astrologer's Day" remains a major work in his corpus and displays all the characteristics associated with his writing. Narayan's sense of irony, his deep religious sensibility, his humour, his consciousness of the significance of everyday occurrences, and his belief in a Hindu vision of life are all revealed in this story.

The short story "An Astrologer's Day" begins with a general description of an astrologer, who is one of many street vendors, except for the fact that he has a distinct aura of holiness and power. He is working in a busy, unnamed city, and the author establishes that, in reality, he is a charlatan with no special powers other than the keen ability to judge character. The Astrologer pursued his trade under a tamarind tree standing beside a pathway running through the Town Hall Park.

Notes

He spreads his professional equipment, which consists of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook and a bundle of Palmyra writing. He's a fine get-up of an astrologer, with his forehead shinning with sacred ash and vermilion. He has dark whiskers and sparkling eyes. To crown the effect, he wears bright clothes and a saffron-coloured turban around his head. He sits at a place which is frequented by all sorts-of people. Many hawkers cry loudly near him. And when it's dark he gets light from a neighbouring hawker. The setting was an ideal one because a large crowd went up and down the pathway from morning till night and a good number of them were the astrologer's prospective customers. Moreover, the man had interesting peddlers as his neighbours, some of whose customers would get drawn to him to know their future. A man sold medicines near him. Another peddled junk goods and stolen hardware at throw-away prices. A magician would be showing sleight of hands while another would create enough interest among the passing crowd by auctioning cheap clothes. And then there was the hawker who drew a good crowd around him because of his excellent salesmanship. He would sell the same fried groundnuts every day but would canvass his fare in different fancy names like Bombay Ice Cream, Delhi Almond, and so on and so forth on different days.

The astrologer was devoid of any professional training. During his youth he used to drink, gamble and quarrel. Once he hit a fellow villager hard on his head and assuming the person dead, he pushed him into a well. To hide himself from the police he ran away and settled as an astrologer in a town. Even though he lacked training, he had all the shrewdness and understanding of human mind and the causes of human worries. That is why he could convincingly answer all questions of his clients.

The astrologer is about to return to his home at the end of the day when he is stopped by an unusually aggressive customer, Guru Nayak, the client who turns out to be a former victim, now on a quest for revenge. The customer insists that the astrologer tell him the truth about his life, and that if he does not, he should return his (the customer's) money, along with extra, as payment for having lied. The astrologer, realizing that he will most likely be exposed, tries to get out of the deal, but the customer is adamant.

The story takes an unexpected turn, when, unbeknownst to the customer, the astrologer recognizes him and tells him about something that happened in the past. Calling the customer by name, the astrologer recounts how the customer had once been stabbed and left for dead, but had been saved by a bystander. The astrologer tells the customer that he must stop looking for the man who stabbed him so long ago, because to do so would be dangerous, and anyway, the perpetrator is dead. The customer, not recognizing the astrologer, is impressed that he should know about his past.

When the astrologer goes home, his wife asks about his day. He tells her that he has been relieved of a great load; he had once thought that he had killed someone, but had today discovered that the victim was well and very much alive. The wife is mystified, but the astrologer goes to bed for an untroubled night of sleep.

7.5.1 Critical Analysis

Book: An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories (1947)

Author: R.K. Narayan

Genre: Short stories

Story from the Collection: An Astrologer's Day

'An Astrologer's Day and other Stories' are a collection of short stories written by R.K. Narayan. 'An Astrologer's Day' is the first story from the collection. "An Astrologer's Day" has been

perceived as a significant work, comparable to anything else he has written. While many critical accounts have been confined to plot summaries, a few have drawn attention to the quality of irony that accounts for the strength of the story. What has not been stressed adequately is that the quality of harmony that informs all his work also frames this story. There is very little violence in Narayan's writing, and very little by way of tragedy. Not all his fiction ends on a note of optimism, but there is always a sense of reconciliation, a suggestion that contradictions will be resolved.

The story is about an astrologer, who chose to be one not out of choice but past mysterious situations in life forced him to be one. So it goes without saying that he was a stranger to the stars as much his gullible clients, but he did know how to carry out his profession. What baffles the reader and everyone is how he could correctly read an unusual client's past and even known his name? Had he studied the stars and mastered the art, contrary to the common belief? Did he possess some uncanny powers, which could be put to good use, when needed?

Plot

1. **Exposition:** In the beginning of the story we are introduced to the astrologer. All others transacting their business nearby are there to create the right atmosphere and provide the setting necessary for the development of the plot. The crafty ways in which the astrologer transcends his work and endeared to his gullible customers is very well described.

"He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customer. But it didn't seem to matter at all. He said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice and shrewd guesswork".

The writer paints a perfect picture of an astrologer – the con men, the likes of whom we come across in the marketplace and towns. Even though we may harbour doubts about their knowledge of stars, we do feel tempted to consult them to know what future has in store for us!

2. **Complication:** A sense of suspense is created about the personal life or past history of the astrologer. All that we are told in the beginning of the story is that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life.

He had left his village stealthily without any previous thought or plan. He had to leave home without telling anyone and had to cover a safe distance before he could recollect himself and his life. We are also told that astrology was not his family business. If he had continued to live in his village, he would have tilled the land and tended his cornfields like his forefathers. So this creates curiosity in the minds of the reader as to what had happened in his past that had broken this ancestral cycle and forced him to leave all of a sudden?

3. **Climax:** The narration continues at its normal expected pace until an unusual client appears in the scene to consult the astrologer when the astrologer was packing up his astrology paraphernalia and was ready to call it a day. This client was no usual casual client wanting temporary respite but had specific questions and challenged the astrologer to provide specific answers.

The critical scene which drives the plot ahead: As the stranger lit his cheroot, the astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the matchlight and for some obscure reason the astrologer now felt uncomfortable and tried to wriggle out of the whole thing.

(The work place setting described in the beginning of the story is very well gelled in evolving the critical scene of the story).

The stranger won't let go the astrologer. "Challenge is challenge".

Notes

What the astrologer says hereafter takes the client as well as the reader by surprise. He was left for dead, a knife had passed through him once, and he was pushed into a well nearby in the field. The effect is further heightened when the astrologer even gives out his correct name. Guru Nayak is completely stumped. When asked about the whereabouts of the man who stabbed him and left him for dead, the astrologer confidently tells Guru Nayak to give up the hunt because the assailant had died four months ago, crushed under a lorry in a far-off town. The astrologer also advises Guru Nayak to go home and stay up there and never travel southward again.

This episode leaves us with new-found admiration for the astrologer. How could he so correctly read the stranger's past and even known his name? Had he studied the stars and mastered the art, contrary to the common belief? Did he possess some uncanny powers, which could be put to good use, when needed?

4. **Denouement:** The story takes another twist when the astrologer reaches home and confides with his wife the reason why he had run away from home, settled here, and married her. All these years he had thought that the blood of a man was on his hands. This past incidence had happened when he was a youngster, got drunk, gambled and got into a quarrel. But now the man he thought he had killed was alive. Thus a great load was off his chest.

This is the reason why the astrologer had to leave his village without any plan or preparation. And this was how he could so correctly talk of Guru Nayak's troubled past.

The story thus ends with an incredible twist: "a murdered man" turns up to consult his "murderer", who is now an astrologer, regarding when he will be able to have his revenge; the "murderer" recognizes him by the matchlight when the former had lit his cheroot but he cannot recognize his old enemy in his garb as an astrologer. The client is astonished to be told about his previous history by the astrologer, and meekly agrees to give up his search for his enemy declared to have been crushed under a lorry months ago. Thus the astrologer ensured for himself a safe and secure life hereafter. Convinced that his assailant had been crushed under a lorry months ago, Guru Nayak would not want to venture out of his village when his life was at risk. Thus, all the mystery begins to fall in place and the loose ends are tied into a unified whole.

7.5.2 Atmosphere

The author, R.K. Narayan, has an eye for detail. He creates an atmosphere of a perfect work place for the astrologer.

Illustrations:

- His professional equipment consisted of "a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook, and a bundle of palmyra writing".
- The boughs of the spreading tamarind tree, the surging crowd moving up and down the narrow road morning till night, the variety of traders- medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians, auctioneers of cheap cloth, and vendors of fried groundnut-vociferously vying with each other to attract the crowd created a remarkable work place for the astrologer.
- The light and smoke of the crackling flare above the groundnut heap, enchantment of the place created by lack of lighting, hissing gaslights and bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows created the right setting for an astrologer.

7.5.3 Characterisation

Notes

The method of characterization adopted by the author is a combination of expository and dramatic.

There are three characters in the story:

1. **The Astrologer:** The protagonist is an astrologer. The astrologer's name is never mentioned and it doesn't really matter that the reader knows it. He is a 'round character' with various facets of the personality being revealed and the character evolved with the development of the plot.

The appearance of the astrologer is very well described by the author.

- ❖ "His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam" which his simple clients took to be prophetic light and felt comforted.
- ❖ "Half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting".
- ❖ "To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks".

The only thing the astrologer didn't know anything about was 'Astrology' but he was intelligent and had his crafty ways to go about his profession. He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles and told the person before him, gazing at his palm:

- ❖ "In many ways you are not getting the fullest results of your efforts".
- ❖ "Most of your troubles are due to your nature.....Saturn.....You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior".

These talks endeared to almost everyone's hearts immediately.

Clever as he was, he never opened for at least ten minutes which provided him enough stuff for "a dozen answers and advices".

2. **A prospective client of the Astrologer:** The prospective client happened to be the person the astrologer had stabbed and left for being dead when they were youngsters. Therefore he was restless, furious and was searching for his assailant to take revenge. The astrologer recognized him but he could not recognize his assailant in the garb of an astrologer. His name, 'Guru Nayak', is revealed when the astrologer was unravelling his past. He plays a pivotal role in the development and climax of the plot.
3. **Astrologer's wife:** Though a minuscule role, the astrologer's wife plays an important part in the denouement of the story, helping the astrologer take the great load off his chest.

Is this character absolutely required in the story? The author could have eliminated this role altogether and allowed the astrologer heave a sigh of relief by talking to his conscience but confiding and sharing his relief with his wife brings the characters to life.



Caution Remember that it is only at the end of the story that the astrologer is given an individuality that makes him a distinctive figure. Also, in the story he interacts only with two characters: the first, a passer-by who seeks his advice about the future. The relation between the two is purely functional, and there would be no need for the person to address the astrologer by name. The second is the astrologer's wife, who speaks to him at

Notes

the end of the story. In this instance, convention demands that she should not use his name to address him: In a typical South Indian family it would be rare for a wife to address her husband by name. Hence, despite the latitude of omniscient narration, the author chooses to let the astrologer remain anonymous.

7.5.4 Narrative Techniques

The story builds up certain suspense in the mind of the readers regarding the circumstances that had compelled the protagonist to leave his village all of a sudden without any plan or preparation and take to astrology to eke out a living in the town. The revelation unties many knots merely hinted at earlier and weaves the parts into a unified whole. It is a logical climax reached dramatically.

7.5.5 Figurative Language

Irony: The author uses ironic comment on the astrologer’s crafty ways of carrying out his profession and the gullible people who came to him for solutions and finding respite:

- ❖ “He knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute”.
- ❖ “He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers”.
- ❖ “...his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted”.

Simile: The appearance of the astrologer wearing a saffron-coloured turban is described as:

“To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks”.

The astrologer had left his home under mysterious circumstances and did not rest till he covered a couple of hundred miles. This enormous distance covered is emphasized as:

“To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between”.



Example: Catchy Phrases: The work place setting is buzzing with activities consisting different traders. I personally liked the way the groundnut seller uses catchy phrases to transact business:

“He gave a fancy name each day, calling it ‘Bombay Ice-Cream’ one day, and on the next ‘Delhi Almond’ on the next, and ‘Raja’s Delicacy’”.

Innovative catch phrases are commonly used by many street vendors in the towns of India to lure customers. This vibrant marketing style has been very vividly captured by the author.

7.5.6 Societal Satire

This story goes on to show how past can actually affect the present and future of one’s life.

The astrologer had committed a folly by getting into a quarrel when he was a drunk youngster, the result of which changed his entire path of life. If not for the past incidence he would have continued to live in that village carried on the work of his forefathers namely, tilling the land, living, marrying, and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But now he had to leave his

village stealthily and take up the profession of an astrologer which he least intended to in a faraway village.

There is an element of social satire in the story: What happened in the past and how it affected the lives henceforth is for all of us to see.

7.5.7 Astrology as a Profession

The author uses irony to show how the science of astrology has been misused by these conmen in the society thereby creating distrust in the people about astrology and astrologers. Though the author uses ironic comment on the astrologer's crafty ways of carrying out his profession and the gullible people who came to him for solutions and finding respite but he has never been judgmental and undermined astrology as a profession.

7.5.8 Illustration

"He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customer. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice, and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labour as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day".

What makes the story impressive is the interesting plot, element of suspense, logical climax, figurative language, importance to details, and the underlying meaning behind the story. These elements have been artistically interwoven in the story by the author, making it an interesting read.

Self Assessment

State true or false:

1. R.K. Narayan is the author of An Astrologer's Day.
2. The English Teacher is R. K. Narayan's popular work.
3. The astrologer set up his shop in Town Hall Park.
4. The astrologer wears dull clothes when he is first introduced in the story.
5. The astrologer possessed some supernatural powers.

7.6 Summary

- Indian author R.K. Narayan, full name **Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami**, is widely considered to be one of India's greatest English language novelists known for his simple and unpretentious writing style, often compared to William Faulkner. He was felicitated with Sahitya Akademi Award for *The Guide* in 1958; Padma Bhushan in 1964.
- R.K. Narayan was born on October 10, 1906 in Madras. His father was a school headmaster, and Narayan did some of his studies at his father's school. As his father's job entailed frequent transfers, Narayan spent part of his childhood under the care of his maternal grandmother, Parvati. During this time his best friends and playmates were a peacock and a mischievous monkey.
- His first published work was a book review of *Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England*. Subsequently, he started writing the occasional local interest story for English newspapers and magazines.

Notes

- Narayan was commissioned by the government of Karnataka to write a book to promote tourism in the state. The work was published as part of a larger government publication in the late 1970s. He thought it deserved better, and republished it as *The Emerald Route* (Indian Thought Publications, 1980).
- In 1980, Narayan was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, for his contributions to literature. During his entire six-year term, he was focused on one issue—the plight of school children, specifically the heavy load of school books and the negative effect of the system on a child’s creativity, which was something that he first highlighted in his debut novel, *Swami and Friends*.
- Narayan’s writing style was simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like, thereby providing a greater ability to relate to the topic.
- “An Astrologer’s Day” was first published in the newspaper *The Hindu* and then was made the title story of a collection of short stories which appeared in 1947—the year that India gained its independence. R.K. Narayan’s first collection of short stories, entitled *Malgudi Days*, appeared in 1941.
- “An Astrologer’s Day” remains a major work in his corpus and displays all the characteristics associated with his writing. Narayan’s sense of irony, his deep religious sensibility, his humour, his consciousness of the significance of everyday occurrences, and his belief in a Hindu vision of life are all revealed in this story.
- The story is about an astrologer, who chose to be one not out of choice but past mysterious situations in life forced him to be one. So it goes without saying that he was a stranger to the stars as much his gullible clients, but he did know how to carry out his profession.
- “An Astrologer’s Day” has been perceived as a significant work, comparable to anything else he has written. While many critical accounts have been confined to plot summaries, a few have drawn attention to the quality of irony that accounts for the strength of the story. What has not been stressed adequately is that the quality of harmony that informs all his work also frames this story. There is very little violence in Narayan’s writing.

7.7 Keywords

Astrology: It can be defined as the study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs.

Corpus: It is a collection of written texts, especially the entire works of a particular author or a body of writing on a particular subject.

Denouement: The denouement refers to the resolution of the complications of a plot in a work of fiction, generally done in a final chapter or section. It generally follows the climax, except in mystery novels, in which the denouement and the climax may occur at the same time.

Gullible: A gullible person is somebody who can be easily persuaded to believe something. If you describe someone as gullible, you mean they are easily tricked because they are too trusting.

Irony: The expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect can be defined as irony.

Novelist: A person who writes novels is called a novelist.

Occurrence: An incident or event is called so.

Notes

Unravel: It means to separate and clarify the elements of something mysterious or baffling.

7.8 Review Questions

1. Throw light on the life of R.K. Narayan.
2. Write about R.K. Narayan's achievements.
3. Write about R.K. Narayan's childhood days.
4. State the character sketch of the astrologer in the story *An Astrologer's Day*.
5. Talk about the figurative language used in the story *An Astrologer's Day*.
6. Where did the Astrologer ply his trade? How did the setting help in attracting his customers?
7. Who were the other traders and vendors who did their business around him?
8. Talk about the narrative techniques used in the story *An Astrologer's Day*.
9. Why did the astrologer leave his village without any plan or preparation?
10. Briefly talk about R.K. Narayan's style of writing.
11. How does the wife play an important role towards the end of the story?
12. "His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which is simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted."

Refer to the lines above and tell whose appearance is being described here? What more do we learn about him and his profession?

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. True | 2. True |
| 3. True | 4. False |
| 5. False | |

7.9 Further Readings



Books

Badal R.K. (1976), *R.K. Narayan: A Study*, Prakash Book Depot.

Edited by Khatr C. L. *R.K. Narayan: Reflections and Re-evaluation*, Sarup & Sons, New Delhi.

Edited by Prasad A.N., *Critical Response to R.K. Narayan*, Sarup & Sons, New Delhi.

Narayan R.K. (1960) *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories: (a Selection)*, Indian Thought Publishers.

Notes



Online links

<http://www.enotes.com/topics/an-astrologers-day>

<http://www.enotes.com/topics/astrologers-day/themes>

<http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/rk-narayan.html>

<http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-blogs/seekers/faith-and-rituals/an-astrologers-day-story-by-r-k-narayan-adaptation>

Unit 8: Before a Midnight Breaks in Storm by Rudyard Kipling

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

8.1 About Joseph Rudyard Kipling

8.1.1 Early Life

8.1.2 Back to India

8.1.3 Career as a Writer

8.1.4 Peak of his Career

8.1.5 Freemasonry

8.1.6 The First World War

8.1.7 After the War

8.1.8 Death and Legacy

8.1.9 Links with Scouting

8.1.10 Kipling's Home at Burwash

8.1.11 Reputation in India

8.1.12 Bibliography

8.2 Poem

8.2.1 Analysis

8.3 Summary

8.4 Keywords

8.5 Review Questions

8.6 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and works of Rudyard Kipling
- Explain the *Before a Midnight breaks in Storm*
- Analyse *Before a Midnight breaks in Storm*

Introduction

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay on December 30th 1865, son of John Lockwood Kipling, an artist and teacher of architectural sculpture, and his wife Alice. His mother was one of the talented and beautiful Macdonald sisters, four of whom married remarkable men, Sir Edward

Notes

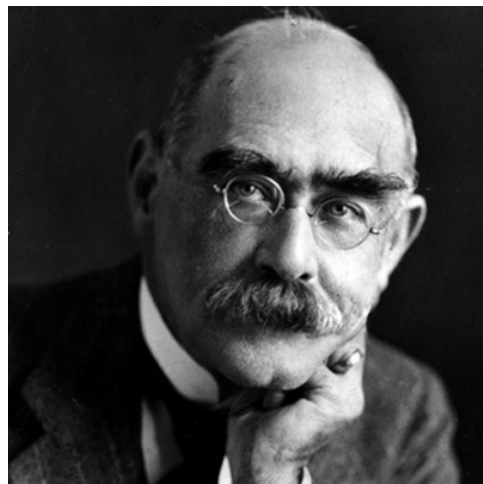
Burne-Jones, Sir Edward Poynter, Alfred Baldwin, and John Lockwood Kipling himself. His literary career began with *Departmental Ditties* (1886), but subsequently he became chiefly known as a writer of short stories. Kipling was the recipient of many honorary degrees and other awards. In 1926 he received the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature, which only Scott, Meredith, and Hardy had been awarded before him.

Before a midnight breaks in storm written by Stephen Leacock was first published as the Dedication to *The Five Nation* (1903).

In this unit we will study more about Rudyard Kipling and *Before a Midnight breaks in Storm*.

8.1 About Joseph Rudyard Kipling

Figure 8.1: Rudyard Kipling



Source: <http://www.biography.com/imported/images/Biography/Images/Profiles/K/Rudyard-Kipling-9365581-1-402.jpg>

Joseph Rudyard Kipling (December 1865 – 18 January 1936) was an English short-story writer, novelist and poet. He is chiefly remembered for his tales and poems of life in British India and his tales for children. Kipling enjoyed early success with his poems but soon became known as a masterful short story writer for his portrayals of the people, history, and culture of his times. He was born in Bombay, in the Bombay Presidency of British India, and was taken by his family to England when he was five years old. Kipling is best known for his works of fiction, including *The Jungle Book* (a collection of stories which includes “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi”), *Just So Stories* (1902), *Kim* (1901) (a tale of adventure), many short stories, including “The Man Who Would Be King” (1888); and his poems, including “Mandalay” (1890), “Gunga Din” (1890), “The White Man’s Burden” (1899), and “If—” (1910). He is regarded as a major “innovator in the art of the short story”; his children’s books are enduring classics of children’s literature; and his best works are said to exhibit “a versatile and luminous narrative gift”.

Kipling was one of the most popular writers in England, in both prose and verse, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Henry James said: “Kipling strikes me personally as the most complete man of genius (as distinct from fine intelligence) that I have ever known.” In 1907, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, making him the first English-language writer to receive the prize, and to date he remains its youngest recipient. Among other honours, he was sounded out for the British Poet Laureateship and on several occasions for a knighthood, all of which he declined.

Kipling's subsequent reputation has changed according to the political and social climate of the age and the resulting contrasting views about him continued for much of the 20th century. George Orwell called him a "prophet of British imperialism". Literary critic Douglas Kerr wrote: "He [Kipling] is still an author who can inspire passionate disagreement and his place in literary and cultural history is far from settled. But as the age of the European empires recedes, he is recognised as an incomparable, if controversial, interpreter of how empire was experienced. That, and an increasing recognition of his extraordinary narrative gifts, make him a force to be reckoned with."



Did u know? The most famous quote written by Rudyard Kipling is "He wrapped himself in quotations – as a beggar would enfold himself in the purple of Emperors."

8.1.1 Early Life

Rudyard Kipling was born on 30 December 1865 in Bombay, in the Bombay Presidency of British India, to Alice Kipling (née MacDonald) and (John) Lockwood Kipling. Alice (one of four remarkable Victorian sisters) was a vivacious woman about whom a future Viceroy of India would say, "Dullness and Mrs. Kipling cannot exist in the same room." Lockwood Kipling, a sculptor and pottery designer, was the Principal and Professor of Architectural Sculpture at the newly founded Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Bombay.

John Lockwood and Alice had met in 1863 and courted at Rudyard Lake in Rudyard, Staffordshire, England. They married, and moved to India in 1865. They had been so moved by the beauty of the Rudyard Lake area that when their first child was born, they included a reference to the lake in naming him. Alice's sister Georgiana was married to painter Edward Burne-Jones, and her sister Agnes was married to painter Edward Poynter. Kipling's most famous relative was his first cousin, Stanley Baldwin, who was Conservative Prime Minister of the UK three times in the 1920s and 1930s. Kipling's birth home still stands on the campus of the J J School of Art in Mumbai and was used as the Dean's residence for several years. Bombay historian Foy Nissen points out, however, that although the cottage bears a plaque stating that this is the site where Kipling was born, the original cottage was torn down decades ago and a new one was built in its place. The wooden bungalow has been empty and locked up for years.

Of Bombay, Kipling was to write:

Mother of Cities to me,
For I was born in her gate,
Between the palms and the sea,
Where the world-end steamers wait.

According to Bernice M. Murphy, "Kipling's parents considered themselves 'Anglo-Indians' (a term used in the 19th century for people of British origin living in India) and so too would their son, though he spent the bulk of his life elsewhere. Complex issues of identity and national allegiance would become prominent features in his fiction."



Example: Kipling referred to such conflicts; "In the afternoon heats before we took our sleep, she (the Portuguese ayah, or nanny) or Meeta (the Hindu bearer, or male attendant) would tell us stories and Indian nursery songs all unforgotten, and we were sent into the dining-room after we had been dressed, with the caution 'Speak English now to Papa and Mamma.' So one spoke 'English', haltingly translated out of the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in".

Notes

Kipling's days of "strong light and darkness" in Bombay ended when he was five years old. As was the custom in British India, he and his three-year-old sister Alice ("Trix") were taken to England—in their case to Southsea, Portsmouth—to live with a couple who boarded children of British nationals who were serving in India. For the next six years, from October 1871 to April 1877, the two children lived with the couple, Captain Pryse Agar Holloway, once an officer in the merchant navy, and Mrs Sarah Holloway, at their house, Lorne Lodge at 4 Campbell Road, Southsea. In his autobiography, published some 65 years later, Kipling recalled the stay with horror, and wondered ironically if the combination of cruelty and neglect which he experienced there at the hands of Mrs. Holloway might not have hastened the onset of his literary life: "If you cross-examine a child of seven or eight on his day's doings (specially when he wants to go to sleep) he will contradict himself very satisfactorily. If each contradiction be set down as a lie and retailed at breakfast, life is not easy. I have known a certain amount of bullying, but this was calculated torture—religious as well as scientific. Yet it made me give attention to the lies I soon found it necessary to tell: and this, I presume, is the foundation of literary effort".

Trix fared better at Lorne Lodge; Mrs. Holloway apparently hoped that Trix would eventually marry the Holloway son. The two Kipling children, however, did have relatives in England whom they could visit. They spent a month each Christmas with their maternal aunt Georgiana ("Georgy") and her husband at their house, "The Grange," in Fulham, London, which Kipling was to call "a paradise which I verily believe saved me." In the spring of 1877, Alice returned from India and removed the children from Lorne Lodge. Kipling remembers, "Often and often afterwards, the beloved Aunt would ask me why I had never told anyone how I was being treated. Children tell little more than animals, for what comes to them they accept as eternally established. Also, badly-treated children have a clear notion of what they are likely to get if they betray the secrets of a prison-house before they are clear of it".

In January 1878, Kipling was admitted to the United Services College at Westward Ho! Devon, a school founded a few years earlier to prepare boys for the British Army. The school proved rough going for him at first, but later led to firm friendships, and provided the setting for his schoolboy stories *Stalky & Co.* (1899). During his time there, Kipling also met and fell in love with Florence Garrard, who was boarding with Trix at Southsea (to which Trix had returned). Florence was to become the model for Maisie in Kipling's first novel, *The Light that Failed* (1891).

Near the end of his stay at the school, it was decided that he lacked the academic ability to get into Oxford University on a scholarship and his parents lacked the wherewithal to finance him, so Lockwood obtained a job for his son in Lahore, Punjab (now in Pakistan), where Lockwood was Principal of the Mayo College of Art and Curator of the Lahore Museum. Kipling was to be assistant editor of a small local newspaper, the *Civil & Military Gazette*.

He sailed for India on 20 September 1882 and arrived in Bombay on 18 October. He described this moment years later: "So, at sixteen years and nine months, but looking four or five years older, and adorned with real whiskers which the scandalised Mother abolished within one hour of beholding, I found myself at Bombay where I was born, moving among sights and smells that made me deliver in the vernacular sentences whose meaning I knew not. Other Indian-born boys have told me how the same thing happened to them." This arrival changed Kipling, as he explains: "There were yet three or four days' rail to Lahore, where my people lived. After these, my English years fell away, nor ever, I think, came back in full strength".

8.1.2 Back to India

The *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore, the newspaper which Kipling was to call "mistress and most true love", appeared six days a week throughout the year except for one-day breaks for Christmas and Easter. Stephen Wheeler, the editor, worked Kipling hard, but Kipling's need

to write was unstoppable. In 1886, he published his first collection of verse, *Departmental Ditties*. That year also brought a change of editors at the newspaper; Kay Robinson, the new editor, allowed more creative freedom and Kipling was asked to contribute short stories to the newspaper. In an article printed in the *Chums boys' annual* (No. 256, Vol. V, 4 August 1897, page 798), an ex-colleague of Kipling's stated that ... "he never knew such a fellow for ink—he simply revelled in it, filling up his pen viciously, and then throwing the contents all over the office, so that it was almost dangerous to approach him". The anecdote continues: "In the hot weather, when he (Kipling) wore only white trousers and a thin vest, he is said to have resembled a Dalmatian dog more than a human being, for he was spotted all over with ink in every direction."

During the summer of 1883, Kipling visited Shimla (then known as Simla), a well-known hill station and the summer capital of British India. By then it was established practice for the Viceroy of India and the government to move to Simla for six months, and the town became a "centre of power as well as pleasure". Kipling's family became yearly visitors to Simla, and Lockwood Kipling was asked to serve in Christ Church there. Rudyard Kipling returned to Simla for his annual leave each year from 1885 to 1888, and the town figured prominently in many of the stories that he wrote for the *Gazette*. He describes this time: "My month's leave at Simla, or whatever Hill Station my people went to, was pure joy—every golden hour counted. It began in heat and discomfort, by rail and road. It ended in the cool evening, with a wood fire in one's bedroom, and next morn—thirty more of them ahead!—the early cup of tea, the Mother who brought it in, and the long talks of us all together again. One had leisure to work, too, at whatever play-work was in one's head, and that was usually full." Back in Lahore, some thirty-nine stories appeared in the *Gazette* between November 1886 and June 1887. Kipling included most of these stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, his first prose collection, which was published in Calcutta in January 1888, a month after his 22nd birthday. Kipling's time in Lahore, however, had come to an end. In November 1887, he was transferred to the *Gazette's* much larger sister newspaper, *The Pioneer*, in Allahabad in the United Provinces.

Kipling's writing continued at a frenetic pace; in 1888, he published six collections of short stories: *Soldiers Three*, *The Story of the Gadsbys*, *In Black and White*, *Under the Deodars*, *The Phantom Rickshaw*, and *Wee Willie Winkie*, containing a total of 41 stories, some quite long. In addition, as *The Pioneer's* special correspondent in the western region of Rajputana, he wrote many sketches that were later collected in *Letters of Marque* and published in *From Sea to Sea* and *Other Sketches, Letters of Travel*.

Kipling was discharged from *The Pioneer* in early 1889, after a dispute. By this time, he had been increasingly thinking about the future. He sold the rights to his six volumes of stories for £200 and a small royalty, and the *Plain Tales* for £50; in addition, from *The Pioneer*, he received six-month' salary in lieu of notice. He decided to use this money to make his way to London, the literary centre of the British Empire. On 9 March 1889, Kipling left India, travelling first to San Francisco via Rangoon, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. He then travelled through the United States, writing articles for *The Pioneer* that were later published in *From Sea to Sea* and *Other Sketches, Letters of Travel*. Starting his American travels in San Francisco, Kipling journeyed north to Portland, Oregon; to Seattle, Washington; up into Canada, to Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia; back into the U.S. to Yellowstone National Park; down to Salt Lake City; then east to Omaha, Nebraska, and on to Chicago, Illinois; then to Beaver, Pennsylvania on the Ohio River to visit the Hill family; from there, he went to Chautauqua with Professor Hill, and later to Niagara Falls, Toronto, Washington, D.C., New York, and Boston. In the course of this journey, he met Mark Twain in Elmira, New York, and was deeply impressed. He then crossed the Atlantic, and reached Liverpool in October 1889. He soon made his *début* in the London literary world—to great acclaim.

Notes

8.1.3 Career as a Writer

London

In London, Kipling had several stories accepted by various magazine editors. He also found a place to live for the next two years:

The experience in his own words: “Meantime, I had found me quarters in Villiers Street, Strand, which forty-six years ago was primitive and passionate in its habits and population. My rooms were small, not over-clean or well-kept, but from my desk I could look out of my window through the fanlight of Gatti’s Music-Hall entrance, across the street, almost on to its stage. The Charing Cross trains rumbled through my dreams on one side, the boom of the Strand on the other, while, before my windows, Father Thames under the Shot Tower walked up and down with his traffic”.

In the next two years, he published a novel, *The Light that Failed*, had a nervous breakdown, and met an American writer and publishing agent, Wolcott Balestier, with whom he collaborated on a novel, *The Naulahka* (a title which he uncharacteristically misspelt; see below). In 1891, on the advice of his doctors, Kipling embarked on another sea voyage visiting South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and once again India. However, he cut short his plans for spending Christmas with his family in India when he heard of Balestier’s sudden death from typhoid fever, and immediately decided to return to London. Before his return, he had used the telegram to propose to and be accepted by Wolcott’s sister Caroline Starr Balestier (1862–1939), called “Carrie”, whom he had met a year earlier, and with whom he had apparently been having an intermittent romance. Meanwhile, late in 1891, his collection of short stories of the British in India, *Life’s Handicap*, was published in London.

On 18 January 1892, Carrie Balestier (aged 29) and Rudyard Kipling (aged 26) were married in London, in the “thick of an influenza epidemic, when the undertakers had run out of black horses and the dead had to be content with brown ones.” The wedding was held at All Souls Church, Langham Place. Henry James gave the bride away.



Notes The house where Rudyard Kipling wrote some of his best-loved works including the *Just So Stories* has gone on sale for £1.6m. The beautiful five-bedroom home is located in the centre of Rottingdean, near Brighton, East Sussex and still features the study where the author penned some of his works. Artist Sir Philip Burne-Jones 1899 even immortalised the study in one of his portraits – which is now housed in the National Portrait Gallery.

On the exterior of the house is a blue plaque – installed by the Kipling Society to commemorate the time Kipling spent in the property with his wife Carrie, the daughter of American agent and publisher Wolcott Balestier, and their children. The stunning house, complete with bay windows and gravel driveway, is on the market for £1,595,000.

It features four floors and includes a kitchen, dining room, family room, library, hallway, dressing room, five bedrooms and two bathrooms. The author, whose works include *The Jungle Book* and the *Just So Stories*, moved into the house, which backs on to the village green, just before the turn of the 20th century. Previously, the family had live in Vermont, America, before returning to Torquay, Devon following a dispute with Kipling’s American agent.

Kipling then lived in the Rottingdean house - called *The Elms* at the time – from 1897 to 1903.

Contd...

Notes

Kipling, his wife and their three children Josephine, Elsie and baby John, moved into the property as the writer wanted to be closer to his aunt - who lived next door. The family remained in the home - for which Kipling reportedly paid three guineas a week - for six years. In one journal, Kipling wrote about the property: 'It was small, none too well built, but cheap.' While living there, he enjoyed one of the most productive periods of his life, writing the poem *Recessional* in 1897 for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Controversial poem *The White Man's Burden*, about the obligation of white people to rule over those from other cultural backgrounds, was written in 1899. *Kim* - a novel about political conflict between Russia and Britain in Central Asia following the second Afghan War - was also written in the house in 1902. The *Just So* stories - inspired by the bed-time stories Kipling would tell his eldest daughter Josephine while they lived at the house was also penned in 1902. Kipling illustrated the first edition of the stories, also. It is thought that the name came from his daughter's request for her father to repeat his stories for her just as he had first told them, or 'Just So'. Sadly Josephine died of pneumonia, which she contracted on a family trip to visit Carrie's mother in American in 1902. The family moved to Burwash, East Sussex to a house called Bateman's which dated back to 1634, following her death. Someday Kipling, who by 1902 was one of the highest paid writers in the world, moved from the house because his neighbours kept looking over the wall that surrounds the property.

Kipling stayed at Bateman's, around 50 miles from the Rotting dean house, until he died in 1936.

United States

The couple settled upon a honeymoon that would take them first to the United States (including a stop at the Balestier family estate near Brattleboro, Vermont) and then on to Japan. However, when they arrived in Yokohama, Japan, they discovered that their bank, The New Oriental Banking Corporation, had failed. Taking this loss in their stride, they returned to the U.S., back to Vermont—Carrie by this time was pregnant with their first child—and rented a small cottage on a farm near Brattleboro for ten dollars a month. According to Kipling, "We furnished it with a simplicity that fore-ran the hire-purchase system. We bought, second or third hand, a huge, hot-air stove which we installed in the cellar. We cut generous holes in our thin floors for its eight-inch [20 cm] tin pipes (why we were not burned in our beds each week of the winter I never can understand) and we were extraordinarily and self-centredly content."

In this house, which they called Bliss Cottage, their first child, Josephine, was born "in three foot of snow on the night of 29 December 1892. Her Mother's birthday being the 31st and mine the 30th of the same month, we congratulated her on her sense of the fitness of things ..."

It was also in this cottage that the first dawnings of the *Jungle Books* came to Kipling: ". . . workroom in the Bliss Cottage was seven feet by eight, and from December to April the snow lay level with its window-sill. It chanced that I had written a tale about Indian Forestry work which included a boy who had been brought up by wolves. In the stillness, and suspense, of the winter of '92 some memory of the Masonic Lions of my childhood's magazine, and a phrase in Haggard's *Nada the Lily*, combined with the echo of this tale. After blocking out the main idea in my head, the pen took charge, and I watched it begin to write stories about Mowgli and animals, which later grew into the two *Jungle Books* ". With Josephine's arrival, Bliss Cottage was felt to be congested, so eventually the couple bought land—10 acres (40,000 m²) on a rocky hillside overlooking the Connecticut River—from Carrie's brother Beatty Balestier, and built their own house.

Kipling named the house Naulakha, in honour of Wolcott and of their collaboration, and this time the name was spelled correctly. From his early years in Lahore (1882–87), Kipling had

Notes

become enamored with the Mughal architecture, especially the Naulakha pavilions situated in Lahore Fort, which eventually became an inspiration for the title of his novel as well as the house. The house still stands on Kipling Road, three miles (5 km) north of Brattleboro in Dummerston, Vermont: a big, secluded, dark-green house, with shingled roof and sides, which Kipling called his “ship”, and which brought him “sunshine and a mind at ease.” His seclusion in Vermont, combined with his healthy “sane clean life”, made Kipling both inventive and prolific.

In the short span of four years, he produced, in addition to the *Jungle Books*, a collection of short stories (*The Day’s Work*), a novel (*Captains Courageous*), and a profusion of poetry, including the volume *The Seven Seas*. The collection of *Barrack-Room Ballads* was issued in March 1892, first published individually for the most part in 1890, and containing his poems “Mandalay” and “Gunga Din”. He especially enjoyed writing the *Jungle Books*—both masterpieces of imaginative writing—and enjoyed, too, corresponding with the many children who wrote to him about them.

The writing life in *naulakha* was occasionally interrupted by visitors, including his father, who visited soon after his retirement in 1893, and British writer Arthur Conan Doyle, who brought his golf-clubs, stayed for two days, and gave Kipling an extended golf lesson. Kipling seemed to take to golf, occasionally practising with the local Congregational minister, and even playing with red-painted balls when the ground was covered in snow. However, wintertime golf was “not altogether a success because there were no limits to a drive; the ball might skid two miles (3 km) down the long slope to Connecticut river.”

From all accounts, Kipling loved the outdoors, not least of whose marvels in Vermont was the turning of the leaves each fall. He described this moment in a letter: “A little maple began it, flaming blood-red of a sudden where he stood against the dark green of a pine-belt. Next morning there was an answering signal from the swamp where the sumacs grow. Three days later, the hill-sides as fast as the eye could range were afire, and the roads paved, with crimson and gold. Then a wet wind blew, and ruined all the uniforms of that gorgeous army; and the oaks, who had held themselves in reserve, buckled on their dull and bronzed cuirasses and stood it out stiffly to the last blown leaf, till nothing remained but pencil-shadings of bare boughs, and one could see into the most private heart of the woods.”

In February 1896, Elsie Kipling was born, the couple’s second daughter. By this time, according to several biographers, their marital relationship was no longer spontaneous and light-hearted. Although they would always remain loyal to each other, they seemed now to have fallen into set roles. In a letter to a friend who had become engaged around this time, the 30 year old Kipling offered this sombre counsel: marriage principally taught “the tougher virtues—such as humility, restraint, order, and forethought.”

The Kiplings loved life in Vermont and might have lived out their lives there, were it not for two incidents—one of global politics, the other of family discord—that hastily ended their time there. By the early 1890s, the United Kingdom and Venezuela were in a border dispute involving British Guiana. The U.S. had made several offers to arbitrate, but in 1895 the new American Secretary of State Richard Olney upped the ante by arguing for the American “right” to arbitrate on grounds of sovereignty on the continent (see the Olney interpretation as an extension of the Monroe Doctrine). This raised hackles in the UK, and the situation grew into a major Anglo-American crisis, with talk of war on both sides.

Although the crisis led to greater U.S.-British cooperation, at the time Kipling was bewildered by what he felt was persistent anti-British sentiment in the U.S., especially in the press. He wrote in a letter that it felt like being “aimed at with a decanter across a friendly dinner table.” By January 1896, he had decided to end his family’s “good wholesome life” in the U.S. and seek their fortunes elsewhere.

A family dispute became the final straw. For some time, relations between Carrie and her brother Beatty Balestier had been strained, owing to his drinking and insolvency. In May 1896, an inebriated Beatty encountered Kipling on the street and threatened him with physical harm. The incident led to Beatty's eventual arrest, but in the subsequent hearing, and the resulting publicity, Kipling's privacy was destroyed, and he was left feeling miserable and exhausted. In July 1896, a week before the hearing was to resume, the Kiplings packed their belongings, left the United States, and returned to England.

Devon

By September 1896, the Kiplings were in Torquay, Devon, on the southwestern coast of England, in a hillside home overlooking the English Channel. Although Kipling did not much care for his new house, whose design, he claimed, left its occupants feeling dispirited and gloomy, he managed to remain productive and socially active. Kipling was now a famous man, and in the previous two or three years, had increasingly been making political pronouncements in his writings. The Kiplings had welcomed their first son, John, in August 1897. Kipling had begun work on two poems, "Recessional" (1897) and "The White Man's Burden" (1899) which were to create controversy when published. Regarded by some as anthems for enlightened and duty-bound empire-building (that captured the mood of the Victorian age), the poems equally were regarded by others as propaganda for brazenfaced imperialism and its attendant racial attitudes; still others saw irony in the poems and warnings of the perils of empire.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go, bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait, in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.

—The White Man's Burden

There was also foreboding in the poems, a sense that all could yet come to naught.
Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet.
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

—*Recessional*

A prolific writer during his time in Torquay, he also wrote *Stalky & Co.*, a collection of school stories (born of his experience at the United Services College in Westward Ho!) whose juvenile protagonists displayed a know-it-all, cynical outlook on patriotism and authority. According to his family, Kipling enjoyed reading aloud stories from *Stalky & Co.* to them, and often went into spasms of laughter over his own jokes.

South Africa

In early 1898 the Kiplings travelled to South Africa for their winter holiday, thus beginning an annual tradition which (excepting the following year) was to last until 1908. They always stayed

Notes

in “The Woolsack”, a house on Cecil Rhodes’ estate at Groote Schuur (and now a student residence for the University of Cape Town); it was within walking distance of Rhodes’ mansion. With his new reputation as Poet of the Empire, Kipling was warmly received by some of the most influential politicians of the Cape Colony, including Rhodes, Sir Alfred Milner, and Leander Starr Jameson. Kipling cultivated their friendship and came to admire the men and their politics. The period 1898–1910 was crucial in the history of South Africa and included the Second Boer War (1899–1902), the ensuing peace treaty, and the 1910 formation of the Union of South Africa. Back in England, Kipling wrote poetry in support of the British cause in the Boer War and on his next visit to South Africa in early 1900, he became a correspondent for *The Friend* newspaper in Bloemfontein, which had been commandeered by Lord Roberts for British troops. Although his journalistic stint was to last only two weeks, it was Kipling’s first work on a newspaper staff since he left *The Pioneer* in Allahabad more than ten years earlier. At *The Friend* he made lifelong friendships with Perceval Landon, H.A. Gwynne and others. He also wrote articles published more widely expressing his views on the conflict. Kipling penned an inscription for the Honoured Dead Memorial (Siege memorial) in Kimberley.

Sussex

In 1897, Kipling moved from Torquay to Rottingdean, East Sussex; first to North End House and later to The Elms. In 1902 Kipling bought Bateman’s, a house built in 1634 and located in rural Burwash, East Sussex, England. Bateman’s was Kipling’s home from 1902 until his death in 1936. The house, along with the surrounding buildings, the mill and 33 acres (130,000 m²) was purchased for £9,300. It had no bathroom, no running water upstairs and no electricity, but Kipling loved it: “Behold us, lawful owners of a grey stone lichened house—A.D. 1634 over the door—beamed, panelled, with old oak staircase, and all untouched and unfaked. It is a good and peaceable place. We have loved it ever since our first sight of it.” (from a November 1902 letter).

8.1.4 Peak of his Career

In the non-fiction realm he also became involved in the debate over the British response to the rise in German naval power known as the Tirpitz Plan to build a fleet to challenge the Royal Navy, publishing a series of articles in 1898 which were collected as *A Fleet in Being*. On a visit to the United States in 1899, Kipling and Josephine developed pneumonia, from which she eventually died. Kipling began collecting material for another of his children’s classics, *Just So Stories for Little Children*. That work was published in 1902; the year after *Kim* was first issued. The first decade of the 20th century saw Kipling at the height of his popularity. In 1906 he wrote the song “Land of our Birth, We Pledge to Thee”. Kipling wrote two science fiction short stories, *With the Night Mail* (1905) and *As Easy as A. B. C.* (1912), both set in the 21st century in Kipling’s Aerial Board of Control universe. These read like modern hard science fiction, and introduced the literary technique known as indirect exposition, which would later become one of Heinlein’s trademarks.

In 1907 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The prize citation said: “In consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author.” Nobel prizes had been established in 1901 and Kipling was the first English-language recipient. At the award ceremony in Stockholm on 10 December 1907, the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, Carl David af Wirsén, praised both Kipling and three centuries of English literature:

The Swedish Academy, in awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature this year to Rudyard Kipling, desires to pay a tribute of homage to the literature of England, so rich in manifold glories, and to the greatest genius in the realm of narrative that that country has produced in our times.

“Book-ending” this achievement was the publication of two connected poetry and story collections: *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906), and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). The latter contained the poem “If—”. In a 1995 BBC opinion poll, it was voted the UK’s favourite poem. This exhortation to self-control and stoicism is arguably Kipling’s most famous poem.

Many older editions of Rudyard Kipling’s books have a swastika printed on their covers associated with a picture of an elephant carrying a lotus flower, reflecting the influence of Indian culture. Kipling’s use of the swastika was based on the Indian sun symbol conferring good luck and the Sanskrit word meaning “fortunate” or “well-being”. In a note to Edward Bok written after the death of Lockwood Kipling in 1911, Rudyard said: “I am sending with this for your acceptance, as some little memory of my father to whom you were so kind, the original of one of the plaques that he used to make for me. I thought it being the Swastika would be appropriate for your Swastika. May it bring you even more good fortune.” He used the swastika symbol in both right- and left-facing orientations, and it was in general use at the time.

Such was Kipling’s popularity that he was asked by his friend Max Aitken to intervene in the 1911 Canadian election on behalf of the Conservatives. On 7 September 1911, the *Montreal Daily Star* newspaper published a front-page appeal to all Canadians against the reciprocity agreement with the United States by Kipling who wrote: “It is her own soul that Canada risks today. Once that soul is pawned for any consideration, Canada must inevitably conform to the commercial, legal, financial, social and ethical standards which will be imposed on her by the sheer admitted weight of the United States.” Over the next week, Kipling’s appeal was reprinted in every English newspaper in Canada, and is credited with helping to turn Canadian public opinion against the Liberal government that signed the reciprocity agreement. Kipling sympathised with the anti-Home Rule stance of Irish Unionists. He was friends with Edward Carson, the Dublin-born leader of Ulster Unionism, who raised the Ulster Volunteers to oppose “Home Rule” in Ireland. Kipling wrote the poem “Ulster” in 1912 reflecting this. Kipling was a staunch opponent of Bolshevism, a position which he shared with his friend Henry Rider Haggard. The two had bonded upon Kipling’s arrival in London in 1889 largely on the strength of their shared opinions, and they remained lifelong friends.

Many have wondered why he was never made Poet Laureate. Some claim that he was offered the post during the interregnum of 1892–96 and turned it down.

8.1.5 Freemasonry

According to the English magazine *Masonic Illustrated*, Kipling became a Freemason in about 1885, prior to the usual minimum age of 21. He was initiated into Hope and Perseverance Lodge No. 782 in Lahore. He later wrote to *The Times*, “I was Secretary for some years of the Lodge. . . , which included Brethren of at least four creeds. I was entered [as an Apprentice] by a member from Brahma Somaj, a Hindu, passed [to the degree of Fellow Craft] by a Mohammedan, and raised [to the degree of Master Mason] by an Englishman. Our Tyler was an Indian Jew.” Kipling received not only the three degrees of Craft Masonry, but also the side degrees of Mark Master Mason and Royal Ark Mariner. Kipling so loved his masonic experience that he memorialised its ideals in his famous poem, “The Mother Lodge”.

8.1.6 The First World War

At the beginning of World War I, like many other writers, Kipling wrote pamphlets which enthusiastically supported the UK’s war aims of restoring Belgium after that kingdom had been occupied by Germany together with more generalised statements that Britain was standing up for the cause of good. In September 1914, Kipling was asked by the British government to write propaganda, an offer that he immediately accepted. Kipling’s pamphlets and stories were very

Notes

popular with the British people during the war with his major themes being glorifying the British military as the place for heroic men to be, German atrocities against Belgian civilians and the stories of women being brutalized by a horrific war unleashed by Germany, yet surviving and triumphing in spite of their suffering.

Kipling was enraged by reports of the Rape of Belgium together with the sinking of the RMS Lusitania in 1915, which he saw as a deeply inhumane act, which led him to see the war as a crusade for civilization against barbarism. In a 1915 speech Kipling declared that “There was no crime, no cruelty, no abomination that the mind of men can conceive of which the German has not perpetrated, is not perpetrating, and will not perpetrate if he is allowed to go on...Today, there are only two divisions in the world...human beings and Germans.” Alongside his passionate Germanophobia, Kipling was privately deeply critical of how the war was fought by the British Army as opposed to the war itself, which he ardently supported, complaining as early as October 1914 that Germany should have been defeated by now, and something must be wrong with the British Army. Kipling, who was shocked by the heavy losses that the BEF had taken by the autumn of 1914 blamed the entire pre-war generation of British politicians, who he argued had failed to learn the lessons of the Boer War and as a result, thousands of British soldiers were now paying with their lives for their failure in the fields of France and Belgium.

Kipling had scorn for those men who shirked duty in the First World War. In “The New Army in Training” (1915), Kipling concluded the piece by saying:

This much we can realise, even though we are so close to it, the old safe instinct saves us from triumph and exultation. But what will be the position in years to come of the young man who has deliberately elected to outcaste himself from this all-embracing brotherhood? What of his family, and, above all, what of his descendants, when the books have been closed and the last balance struck of sacrifice and sorrow in every hamlet, village, parish, suburb, city, shire, district, province, and Dominion throughout the Empire?

Exultation and triumph was what Kipling had in mind as he actively encouraged his young son to go to war. Kipling’s son John died in the First World War, at the Battle of Loos in September 1915, at age 18. John had initially wanted to join the Royal Navy, but having had his application turned down after a failed medical examination due to poor eyesight, he opted to apply for military service as an officer. But again, his eyesight was an issue during the medical examination. In fact, he tried twice to enlist, but was rejected. His father had been lifelong friends with Lord Roberts, commander-in-chief of the British Army, and colonel of the Irish Guards, and at Rudyard’s request, John was accepted into the Irish Guards. He was sent to Loos two days into the battle in a reinforcement contingent. He was last seen stumbling through the mud blindly, screaming in agony after an exploding shell ripped his face apart. A body identified as his was not found until 1992, although that identification has been challenged.

After his son’s death, Kipling wrote, “If any question why we died/ Tell them, because our fathers lied.” It is speculated that these words may reveal his feelings of guilt at his role in getting John a commission in the Irish Guards. Other such as the English professor Tracey Bilsing contend that the line is referring to Kipling’s disgust that British leaders failed to learn the lessons of the Boer War, and were not prepared for the struggle with Germany in 1914 with the “lie” of the “fathers” being that the British Army was prepared for any war before 1914 when it was not. John’s death has been linked to Kipling’s 1916 poem “My Boy Jack”, notably in the play *My Boy Jack* and its subsequent television adaptation, along with the documentary *Rudyard Kipling: A Remembrance Tale*. However, the poem was originally published at the head of a story about the Battle of Jutland and appears to refer to a death at sea; the ‘Jack’ referred to is probably a generic ‘Jack Tar’. Kipling was said to help assuage his grief over the death of his son through reading the novels of Jane Austen aloud to his wife and daughter.

During the war, he wrote a booklet 'The Fringes of the Fleet' containing essays and poems on various nautical subjects of the war. Some of the poems were set to music by English composer Edward Elgar.

Kipling became friends with a French soldier whose life had been saved in the First World War when his copy of *Kim*, which he had in his left breast pocket, stopped a bullet. The soldier presented Kipling with the book (with bullet still embedded) and his Croix de Guerre as a token of gratitude. They continued to correspond, and when the soldier, Maurice Hammoneau, had a son, Kipling insisted on returning the book and medal.

On 1 August 1918, a poem—"The Old Volunteer"—appeared under his name in *The Times*. The next day he wrote to the newspaper to disclaim authorship, and a correction appeared. Although *The Times* employed a private detective to investigate (and the detective appears to have suspected Kipling himself of being the author), the identity of the hoaxer was never established.

8.1.7 After the War

Partly in response to John's death, Kipling joined Sir Fabian Ware's Imperial War Graves Commission (now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission), the group responsible for the garden-like British war graves that can be found to this day dotted along the former Western Front and all the other locations around the world where troops of the British Empire lie buried. His most significant contribution to the project was his selection of the biblical phrase "Their Name Liveth For Evermore" (Ecclesiasticus 44.14, KJV) found on the Stones of Remembrance in larger war graves and his suggestion of the phrase "Known unto God" for the gravestones of unidentified servicemen. He chose the inscription "The Glorious Dead" on the Cenotaph, Whitehall, London. He also wrote a two-volume history of the Irish Guards, his son's regiment, which was published in 1923 and is considered to be one of the finest examples of regimental history. Kipling's moving short story, "The Gardener", depicts visits to the war cemeteries, and the poem "The King's Pilgrimage" (1922) depicts a journey which King George V made, touring the cemeteries and memorials under construction by the Imperial War Graves Commission. With the increasing popularity of the automobile, Kipling became a motoring correspondent for the British press, and wrote enthusiastically of his trips around England and abroad, even though he was usually driven by a chauffeur.

After the war, Kipling was sceptical about the Fourteen Points and the League of Nations, but he had great hopes that the United States would abandon isolationism and that the post-war world would be dominated by an Anglo-French-American alliance. Kipling hoped that the United States would take on a League of Nations mandate for Armenia as the best way of preventing isolationism, and hoped that Theodore Roosevelt, whom Kipling admired, would once again become President. Kipling was saddened by Roosevelt's death in 1919, believing that his friend was the only American politician capable of keeping the United States in the "game" of world politics.

In 1920 Kipling co-founded the Liberty League with Ryder Haggard and Lord Sydenham. This short-lived enterprise focused on promoting classic liberal ideals as a response to the rising power of Communist tendencies within Great Britain, or has Kipling put it "to combat the advance of Bolshevism". In 1922 Kipling, who had made reference to the work of engineers in some of his poems and writings, was asked by University of Toronto civil engineering professor Herbert E. T. Haultain for his assistance in developing a dignified obligation and ceremony for graduating engineering students. Kipling was enthusiastic in his response and shortly produced both, formally entitled "The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer". Today, engineering graduates all across Canada are presented with an iron ring at the ceremony as a reminder of their obligation to society. In 1922 Kipling also became Lord Rector of

Notes

St Andrews University in Scotland, a three-year position. Kipling who was a Francophile argued very strongly for an Anglo-French alliance to uphold the peace, calling Britain and France in 1920 the “twin fortresses of European civilization”. Along the same lines, Kipling repeatedly warned against revising the Treaty of Versailles in Germany’s favour, which he predicted would lead to a new world war. An admirer of Raymond Poincaré, Kipling was one of the few British intellectuals who supported the French Occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 at a time when the British government and most public opinion was against the French position. In contrast to the popular British view of Poincaré as a cruel bully intent on impoverishing Germany by seeking unreasonable reparations, Kipling argued that Poincaré was only rightfully trying to preserve France as a great power in the face of an unfavourable situation. Kipling argued that even before 1914 Germany’s larger economy and birth-rate had made that country stronger than France, that with much of France was devastated by the war and the French suffering heavy losses that the low French birth-rate would have trouble replacing while Germany was mostly undamaged and with a higher birth rate, that it was madness for Britain to seek to pressure France to revise Versailles in Germany’s favour. In 1924, Kipling was opposed to the Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald as “Bolshevism without bullets”, but believing that Labour was a Communist front organisation took the view that “excited orders and instructions from Moscow” would expose Labour as Communist front organisation to the British people. Kipling’s views were on the right and through he admired Benito Mussolini to a certain extent for a time in the 1920s, Kipling was against fascism, writing that Sir Oswald Mosley was “a bounder and anarriviste”, by 1935 called Mussolini a deranged and dangerous egomaniac and in 1933 wrote “The Hitlerites are out for blood”. Once the Nazis came to power and usurped the swastika, Kipling ordered that it should no longer adorn his books. In 1934 he published a short story in Strand Magazine, “Proofs of Holy Writ”, which postulated that William Shakespeare had helped to polish the prose of the King James Bible. Less than one year before his death Kipling gave a speech (titled “An Undefended Island”) to The Royal Society of St George on 6 May 1935 warning of the danger which Nazi Germany posed to Britain.

8.1.8 Death and Legacy

Kipling kept writing until the early 1930s, but at a slower pace and with much less success than before. On the night of 12 January 1936, Kipling suffered a haemorrhage in his small intestine. He underwent surgery, but died less than a week later on 18 January 1936 at the age of 70 of a perforated duodenal ulcer. It was two days before the death of King George V. Kipling’s death had in fact previously been incorrectly announced in a magazine, to which he wrote, “I’ve just read that I am dead. Don’t forget to delete me from your list of subscribers.”

The pallbearers at the funeral included Kipling’s cousin, the UK Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, and the marble casket was covered by a Union flag. Kipling was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium, northwest London, and his ashes were buried in Poets’ Corner, part of the South Transept of Westminster Abbey, next to the graves of Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy.

In 2010 the International Astronomical Union approved that a crater on the planet Mercury would be named after Kipling—one of ten newly discovered impact craters observed by the MESSENGER spacecraft in 2008–09. In 2012, an extinct species of crocodile, *Goniopholis kiplingi*, was named in his honour, “in recognition for his enthusiasm for natural sciences”. More than 50 unpublished poems by Kipling were released for the first time in March 2013.

Posthumous Reputation

Various writers, most notably Edmund Candler, were strongly influenced by Kipling’s writing. Kipling’s stories for adults remain in print and have garnered high praise from writers as different as Poul Anderson, Jorge Luis Borges, and Randall Jarrell who wrote that, “After you

have read Kipling's fifty or seventy-five best stories you realize that few men have written this many stories of this much merit, and that very few have written more and better stories."

His children's stories remain popular; and his Jungle Books have been made into several movies. The first was made by producer Alexander Korda, and other films have been produced by the Walt Disney Company. A number of his poems were set to music by Percy Grainger. A series of short films based on some of his stories was broadcast by the BBC in 1964. Kipling's work is still popular today.

The poet T.S. Eliot edited *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1941) with an introductory essay. Eliot is aware of the complaints that had been levelled against Kipling: and he dismissed them one by one: that Kipling is 'a Tory' using his verse to transmit right wing political views, or 'a journalist' pandering to popular taste; while Eliot writes "I cannot find any justification for the charge that he held a doctrine of race superiority." Eliot finds instead.

An immense gift for using words, an amazing curiosity and power of observation with his mind and with all his senses, the mask of the entertainer, and beyond that a queer gift of second sight, of transmitting messages from elsewhere, a gift so disconcerting when we are made aware of it that thenceforth we are never sure when it is not present: all this makes Kipling a writer impossible wholly to understand and quite impossible to belittle.

—T.S. Eliot

Of Kipling's verse, such as his Barrack-Room Ballads, Eliot writes "of a number of poets who have written great poetry, only ... a very few whom I should call great verse writers. And unless I am mistaken, Kipling's position in this class is not only high, but unique."

The poet Alison Brackenbury writes that "Kipling is poetry's Dickens, an outsider and journalist with an unrivalled ear for sound and speech."

Kipling is often quoted in discussions of contemporary political and social issues. Political singer-songwriter Billy Bragg, who attempts to reclaim English nationalism from the right-wing, has reclaimed Kipling for an inclusive sense of Englishness. Kipling's enduring relevance has been noted in the United States as it has become involved in Afghanistan and other areas about which he wrote.

8.1.9 Links with Scouting

Kipling's links with the Scouting movements were strong. Robert Baden-Powell, 1st Baron Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, used many themes from *The Jungle Book* stories and *Kim* in setting up his junior movement, the Wolf Cubs. These connections still exist today, such as the continued popularity of "Kim's Game" in the Scouting movement. The movement is named after Mowgli's adopted wolf family, and the adult helpers of Wolf Cub Packs adopt names taken from *The Jungle Book*, especially the adult leader who is called Akela after the leader of the Seeonee wolf pack.

8.1.10 Kipling's Home at Burwash

After the death of Kipling's wife in 1939, his house, "Bateman's" in Burwash, East Sussex, South East England, where he had lived from 1902 until 1936, was bequeathed to the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty and is now a public museum dedicated to the author. Elsie, his only child who lived to maturity, died childless in 1976, and bequeathed her copyrights to the National Trust.

Novelist and poet Sir Kingsley Amis wrote a poem, 'Kipling at Bateman's', after visiting Kipling's Burwash home (Amis' father had lived in Burwash briefly in the 1960s). Amis and a BBC television crew went to make a short film in a series of films about writers and their houses.

Notes

In 2003, actor Ralph Fiennes read excerpts from Kipling's works from the study in Bateman's, including, *The Jungle Book*, *Something Of Myself*, *Kim*, and *The Just So Stories*, and poems, including "If..." and "My Boy Jack", for a CD published by the National Trust.

8.1.11 Reputation in India

In modern-day India, whence he drew much of his material, Kipling's reputation remains controversial, especially amongst modern nationalists and some post-colonial critics. Other contemporary Indian intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy have taken a more nuanced view of his work. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, always described Kipling's novel *Kim* as his favourite book.

G V Desani, a canonical Indian writer of fiction, had a condescending opinion of Kipling. He alluded to Kipling in his novel, *All About H. Hatter* (1948), thus:

I happen to pick up R. Kipling's autobiographical "Kim". Therein, this self-appointed whiteman's burden-bearing sherpa feller's stated how, in the Orient, blokes hit the road and think nothing of walking a thousand miles in search of something.

Well-known Indian historian and writer Khushwant Singh wrote in 2001 that he considers Kipling's "If—" "the essence of the message of *The Gita* in English". The text Singh refers to is the *Bhagavad Gita*, an ancient Indian scripture.

In November 2007 it was announced that Kipling's birth home in the campus of the J J School of Art in Mumbai would be turned into a museum celebrating the author and his works.

8.1.12 Bibliography

- The Story of the Gadsbys (1888) (linked short stories)
- Plain Tales from the Hills (1888) (short stories)
- The Phantom Rickshaw and other Eerie Tales (1888) (short stories)
- The Light that Failed (1890) (novel)
- Many Inventions (1893) (short stories)
- The Jungle Book (1894) (short stories)
- The Second Jungle Book (1895) (short stories)
- The Seven Seas (1896) (poems)
- Captains Courageous (1897) (novel)
- Recessional (1897) (poem)
- The Day's Work (1898) (short stories)
- Stalky & Co. (1899) (linked short stories)
- The White Man's Burden (1899) (poem)
- Kim (1901) (novel)
- Just So Stories (1902) (short stories)
- Puck of Pook's Hill (1906) (historical fantasy short stories)
- Rewards and Fairies (1910) (historical fantasy short stories)

- Life's Handicap (1899) (short stories)
- Letters of Travel 1892–1913
- A Book of Words (1928)
- Limits and Renewals (1932)

8.2 Poem

“Before a Midnight Breaks in Storm” by Rudyard Kipling 1903

Before a midnight breaks in storm,
Or herded sea in wrath,
Ye know what wavering gusts inform
The greater tempest's path;
Till the loosed wind
Drive all from mind,
Except Distress, which, so will prophets cry,
O'ercame them, houseless, from the unhinting sky.

Ere rivers league against the land
In piracy of flood,
Ye know what waters steal and stand
Where seldom water stood.
Yet who will note,
Till fields afloat,
And washen carcass and the returning well,
Trumpet what these poor heralds strove to tell?

Ye know who use the Crystal Ball
(To peer by stealth on Doom),
The Shade that, shaping first of all,
Prepares an empty room.
Then doth It pass
Like breath from glass,
But, on the extorted Vision bowed intent,
No man considers why It came or went.

Before the years reborn behold
Themselves with stranger eye,
And the sport-making Gods of old,
Like Samson slaying, die,
Many shall hear
The all-pregnant sphere,
Bow to the birth and sweat, but—speech denied—
Sit dumb or—dealt in part—fall weak and wide.

Yet instant to fore-shadowed need
The eternal balance swings;
That winged men, the Fates may breed

Notes

So soon as Fate hath wings.
These shall possess
Our littleness,
And in the imperial task (as worthy) lay
Up our lives' all to piece one giant Day.



Task Recite the poem *Before a Midnight breaks in storm* by Rudyard Kipling.

8.2.1 Analysis

Before a midnight breaks in storm written by Stephen Leacock was first published as the Dedication to *The Five Nation*(1903).

Background

The poem sounds an apocalyptic note, warning against the danger that comes when the signs of impending disaster are ignored. Kipling was frustrated by the failure of those in power to register the threat from Germany, whose military and imperial ambitions were evident to him. The language is exceptionally enigmatic and condensed, suggesting that Kipling's private anxieties concerning unforeseen attack underlie and give resonance to the talk of a more public threat.

[Stanza 3] Even crystal-gazers, those who try to foretell the future, can fail to ask themselves the right questions. The stanza appears to refer to the sequence of changes, through mistiness to blackness and emptiness which may appear to take place in the crystal ball as it is gazed into with a view to predicting the future. Kipling associated spiritualism and its attendant practices with deep suspicion, feeling that her involvement in them had contributed to the mental illness of his sister, Trix, who owned and used one of these balls herself. Yet Kipling shared his sister's sensitivity and admitted that unsought experience of 'the Sight' had come to him.

[Stanza 4] In a language that is compacted and obscure Kipling appears to be prophesying: he foresees a future to be compared with the end of the world, an end to be brought about by the destructiveness of the Gods themselves. For 'sport-making gods' of Shakespeare's *King Lear* IV ii:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods
They kill us for their sport.

The failure of the 'all-pregnant sphere' to deliver its message perhaps refers again to the crystal ball and the difficulty of reading what it shows.

[Stanza 5] Among the compressed and difficult language can be made out a possible reference to the airmen – 'winged men' – whose crucial part in future warfare Kipling foresaw. Yet the notion that 'our lives' all will be taken to make up the huge total that is required for the giant day to come seems like a glimpse of a catastrophe that is personal, one that would arrive for Kipling in 1915 with the death of his son John at the front.



Caution You must remember that it was at the end of 1903, the year in which this collection was published that the Wright brothers achieved their first powered flights.

Self Assessment

Notes

State true or false:

1. Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay but educated in England.
2. Kipling's literary career began with Departmental Ditties in 1886.
3. Kipling's links with the Scouting movements were weak.
4. *Before a midnight breaks in storm* written by Stephen Leacock was first published as the Dedication to The Five Nation.
5. The language in *Before a midnight breaks in storm* suggests that Kipling was not concerned about any unforeseen attacks.

8.3 Summary

- Joseph Rudyard Kipling (December 1865 – 18 January 1936) was an English short-story writer, poet, and novelist. Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay on December 30th 1865, son of John Lockwood Kipling, an artist and teacher of architectural sculpture, and his wife Alice.
- His literary career began with Departmental Ditties (1886), but subsequently he became chiefly known as a writer of short stories.
- Kipling was one of the most popular writers in England, in both prose and verse, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Henry James said: "Kipling strikes me personally as the most complete man of genius (as distinct from fine intelligence) that I have ever known." In 1907, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, making him the first English-language writer to receive the prize, and to date he remains its youngest recipient.
- Kipling's subsequent reputation has changed according to the political and social climate of the age and the resulting contrasting views about him continued for much of the 20th century.
- The Civil and Military Gazette in Lahore, the newspaper which Kipling was to call "mistress and most true love", appeared six days a week throughout the year except for one-day breaks for Christmas and Easter.
- During the summer of 1883, Kipling visited Shimla (then known as Simla), a well-known hill station and the summer capital of British India. By then it was established practice for the Viceroy of India and the government to move to Simla for six months, and the town became a "centre of power as well as pleasure".
- In November 1887, he was transferred to the Gazette's much larger sister newspaper, The Pioneer, in Allahabad in the United Provinces.
- Kipling was discharged from The Pioneer in early 1889, after a dispute. By this time, he had been increasingly thinking about the future. He sold the rights to his six volumes of stories for £200 and a small royalty, and the Plain Tales for £50; in addition, from The Pioneer, he received six-months' salary in lieu of notice. He decided to use this money to make his way to London, the literary centre of the British Empire.
- In London, Kipling had several stories accepted by various magazine editors. He also found a place to live for the next two years.
- By September 1896, the Kiplings were in Torquay, Devon, on the southwestern coast of England, in a hillside home overlooking the English Channel. Although Kipling did not

Notes

much care for his new house, whose design, he claimed, left its occupants feeling dispirited and gloomy, he managed to remain productive and socially active.

- In early 1898 the Kiplings travelled to South Africa for their winter holiday, thus beginning an annual tradition which (excepting the following year) was to last until 1908.
- In the non-fiction realm he also became involved in the debate over the British response to the rise in German naval power known as the Tirpitz Plan to build a fleet to challenge the Royal Navy, publishing a series of articles in 1898 which were collected as *A Fleet in Being*.
- Such was Kipling's popularity that he was asked by his friend Max Aitken to intervene in the 1911 Canadian election on behalf of the Conservatives. On 7 September 1911, the Montreal Daily Star newspaper published a front-page appeal to all Canadians against the reciprocity agreement with the United States by Kipling who wrote: "It is her own soul that Canada risks today."
- According to the English magazine *Masonic Illustrated*, Kipling became a Freemason in about 1885, prior to the usual minimum age of 21.
- At the beginning of World War I, like many other writers, Kipling wrote pamphlets which enthusiastically supported the UK's war aims of restoring Belgium after that kingdom had been occupied by Germany together with more generalised statements that Britain was standing up for the cause of good.
- Kipling kept writing until the early 1930s, but at a slower pace and with much less success than before. On the night of 12 January 1936, Kipling suffered a haemorrhage in his small intestine. He underwent surgery, but died less than a week later on 18 January 1936 at the age of 70 of a perforated duodenal ulcer.
- After the death of Kipling's wife in 1939, his house, "Bateman's" in Burwash, East Sussex, South East England, where he had lived from 1902 until 1936, was bequeathed to the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty and is now a public museum dedicated to the author.
- In modern-day India, whence he drew much of his material, Kipling's reputation remains controversial, especially amongst modern nationalists and some post-colonial critics. Other contemporary Indian intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy have taken a more nuanced view of his work. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, always described Kipling's novel *Kim* as his favourite book.
- *Before a midnight breaks in storm* written by Stephen Leacock was first published as the *Dedication to The Five Nation* (1903).
- The poem sounds an apocalyptic note, warning against the danger that comes when the signs of impending disaster are ignored. Kipling was frustrated by the failure of those in power to register the threat from Germany, whose military and imperial ambitions were evident to him.

8.4 Keywords

Catastrophe: It can be defined as an event causing great and usually sudden damage or suffering.

Enigmatic: It is something which is difficult to interpret or understand.

Glimpse: It can be defined as a momentary or partial view or a brief insight or indication of something.

Intellectual: An intellectual is a person possessing a highly developed intellect.

Notes

Mistiness: It means being full of, covered with, or accompanied by mist.

Resonance: It means the quality in a sound of being deep, full, and reverberating.

Unforeseen: Something which is cannot be anticipated or predicted.

Warfare: It means any kind of engagement in or the activities involved in war or conflict.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| 1. True | 2. True |
| 3. False | 4. True |
| 5. False | |

8.5 Review Questions

1. Who is Rudyard Kipling?
2. Throw light on Rudyard Kipling life.
3. How did Rudyard Kipling die?
4. Throw light on Rudyard Kipling major works.
5. Why was Rudyard Kipling frustrated in the poem *Before a Midnight breaks in Storm*?
6. What is Rudyard Kipling's reputation in modern-day India?
7. What happened to Kipling's home at Burwash after his wife's death?
8. What was G.V. Desani's opinion about Rudyard Kipling?
9. What did Kipling do during World War I?
10. Explain the meaning of Kipling's days of "strong light and darkness" in Bombay.
11. Who are 'winged men' according to Kipling in the poem *Before a Midnight breaks in Storm*?
12. In the poem *Before a Midnight breaks in storm*, what did Kipling associate spiritualism with?

8.6 Further Readings



Books

Kipling R. (1994) *The Works of Rudyard Kipling*, Wordsworth Editions.

Kipling R. (2008) *The Five Nations*, Wildside Press LLC.

Orel H. (1989) *Critical essays on Rudyard Kipling*, G.K. Hall.

Parry A. (1992) *The poetry of Rudyard Kipling: rousing the nation*, Open University Press.

Notes



Online links

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0456017/>

<http://www.online-literature.com/kipling/>

<http://www.poemhunter.com/rudyard-kipling/>

http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/kipling_ind.html

Unit 9: Daffodils by William Wordsworth

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

- 9.1 About William Wordsworth
 - 9.1.1 Early Life
 - 9.1.2 Relationship with Annette Vallon
 - 9.1.3 First Publication and Lyrical Ballads
 - 9.1.4 Germany and Move to the Lake District
 - 9.1.5 Marriage and Children
 - 9.1.6 Autobiographical Work and Poems in Two Volumes
 - 9.1.7 The Prospectus
 - 9.1.8 The Poet Laureate and Other Honours
- 9.2 Death
- 9.3 Major Works of William Wordsworth
- 9.4 Writing Style
- 9.5 Poem
 - 9.5.1 Explanation
 - 9.5.2 Analysis
- 9.6 Summary
- 9.7 Keywords
- 9.8 Review Questions
- 9.9 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about William Wordsworth
- Know the Death of William Wordsworth in aggravating circumstances
- Describe the Major works of William Wordsworth
- Explain the Writing Style of William Wordsworth
- Know this poem 'Daffodils'
- Analyse 'Daffodils'

Notes

Introduction

Wordsworth was one of the most influential of England's Romantic poets. William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 at Cockermouth in Cumbria. His father was a lawyer. Both Wordsworth's parents died before he was 15, and he and his four siblings were left in the care of different relatives. As a young man, Wordsworth developed a love of nature, a theme reflected in many of his poems.

While studying at Cambridge University, Wordsworth spent a summer holiday on a walking tour in Switzerland and France. He became an enthusiast for the ideals of the French Revolution. He began to write poetry while he was at school, but none was published until 1793.

William Wordsworth's monumental poetic legacy rests on a large number of important poems, varying in length and weight from the short, simple lyrics of the 1790s to the vast expanses of *The Prelude*, thirteen books long in its 1808 edition.

The poem "Daffodils" is also known by the title "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", a lyrical poem written by William Wordsworth in 1804. It was published in 1815 in 'Collected Poems' with four stanzas. It portrays a moment on April 15, 1802, when Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were walking near a lake at Grasmere, Cumbria County, England, and came upon a shore lined with daffodils. The speaker says that, wandering like a cloud floating above hills and valleys, he encountered a field of *daffodils* beside a lake. The dancing, fluttering flowers stretched endlessly along the shore, and though the waves of the lake danced beside the flowers, *daffodils* outdid the water in glee. The speaker says that a poet could not help but be happy in such a joyful company of flowers. He says that he stared and stared, but did not realize what wealth the scene would bring him. For now, whenever he feels "vacant" or "pensive," the memory flashes upon "that inward eye / that is the bliss of solitude," and his heart fills with pleasure, "and dances with the daffodils."

In this unit we will study more about William Wordsworth and the poem 'Daffodils'.

9.1 About William Wordsworth

Figure 9.1: William Wordsworth



Source: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-_Vrmino1LcI/UTdeEK-zHxI/AAAAAAAAABR8/ImozlCe3g9A/s320/wordworth.png

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850) was a major English Romantic poet who, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, helped to launch the Romantic Age in English literature with the 1798 joint publication *Lyrical Ballads*.

Wordsworth's magnum opus is generally considered to be *The Prelude*, a semiautobiographical poem of his early years which he revised and expanded a number of times. It was posthumously titled and published, prior to which it was generally known as "the poem to Coleridge". Wordsworth was Britain's Poet Laureate from 1843 until his death in 1850.

9.1.1 Early Life

The second of five children born to John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson, William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Wordsworth House in Cockermouth, Cumberland —part of the scenic region in northwest England, the Lake District. His sister, the poet and diarist Dorothy Wordsworth, to whom he was close all his life, was born the following year, and the two were baptised together. They had three other siblings: Richard, the eldest, who became a lawyer; John, born after Dorothy, who went to sea and died in 1805 when the ship of which he was Master, the *Earl of Abergavenny*, was wrecked off the south coast of England; and Christopher, the youngest, who entered the Church and rose to be Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Their father was a legal representative of James Lowther, 1st Earl of Lonsdale and, through his connections, lived in a large mansion in the small town. Wordsworth, as with his siblings, had little involvement with their father, and they would be distant from him until his death in 1783.

Wordsworth's father, although rarely present, taught him poetry, including that of Milton, Wordsworth and Spenser, in addition to allowing his son to rely on his own father's library. Along with spending time reading in Cockermouth, Wordsworth would also stay at his mother's parents' house in Penrith, Cumberland. At Penrith, Wordsworth was exposed to the moors. Wordsworth could not get along with his grandparents and his uncle, and his hostile interactions with them distressed him to the point of contemplating suicide.

After the death of their mother, in 1778, Wordsworth's father sent him to Hawkshead Grammar School in Lancashire (now in Cumbria) and Dorothy to live with relatives in Yorkshire; she and Wordsworth would not meet again for another nine years. Although Hawkshead was Wordsworth's first serious experience with education, he had been taught to read by his mother and had attended a tiny school of low quality in Cockermouth. After the Cockermouth School, he was sent to a school in Penrith for the children of upper-class families and taught by Ann Birkett, a woman who insisted on instilling in her students traditions that included pursuing both scholarly and local activities, especially the festivals around Easter, May Day, and Shrove Tuesday. Wordsworth was taught both the Bible and the *Spectator*, but little else. It was at the school that Wordsworth was to meet the Hutchinsons, including Mary, who would be his future wife.

Wordsworth made his debut as a writer in 1787 when he published a sonnet in *The European Magazine*. That same year he began attending St John's College, Cambridge, and received his B.A. degree in 1791. He returned to Hawkshead for his first two summer holidays, and often spent later holidays on walking tours, visiting places famous for the beauty of their landscape. In 1790, he took a walking tour of Europe, during which he toured the Alps extensively, and visited nearby areas of France, Switzerland, and Italy.

9.1.2 Relationship with Annette Vallon

In November 1791, Wordsworth visited Revolutionary France and became enthralled with the Republican movement. He fell in love with a French woman, Annette Vallon, who in 1792 gave birth to their child, Caroline. Because of lack of money and Britain's tensions with France, he

Notes

returned alone to England the next year. The circumstances of his return and his subsequent behaviour raise doubts as to his declared wish to marry Annette, but he supported her and his daughter as best he could in later life. The Reign of Terror estranged him from the Republican movement, and war between France and Britain prevented him from seeing Annette and Caroline again for several years.

With the Peace of Amiens again allowing travel to France, in 1802 Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, visited Annette and Caroline in Calais. The purpose of the visit was to pave the way for his forthcoming marriage to Mary Hutchinson. Afterwards he wrote the sonnet "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free" recalling a seaside walk with the 9 year old Caroline he had never seen prior to that visit. The sonnet is somewhat reserved but it is plain Wordsworth felt genuine affection for his daughter, as indeed did Mary who was anxious that Wordsworth should do more for Caroline should their circumstances improve. Her wish was granted at Caroline's marriage in 1816, when Wordsworth settled £30 annually on Caroline, a generous allowance (£1,360 purchasing power in year 2000 pounds sterling) that continued until 1835, when it was replaced by a capital settlement.

9.1.3 First Publication and Lyrical Ballads

In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads", which is called the "manifesto" of English Romantic criticism, Wordsworth calls his poems "experimental." The year 1793 saw Wordsworth's first published poetry with the collections *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. He received a legacy of £900 from Raisley Calvert in 1795 so that he could pursue writing poetry. That year, he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Somerset. The two poets quickly developed a close friendship. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to Alfoxton House, Somerset, just a few miles away from Coleridge's home in Nether Stowey. Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge (with insights from Dorothy) produced *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), an important work in the English Romantic movement. The volume gave neither Wordsworth's nor Coleridge's name as author. One of Wordsworth's most famous poems, "Tintern Abbey", was published in the work, along with Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". The second edition, published in 1800, had only Wordsworth listed as the author, and included a preface to the poems, which was augmented significantly in the 1802 edition. This Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* is considered a central work of Romantic literary theory. In it, Wordsworth discusses what he sees as the elements of a new type of poetry, one based on the "real language of men" and which avoids the poetic diction of much 18th-century poetry. Here, Wordsworth gives his famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." A fourth and final edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1805.

The Borderers

From 1795 to 1797, he wrote his only play, *The Borderers*, a verse tragedy set during the reign of King Henry III of England when Englishmen of the North Country were in conflict with Scottish rovers. Wordsworth attempted to get the play staged in November 1797, but it was rejected by Thomas Harris, manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who proclaimed it "impossible that the play should succeed in the representation". The rebuff was not received lightly by Wordsworth, and the play was not published until 1842, after substantial revision.

9.1.4 Germany and Move to the Lake District

Wordsworth, Dorothy and Coleridge travelled to Germany in the autumn of 1798. While Coleridge was intellectually stimulated by the trip, its main effect on Wordsworth was to produce homesickness. During the harsh winter of 1798–99, Wordsworth lived with Dorothy

in Goslar, and, despite extreme stress and loneliness, he began work on an autobiographical piece later titled *The Prelude*. He wrote a number of famous poems, including “The Lucy poems”. He and his sister moved back to England, now to Dove Cottage in Grasmere in the Lake District, and this time with fellow poet Robert Southey nearby. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey came to be known as the “Lake Poets”. Through this period, many of his poems revolve around themes of death, endurance, separation and grief.

9.1.5 Marriage and Children

In 1802, Lowther’s heir, William Lowther, 1st Earl of Lonsdale, paid the £4,000 debt owed to Wordsworth’s father incurred through Lowther’s failure to pay his aide. It was this repayment that afforded Wordsworth the financial means to marry, and on October 4, following his visit with Dorothy to France to arrange matters with Annette; Wordsworth married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson. Dorothy continued to live with the couple and grew close to Mary. The following year, Mary gave birth to the first of five children, three of whom predeceased William and Mary:

- John Wordsworth (18 June 1803 – 1875). Married four times:
 1. Isabella Curwen (d. 1848) had six children: Jane, Henry, William, John, Charles and Edward.
 2. Helen Ross (d. 1854). No children
 3. Mary Ann Dolan (d. after 1858) had one daughter Dora (b. 1858).
 4. Mary Gamble. No children
- Dora Wordsworth (16 August 1804 – 9 July 1847). Married Edward Quillinan in 1843.
- Thomas Wordsworth (15 June 1806 – 1 December 1812).
- Catherine Wordsworth (6 September 1808 – 4 June 1812).
- William “Willy” Wordsworth (12 May 1810 – 1883). Married Fanny Graham and had four children: Mary Louisa, William, Reginald, Gordon.

9.1.6 Autobiographical Work and Poems in Two Volumes

Wordsworth had for years been making plans to write a long philosophical poem in three parts, which he intended to call *The Recluse*. He had in 1798–99 started an autobiographical poem, which he never named but called the “poem to Coleridge”, which would serve as an appendix to *The Recluse*. In 1804, he began expanding this autobiographical work, having decided to make it a prologue rather than an appendix to the larger work he planned. By 1805, he had completed it, but refused to publish such a personal work until he had completed the whole of *The Recluse*. The death of his brother John, in 1805, affected him strongly.

The source of Wordsworth’s philosophical allegiances as articulated in *The Prelude* and in such shorter works as “Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey” has been the source of much critical debate. While it had long been supposed that Wordsworth relied chiefly on Coleridge for philosophical guidance, more recent scholarship has suggested that Wordsworth’s ideas may have been formed years before he and Coleridge became friends in the mid-1790s. While in Revolutionary Paris in 1792, the 22-year-old Wordsworth made the acquaintance of the mysterious traveller John “Walking” Stewart (1747–1822), who was nearing the end of a thirty-years’ peregrination from Madras, India, through Persia and Arabia, across Africa and all of Europe,

Notes

and up through the fledgling United States. By the time of their association, Stewart had published an ambitious work of original materialist philosophy entitled *The Apocalypse of Nature* (London, 1791), to which many of Wordsworth's philosophical sentiments are likely indebted.

In 1807, his *Poems in Two Volumes* were published, including "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood". Up to this point Wordsworth was known publicly only for *Lyrical Ballads*, and he hoped this collection would cement his reputation. Its reception was lukewarm, however. For a time (starting in 1810), Wordsworth and Coleridge were estranged over the latter's opium addiction. Two of his children, Thomas and Catherine, died in 1812. The following year, he received an appointment as Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland, and the £400 per year income from the post made him financially secure. His family, including Dorothy, moved to Rydal Mount, Ambleside (between Grasmere and Rydal Water) in 1813, where he spent the rest of his life.

9.1.7 The Prospectus

In 1814 he published *The Excursion* as the second part of the three-part *The Recluse*. He had not completed the first and third parts, and never would. He did, however, write a poetic Prospectus to "The Recluse" in which he lays out the structure and intent of the poem. The Prospectus contains some of Wordsworth's most famous lines on the relation between the human mind and nature:

My voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too,
Theme this but little heard of among Men,
The external World is fitted to the Mind.

Some modern critics recognise a decline in his works beginning around the mid-1810s. But this decline was perhaps more a change in his lifestyle and beliefs, since most of the issues that characterise his early poetry (loss, death, endurance, separation and abandonment) were resolved in his writings. But, by 1820, he enjoyed the success accompanying a reversal in the contemporary critical opinion of his earlier works. Following the death of his friend the painter William Green in 1823, Wordsworth mended relations with Coleridge. The two were fully reconciled by 1828, when they toured the Rhineland together. Dorothy suffered from a severe illness in 1829 that rendered her an invalid for the remainder of her life. In 1835, Wordsworth gave Annette and Caroline the money they needed for support.

9.1.8 The Poet Laureate and Other Honours

Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University and the same honour from Oxford University the next year. In 1842 the government awarded him a civil list pension amounting to £300 a year. With the death in 1843 of Robert Southey, Wordsworth became the Poet Laureate. He initially refused the honour, saying he was too old, but accepted when Prime Minister Robert Peel assured him "you shall have nothing required of you" (he became the only laureate to write no official poetry). When his daughter, Dora, died in 1847, his production of poetry came to a standstill.

9.2 Death

Notes

William Wordsworth died by aggravating a case of pleurisy on 23 April 1850, and was buried at St. Oswald's church in Grasmere. His widow Mary published his lengthy autobiographical "poem to Coleridge" as *The Prelude* several months after his death. Though this failed to arouse great interest in 1850, it has since come to be recognised as his masterpiece.

William Wordsworth was orphaned at an early age and suffered from anosmia, an inability to smell. His masterpiece "*The Prelude*" was not published during his lifetime.

9.3 Major Works of William Wordsworth

Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems (1798)

- "Simon Lee"
- "We are Seven"
- "Lines Written in Early Spring"
- "Expostulation and Reply"
- "The Tables Turned"
- "The Thorn"
- "Lines Composed A Few Miles above Tintern Abbey"

Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems (1800)

- Preface to the Lyrical Ballads
- "Strange fits of passion have I known"
- "She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways"
- "Three years she grew"
- "A Slumber Did my Spirit Seal"
- "I travelled among unknown men"
- "Lucy Gray"
- "The Two April Mornings"
- "Nutting"
- "The Ruined Cottage"
- "Michael"
- "The Kitten At Play"

Poems, in Two Volumes (1807)

- "Resolution and Independence"
- "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" Also known as "Daffodils"
- "My Heart Leaps Up"
- "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"
- "Ode to Duty"

Notes

- “The Solitary Reaper”
- “Elegiac Stanzas”
- “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802”
- “London, 1802”
- “The World Is Too Much with Us”
- Guide to the Lakes (1810)
- “To the Cuckoo”
- The Excursion (1814)
- Laodamia (1815, 1845)
- The Prelude (1850)

9.4 Writing Style

William Wordsworth’s monumental poetic legacy rests on a large number of important poems, varying in length and weight from the short, simple lyrics of the 1790s to the vast expanses of *The Prelude*, thirteen books long in its 1808 edition. But the themes that run through Wordsworth’s poetry, and the language and imagery he uses to embody those themes, remain remarkably consistent throughout the Wordsworth canon, adhering largely to the tenets Wordsworth set out for himself in the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Here, Wordsworth argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common speech, rather than in the lofty and elaborate dictions that were then considered “poetic.” He argues that poetry should offer access to the emotions contained in memory. And he argues that the first principle of poetry should be pleasure, that the chief duty of poetry is to provide pleasure through a rhythmic and beautiful expression of feeling—for all human sympathy, he claims, is based on a subtle pleasure principle that is “the naked and native dignity of man.”

Recovering “the naked and native dignity of man” makes up a significant part of Wordsworth’s poetic project, and he follows his own advice from the 1802 preface. Wordsworth’s style remains plain-spoken and easy to understand even today, though the rhythms and idioms of common English have changed from those of the early nineteenth century. Many of Wordsworth’s poems (including masterpieces such as “Tintern Abbey” and the “Intimations of Immortality” ode) deal with the subjects of childhood and the memory of childhood in the mind of the adult in particular, childhood’s lost connection with nature, which can be preserved only in memory. Wordsworth’s images and metaphors mix natural scenery, religious symbolism (as in the sonnet “It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,” in which the evening is described as being “quiet as a nun”), and the relics of the poet’s rustic childhood—cottages, hedgerows, orchards, and other places where humanity intersects gently and easily with nature.

Wordsworth’s poems initiated the Romantic era by emphasizing feeling, instinct, and pleasure above formality and mannerism. More than any poet before him, Wordsworth gave expression to inchoate human emotion; his lyric “Strange fits of passion have I known,” in which the speaker describes an inexplicable fantasy he once had that his lover was dead, could not have been written by any previous poet. Curiously for a poet whose work points so directly toward the future, many of Wordsworth’s important works are preoccupied with the lost glory of the past—not only of the lost dreams of childhood but also of the historical past, as in the powerful sonnet “London, 1802,” in which the speaker exhorts the spirit of the centuries-dead poet John Milton to teach the modern world a better way to live.

9.5 Poem

Notes

Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.



Caution Remember that Wordsworth has tried to quantify the amount of daffodils by using the phrase 'ten thousand'. It does not mean that there were literally ten thousand daffodils. Wordsworth just wanted to express that he saw a large number of daffodils.

9.5.1 Explanation

The poem "Daffodils" is also known by the title "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", a lyrical poem written by William Wordsworth in 1804. It was published in 1815 in 'Collected Poems' with four stanzas. It portrays a moment on April 15, 1802, when Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were walking near a lake at Grasmere, Cumbria County, England, and came upon a shore lined with daffodils. He is now looking back on how much of an impression it has had on him.

In the poem, 'The Daffodils' the poet William Wordsworth has described how he once came across numerous daffodils rocking in the breeze. The beauty of the *daffodils* enthralled the poet and became a treasured experience for him.

This poem contains vivid imagery and reflects the pleasure the poet felt at the sight of the daffodils.

Notes

The poem is divided into four stanzas.

Stanza wise Summary of ‘The Daffodils’

Summary of the First Stanza

William Wordsworth being an avid observer of nature, describes the impression a cluster of daffodil flowers created in his mind when he saw them while taking a stroll beside a lake hemmed by some trees. The poet has compared himself to a floating cloud passing over hills and valleys. He was on a stroll through the countryside when he suddenly came across countless yellow daffodils. These daffodils were beside a lake under trees. The flowing breeze made the daffodils flutter and it seemed as if they were dancing.

Summary of the Second Stanza

To William Wordsworth, the daffodils appeared to be as continuous as the twinkling stars on the Milky Way galaxy. They were arrayed in a seemingly unending line along the bank of the adjacent bay. To the poet, it seemed as if ten thousand daffodils were bobbing in the gentle breeze and he imagined them to be engaged in a lively dance. Clearly, the poet has been profoundly enchanted by the daffodils’ beauty, accentuated by their alternating swaying movements. The flowers, appearing full of life and beauty, have un-fettered the poetic imagination of Wordsworth.


Summary of the Third Stanza

There were waves on the surface of the lake, but these waves of water were no match for the waves of daffodils rippling in the breeze. Wordsworth has remarked that a poet can feel nothing but happiness in that kind of cheerful company. Although he beheld the beautiful sight for a long time, he did not understand the true value of that beautiful experience just then. He began to wonder what a great bounty of nature he had stumbled upon.

Summary of the Fourth and Last Stanza

(This stanza has been written in the present tense by the poet and so it has been summarized by using the present tense)

This pleasant encounter with the daffodils by the lake remained dormant in the poet’s sub-conscious mind. Whenever the poet is in low spirits, the sight of the daffodils flashes in his mind. His heart fills with joy and happiness and it seems to him as if his heart is dancing with the daffodils. Thus, the scene remained as a priceless treasure and an in-exhaustible source of joy for the poet.

 <p><i>Task</i> Why do you think the speaker felt so lonely at the beginning of the poem? (Invent your own back-story.)</p>
--

9.5.2 Analysis

Form

The four six-line stanzas of this poem follow a quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme: ABABCC. Each line is metered in iambic tetrameter which is very regular. Each stanza has a cross rhyme in the first 4 lines and then ends with a rhyming couplet. The rhyme comes at the end of lines, it is exact and masculine.

We know that the speaker is a poet because he tells us so in line 15. As we can judge by the first 2 lines, he is a typical romantic character, a lonely sensitive observer. He has a rich imagination, as he creates the image of dancing people around him out of the field with flowers. He speaks in the third person, but we know that he speaks about himself.

The tone of the poem is dynamic, it changes throughout the poem. We can observe it considering the plot structure.

Poetic Devices and Figures of Speech Used

In the first line, the poet has used the simile 'lonely as a cloud'. He has compared himself to a solitary cloud. Just like a cloud floats over hills and valleys (line 2), the poet too has been rambling across the countryside.

Wordsworth has used the phrase 'a crowd' (line 3) followed by the phrase 'a host' (line 4) when he has referred to the daffodils. Both these phrases refer to the large number of daffodils and using them both one after the other lays stress on the enormous number of daffodils.

In line 5, alliteration has been used with the help of the words 'beside' and 'beneath'

This line also determines the location of the daffodils.

In line 6, He has used personification by using the word 'dancing' thus attributing to the daffodils, a quality which is generally associated with humans.

In lines 7, 8, 9 the poet has compared the unending line of daffodils to the continuous shining stars in the Milky Way galaxy.

In line 7, alliteration has been used ('stars', 'shine')

Line 10 further describes how the daffodils are lined up along the bank of the bay. Here 'margin' refers to the bank of the bay.

In line11, William Wordsworth has tried to quantify the amount of daffodils by using the phrase 'ten thousand'. It does not mean that there were literally ten thousand daffodils. Wordsworth simply wanted to create a sense of the large number of daffodils that he came across. Hence he used a hyperbole ('ten thousand') which is a figure of speech used for exaggeration and effect.

In line 12, personification ('tossing their heads' and 'sprightly dance') has been used. The poet has tried to describe the way the daffodils were bobbing about, using these two phrases.

The poet has referred to the waves in the nearby bay (line 13). Personification has been used here by using the term 'dancing' with reference to the waves. But he has concluded that the waves of the rippling daffodils outshone the waves in the water (line14).Here, 'they' refer to the daffodils. The waves in the bay are called 'sparkling' to describe the reflection of sunlight on them.

In lines 15 and 16, Wordsworth has remarked, that a poet could not help being happy in such a cheerful company. By referring to the daffodils as 'jocund company' he has used personification.

By using the phrase 'I gazed' twice (line 17), the poet has emphasized on the fact that he spent a lot of time viewing the daffodils. Here repetition is used. But at the same time, he has admitted that he did not understand the true value of that beautiful sight at that time (lines 17 and 18). In line 18, alliteration has been used ('what wealth')

In lines 19 and 20, the poet has remarked upon those times when he is lying on his couch in a dejected mood.

At times like these, the images of the daffodils flash in his mind (line 21).

Notes

Here, he uses a phrase 'that inward eye' which to him is 'the bliss of solitude' (line 22).

Here, 'the inward eye', is used to refer to one's mind and the memories stored in it. Since, it is much easier for a person to reflect upon and remember old memories when he/she is alone, it is called 'the bliss of solitude'.

As soon as the poet remembers, the daffodils, his heart is filled with bliss and it joins the daffodils in their dance (lines 23 and 24).

In line 24, alliteration has been used by Wordsworth ('dances' and 'daffodils').



Notes All critics believe when they come to study this poem that Wordsworth is describing the flowers. Conventional criticism believe that while he was walking, he came to a bunch of daffodils. They believe that the poem is nothing more than a description. However, some critics also believe that Wordsworth did not meet the daffodils when he wrote this poem, a good poet doesn't need to see the daffodils to write about them.

In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballad" he says that a poet is not in need for external stimulus so that he could write a poem. This means that whenever we meet a poem, we shouldn't understand that the poem is the product of a certain definite occasion. Wordsworth may have seen but also he could write the poem even if he didn't see the daffodils. He can write with or without a stimulus. Seeing the daffodils or not is an external factor and shouldn't be considered in evaluating the poem. This has nothing with the evaluation of the poem. The first impression about the title is that the first lines would be about the daffodils. In this case it will appear that Wordsworth is describing the daffodils. This is not the function of poetry because Wordsworth say that poetry is the "Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected at tranquility". So, the lines are not about the daffodils, and even if they are, the poet is not reproducing nature. The purpose of poetry is never to imitate nature, because if it is an imitation, then it wouldn't be poetry according to Wordsworth. This is what is conveyed in his preface. "Poetry has no purpose, if there is a purpose, it should be a worthy one". There are two contradictory cases, either poetry has a purpose or not. If poetry has a purpose, then Wordsworth would be describing, but as proved in the lines, he is not describing the flowers. The worthy purpose is not describing the daffodils, so there is another story behind the title.

Commentary

This simple poem, one of the loveliest and most famous in the Wordsworth canon, revisits the familiar subjects of nature and memory, this time with a particularly simple, spare, musical eloquence. The plot is extremely simple, depicting the poet's wandering and his discovery of a field of daffodils by a lake, the memory of which pleases him and comforts him when he is lonely, bored, or restless. The characterisation of the sudden occurrence of a memory—the daffodils "flash upon the inward eye/Which is the bliss of solitude"—is psychologically acute, but the poem's main brilliance lies in the reverse personification of its early stanzas. The speaker is metaphorically compared to a natural object, a cloud—"I wandered lonely as a cloud/That floats on high...", and the daffodils are continually personified as human beings, dancing and "tossing their heads" in "a crowd, a host." This technique implies an inherent unity between man and nature, making it one of Wordsworth's most basic and effective methods for instilling in the reader the feeling the poet so often describes himself as experiencing.



Example: Internal rhyming ('fluttering' and 'dancing') has been used by William Wordsworth. He has also described the motion of the daffodils by using the two words.

Self Assessment**Notes**

State true or false:

1. William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1760.
2. The poet has compared himself to a floating cloud in the poem Daffodils.
3. William Wordsworth compares the *daffodils* with the sky in the poem Daffodils.
4. "Daffodils" is a lyric poem focusing on the poet's response to the beauty of nature.
5. In 1790 William Wordsworth together with Samuel Taylor Coleridge published the famous Lyrical Ballads.
6. Wordsworth's most famous work, *The Prelude* (1850), is considered by many to be the crowning achievement of English romanticism.

9.6 Summary

- William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850) was a major English Romantic poet who, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, helped to launch the Romantic Age in English literature with the 1798 joint publication *Lyrical Ballads*.
- The second of five children born to John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson, William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Wordsworth House in Cockermouth, Cumberland – part of the scenic region in northwest England, the Lake District. His sister, the poet and diarist Dorothy Wordsworth, to whom he was close all his life, was born the following year, and the two were baptised together.
- In November 1791, Wordsworth visited Revolutionary France and became enthralled with the Republican movement. He fell in love with a French woman, Annette Vallon, who in 1792 gave birth to their child, Caroline.
- In his "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*", which is called the "manifesto" of English Romantic criticism, Wordsworth calls his poems "experimental." The year 1793 saw Wordsworth's first published poetry with the collections *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. He received a legacy of £900 from Raisley Calvert in 1795 so that he could pursue writing poetry.
- From 1795 to 1797, he wrote his only play, *The Borderers*, a verse tragedy set during the reign of King Henry III of England when Englishmen of the North Country were in conflict with Scottish rovers.
- During the harsh winter of 1798–99, Wordsworth lived with Dorothy in Goslar, and, despite extreme stress and loneliness, he began work on an autobiographical piece later titled *The Prelude*. He wrote a number of famous poems, including "The Lucy poems".
- Wordsworth married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson. Dorothy continued to live with the couple and grew close to Mary.
- Wordsworth had for years been making plans to write a long philosophical poem in three parts, which he intended to call *The Recluse*. He had in 1798–99 started an autobiographical poem, which he never named but called the "poem to Coleridge", which would serve as an appendix to *The Recluse*. In 1804, he began expanding this autobiographical work, having decided to make it a prologue rather than an appendix to the larger work he planned.

Notes

- Wordsworth received an honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree in 1838 from Durham University and the same honour from Oxford University the next year. In 1842 the government awarded him a civil list pension amounting to £300 a year. With the death in 1843 of Robert Southey, Wordsworth became the Poet Laureate.
- William Wordsworth died by aggravating a case of pleurisy on 23 April 1850, and was buried at St. Oswald's church in Grasmere.
- The poem "Daffodils" is also known by the title "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", a lyrical poem written by William Wordsworth in 1804. It was published in 1815 in 'Collected Poems' with four stanzas. It portrays a moment on April 15, 1802, when Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were walking near a lake at Grasmere, Cumbria County, England, and came upon a shore lined with daffodils. He is now looking back on how much of an impression it has had on him.
- In the poem, 'The Daffodils' the poet William Wordsworth has described how he once came across numerous daffodils rocking in the breeze. The beauty of the daffodils enthralled the poet and became a treasured experience for him.
- The poem consists of four stanzas, each of them being a sestet. The meter is iambic tetrameter, it is very even and regular. Each stanza has a cross rhyme in the first 4 lines and then ends with a rhyming couplet. The rhyme comes at the end of lines, it is exact and masculine.
- In the first line, the poet has used the simile 'lonely as a cloud'. He has compared himself to a solitary cloud. Just like a cloud floats over hills and valleys (line 2), the poet too has been rambling across the countryside.
- The four six-line stanzas of this poem follow a quatrain-couplet rhyme scheme: ABABCC. Each line is metered in iambic tetrameter.
- This simple poem, one of the loveliest and most famous in the Wordsworth canon, revisits the familiar subjects of nature and memory, this time with a particularly simple, spare, musical eloquence. The plot is extremely simple, depicting the poet's wandering and his discovery of a field of daffodils by a lake, the memory of which pleases him and comforts him when he is lonely, bored, or restless.

9.7 Keywords

Canon: In fiction, canon is the conceptual material accepted as "official" in a fictional universe's fan base.

Crowning: It means ceremonially placing a crown on the head of someone in order to invest them as a monarch or to declare or acknowledge someone as the best.

Dormant: is someone or something inactive, sleeping or quiet. Having normal physical functions suspended or slowed down for a period of time; in or as if in a deep sleep is understood as dormant.

Eloquence: Derived from the Latin word eloquentia, eloquence is fluent, forcible, elegant or persuasive speaking. It is primarily the power of expressing strong emotions in striking and appropriate language, thereby producing conviction or persuasion. The term is also used for writing in a fluent style.

Impression: An impression is an idea, feeling, or opinion about something or someone, especially one formed without conscious thought or on the basis of little evidence.

Inherent: It means existing in something or someone as a permanent and inseparable element, quality, or attribute.

Personification: A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities. *Personification* is when you make an object or idea do something only a human can do.

Rambling: It can be defined as the activity of walking in the countryside for pleasure.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| 1. False | 2. True |
| 3. False | 4. True |
| 5. False | 6. True |

9.8 Review Questions

- Write about William Wordsworth childhood days?
- Throw light on William Wordsworth major works.
- Throw light on William Wordsworth life.
- Talk about William Wordsworth later years and death.
- Describe the scene in the poem *Daffodils* your own words.
- What does Wordsworth compare himself to? Why? Is the comparison effective?
- What memory according to William Wordsworth can he count upon to lift himself out of the blues?
- What does Wordsworth compare the daffodils to? Is the comparison appropriate? How appropriate is it?
- What appeals to you in the poem *Daffodils*?
- Talk about the Figures of speech and poetic devices used in the poem *Daffodils*.
- Write about the Imagery in William Wordsworth's *Daffodils*?
- How does the poem make use of contrast? Consider the contrast between the poet and the daffodils, and between his feelings before, while and after seeing the daffodils.

9.9 Further Readings



Books

Davies H. (2009) *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, London: Frances Lincoln Ltd.

Durrant G. (1969) *William Wordsworth*, CUP Archive.

Gill S. (1989) *William Wordsworth: A Life*, Oxford University Press.

Wordsworth W. (1994) *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.

Notes



Online links

<http://bloomyebooks.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/a-critical-view-on-william-wordsworth-the-daffodils/>

<http://englishfrombasics.wordpress.com/2012/07/26/the-daffodils-by-william-wordsworth-a-summary/>

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174790>

<http://www.shmoop.com/wandered-lonely-cloud-daffodils/summary.html>

Unit 10: Once There was a King by Rabindranath Tagore

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

10.1 About Rabindranath Thakur

10.1.1 Early Life of Rabindranath Tagore: 1861–1878

10.1.2 Shelaidaha: 1878–1901

10.1.3 Middle Years of Rabindranath Tagore: 1901–1932

10.1.4 Latter Life of Rabindranath Tagore: 1932–1941

10.2 Works of Rabindranath Tagore

10.2.1 Music

10.2.2 Paintings

10.2.3 Theatre

10.2.4 Novels

10.2.5 Stories

10.2.6 Poetry

10.2.7 Politics

10.2.8 Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati

10.3 Theft of Nobel Prize

10.4 Impact

10.5 Major Works of Rabindranath Tagore

10.6 Short Story

10.6.1 Explanation

10.6.2 Analysis

10.7 Summary

10.8 Keywords

10.9 Review Questions

10.10 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Rabindranath Tagore
- Describe the major works of Rabindranath Tagore

Notes

- Have his short story 'Once there was a King'
- Analyse 'Once there was a King'

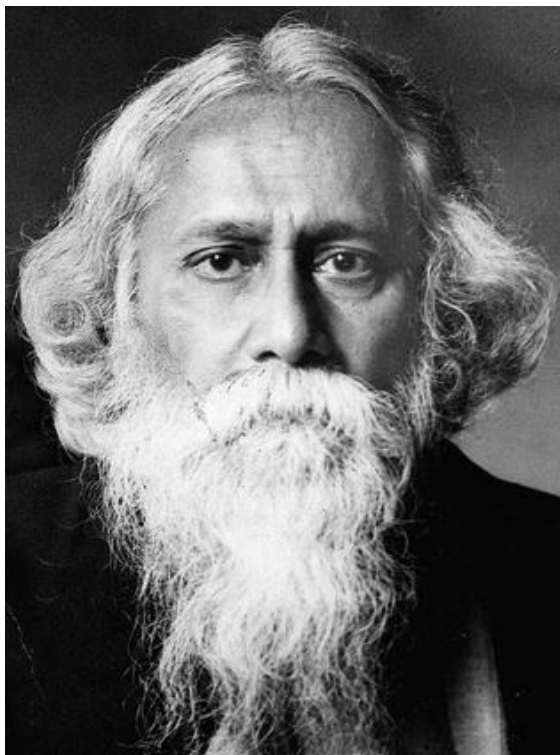
Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet, writer, philosopher was the ambassador of Indian culture to the rest of the world. He is probably the most prominent figure in the cultural world of Indian subcontinent and the first Asian person to be awarded with the Nobel Prize. Even though he is mainly known as a poet, his multifaceted talent showered upon different branches of art, such as, novels, short stories, dramas, articles, essays, painting etc. And his songs, popularly known as *Rabindrasangeet*, have an eternal appeal and are permanently placed in the heart of the Bengalis. He was a social reformer, patriot and above all, a great humanitarian and philosopher. India and Bangladesh – the national anthems of these two countries are taken from his composition.

Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913—the first to be awarded a non-European—on the belief that he represented the romantic, mysterious East judged by the sentimental translations he had made from the poems in his book *Gitanjali*.

10.1 About Rabindranath Thakur

Figure 10.1: Rabindranath Tagore



Source: http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/dynamic/00358/17TH-OPEDTAGORE1_358123e.jpg

Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941) born on Tuesday, 7th May 1861 in a wealthy family in Calcutta was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music. Author of *Gitanjali* and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became the first non-European to win

the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. In translation his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his “elegant prose and magical poetry” remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern South Asia.

A Pirali Brahmin from Calcutta, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At age sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym BhânusiCha (“Sun Lion”), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. He graduated to his first short stories and dramas—and the aegis of his birth name—by 1877. As a humanist, universalist internationalist, and strident anti-nationalist he denounced the Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

Tagore modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced), and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed—or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India’s *Jana Gana Mana* and Bangladesh’s *Amar Shonar Bangla*.



Caution Remember that Rabindranath Tagore’s name also transliterated as Ravindranatha Thakura. He was an Indian short story writer, poet, playwright, essayist, novelist, painter, and songwriter.

10.1.1 Early Life of Rabindranath Tagore: 1861–1878

The youngest of thirteen surviving children, Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Calcutta, India to parents Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and Sarada Devi (1830–1875). The Tagore family came into prominence during the Bengal Renaissance that started during the age of Hussein Shah (1493–1519). The original name of the Tagore family was Banerjee. Being Brahmins, their ancestors were referred to as ‘Thakurmashai’ or ‘Holy Sir’. During the British rule, this name stuck and they began to be recognised as Thakur and eventually the family name got anglicised to Tagore. Tagore family patriarchs were the Brahma founders of the Adi Dharm faith. The loyalist “Prince” Dwarkanath Tagore, who employed European estate managers and visited with Victoria and other royalty, was his paternal grandfather. Debendranath had formulated the Brahmoist philosophies espoused by his friend Ram Mohan Roy, and became focal in Brahmo society after Roy’s death.

Tagore was raised mostly by servants; his mother had died in his early childhood and his father travelled widely. His home hosted the publication of literary magazines; theatre and recitals of both Bengali and Western classical music featured there regularly, as the Jorasanko Tagores were the center of a large and art-loving social group. Tagore’s oldest brother Dwijendranath was a respected philosopher and poet. Another brother, Satyendranath, was the first Indian appointed to the elite and formerly all-European Indian Civil Service. Yet another brother, Jyotirindranath, was a musician, composer, and playwright. His sister Swarnakumari became a novelist. Jyotirindranath’s wife Kadambari, slightly older than Tagore, was a dear friend and powerful influence. Her abrupt suicide in 1884, soon after he married, left him for years profoundly distraught.

Notes

Tagore largely avoided classroom schooling and preferred to roam the manor or nearby Bolpur and Panihati, idylls which the family visited. His brother Hemendranath tutored and physically conditioned him—by having him swim the Ganges or trek through hills, by gymnastics, and by practising judo and wrestling. He learned drawing, anatomy, geography and history, literature, mathematics, Sanskrit, and English—his least favourite subject. Tagore loathed formal education—his scholarly travails at the local Presidency College spanned a single day. Years later he held that proper teaching does not explain things; proper teaching stokes curiosity.

After he underwent an Upanayan initiation at age eleven, he and his father left Calcutta in February 1873 for a months-long tour of the Raj. They visited his father's Santiniketan estate and rested in Amritsar en route to the Himalayan Dhauladhars, their destination being the remote hill station at Dalhousie. Along the way, Tagore read biographies; his father tutored him in history, astronomy, and Sanskrit declensions. He read biographies of Benjamin Franklin among other figures; they discussed Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; and they examined the poetry of Kālidāsa. In mid-April they reached the station, and at 2,300 metres (7,546 ft) they settled into a house that sat atop Bakrota Hill. Tagore was taken aback by the region's deep green gorges, alpine forests, and mossy streams and waterfalls. They stayed there for several months and adopted a regime of study and privation that included daily twilight baths taken in icy water.

He returned to Jorasanko and completed a set of major works by 1877, one of them a long poem in the Maithili style of Vidyapati; they were published pseudonymously. Regional experts accepted them as the lost works of Bhānusiṃha, a newly discovered 17th-century Vaishnava poet. He debuted the short-story genre in Bengali with "Bhikharini" ("The Beggar Woman"), and his *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) includes the famous poem "Nirjharer Swapnabhanga" ("The Rousing of the Waterfall"). Servants subjected him to an almost ludicrous regimentation in a phase he dryly reviled as the "servocracy". His head was water-dunked—to quiet him. He irked his servants by refusing food; he was confined to chalk circles in parody of Sita's forest trial in the *Ramayana*; and he was regaled with the heroic criminal exploits of Bengal's outlaw-dacoits. Because the Jorasanko manor was in an area of north Calcutta rife with poverty and prostitution, he was forbidden to leave it for any purpose other than travelling to school. He thus became preoccupied with the world outside and with nature. Of his 1873 visit to Santiniketan, he wrote:

"What I could not see did not take me long to get over—what I did see was quite enough. There was no servant rule, and the only ring which encircled me was the blue of the horizon, drawn around these solitudes by their presiding goddess. Within this I was free to move about as I chose."

10.1.2 Shelaidaha: 1878–1901

Because Debendranath wanted his son to become a barrister, Tagore enrolled at a public school in Brighton, East Sussex, England in 1878. He stayed for several months at a house that the Tagore family owned near Brighton and Hove, in Medina Villas; in 1877 his nephew and niece—Suren and Indira Devi, the children of Tagore's brother Satyendranath—were sent together with their mother, Tagore's sister-in-law, to live with him. He briefly read law at University College London, but again left school. He opted instead for independent study of Shakespeare, *Religio Medici*, Coriolanus, and Antony and Cleopatra. Lively English, Irish, and Scottish folk tunes impressed Tagore, whose own tradition of Nidhubabu-authored kirtans and tappas and Brahmo hymnody was subdued. In 1880 he returned to Bengal degree-less, resolving to reconcile European novelty with Brahmo traditions, taking the best from each. In 1883 he married Mrinalini Devi, born Bhabatarini, 1873–1902; they had five children, two of whom died in childhood.

In 1890 Tagore began managing his vast ancestral estates in Shelaidaha (today a region of Bangladesh); he was joined by his wife and children in 1898. Tagore released his *Manasi* poems

(1890), among his best-known work. As Zamindar Babu, Tagore criss-crossed the riverine holdings in command of the Padma, the luxurious family barge. He collected mostly token rents and blessed villagers who in turn honoured him with banquets—occasionally of dried rice and sour milk. He met Gagan Harkara, through whom he became familiar with Baul Lalon Shah, whose folk songs greatly influenced Tagore. Tagore worked to popularise Lalon's songs. The period 1891–1895, Tagore's Sadhana period, named after one of Tagore's magazines, was his most productive; in these years he wrote more than half the stories of the three-volume, 84-story Galpaguchchha. It's ironic and grave tales examined the voluptuous poverty of an idealised rural Bengal.



Did u know? because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West.

10.1.3 Middle Years of Rabindranath Tagore: 1901–1932

In 1901 Tagore moved to Santiniketan to find an ashram with a marble-floored prayer hall—The Mandir—an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, a library. There his wife and two of his children died. His father died in 1905. He received monthly payments as part of his inheritance and income from the Maharaja of Tripura, sales of his family's jewellery, his seaside bungalow in Puri, and a derisory 2,000 rupees in book royalties. He gained Bengali and foreign readers alike; he published *Naivedya* (1901) and *Kheya* (1906) and translated poems into free verse.

In November 1913, Tagore learned he had won that year's Nobel Prize in Literature: the Swedish Academy appreciated the idealistic—and for Westerners—accessible nature of a small body of his translated material focussed on the 1912 *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. In 1915, the British Crown granted Tagore a knighthood. He renounced it after the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

In 1921, Tagore and agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst set up the "Institute for Rural Reconstruction", later renamed Shriniketan or "Abode of Welfare", in Surul, a village near the ashram. With it, Tagore sought to moderate Gandhi's Swaraj protests, which he occasionally blamed for British India's perceived mental—and thus ultimately colonial—decline. He sought aid from donors, officials, and scholars worldwide to "free village from the shackles of helplessness and ignorance" by "vitalis[ing] knowledge". In the early 1930s he targeted ambient "abnormal caste consciousness" and untouchability. He lectured against these, he penned Dalit heroes for his poems and his dramas, and he campaigned—successfully—to open Guruvayoor Temple to Dalits.



Notes Tagore was a practitioner of psychological and social realism. His stories depict poignant human relationships within a simple, relatively uneventful plots. In "Postmaster," a young orphaned girl employed by the postmaster in a remote village regards him as a surrogate father; when he returns to his home and family in Calcutta she is devastated at being left behind. Failing to appreciate the depth of her longing for family, the postmaster laughs at her request to be taken home with him. The story "Kabuliwalla" concerns a man who appears brusque, crude, and violent—to the extent that he is in prison—but is so sentimental about his faraway daughter that he cherishes a crumpled piece of paper because it is smudged with her fingerprints. "The Return of Khokababu" is about a servant who while caring for the infant of a wealthy couple briefly looks away from the child during which time it drowns and is never found. The servant moves away, marries, and has a son

Contd...

Notes

of his own. When the son is grown, the servant brings him to the wealthy couple claiming that he had in fact kidnapped their infant son years ago and is now returning him. Tagore's short stories often focus on the struggles of women and girls in traditional Indian society. Many of these tales are concerned with marital relationships and the various forms of estrangement and conflict between husband and wife. "A Wife's Letter" is narrated by a woman writing to her husband describing the many injustices imposed upon married women. In the tale "Vision" a woman goes blind after which her husband begins to neglect her and falls in love with a young girl. "Number One" depicts a woman who commits suicide in order to escape the conflict she feels between her sense of duty to her husband and her love for another man. In "Punishment," a man kills his wife in a fit of rage; his brother, wishing to save him from punishment, convinces his own wife to testify that she is the murderer. Several short stories by Tagore involve elements of the supernatural and contain qualities of the eerie or weird tale, thus inviting comparison to the fantastic tales of Edgar Allan Poe. "The Hungry Stones" is about a man staying in an old palace who becomes enchanted by invisible ghosts; in "Living or Dead," a woman, thought to be dead, regains consciousness during her funeral only to be regarded by her family as a phantasm, and to prove that she is truly alive, she drowns herself; and "The Skeleton" portrays a man who engages in dialogue with the ghost of a skeleton used in classroom demonstrations.

Critical Reception

"The modern short story is Rabindranath Tagore's gift to Indian culture," observed Vishwanath S. Naravane in 1977. Of Tagore's two hundred short stories, Naravane asserted, "about twenty are pearls of the purist variety." Many of Tagore's short stories became available in English after he had gained international acclaim as the Nobel Prize-winning poet of *Gitanjali*. Early reviewers in English received Tagore's stories with mixed appraisal; while some applauded his short fiction, others found them of negligible quality. Later critics have commented that these early reviewers were ignorant of the context of Indian culture in which the stories are set. Commentators have praised Tagore for his blending of poetic lyricism with social realism, as well as the way in which his unearthly tales maintain psychological realism within an atmosphere of supernatural occurrences. Scholars frequently praise Tagore's short stories for the deeply human quality of the characters and relationships. Mohinder Kaur commented of Tagore, "

10.1.4 Latter Life of Rabindranath Tagore: 1932–1941

Tagore's life as a "peripatetic litterateur" affirmed his opinion that human divisions were shallow. During a May 1932 visit to a Bedouin encampment in the Iraqi desert, the tribal chief told him that "Our prophet has said that a true Muslim is he by whose words and deeds not the least of his brother-men may ever come to any harm ..." Tagore confided in his diary: "I was startled into recognizing in his words the voice of essential humanity." To the end Tagore scrutinised orthodoxy—and in 1934, he struck. That year, an earthquake hit Bihar and killed thousands. Gandhi hailed it as seismic karma, as divine retribution avenging the oppression of Dalits. Tagore rebuked him for his seemingly ignominious inferences. He mourned the perennial poverty of Calcutta and the socioeconomic decline of Bengal. He detailed these newly plebeian aesthetics in an unrhymed hundred-line poem whose technique of searing double-vision foreshadowed Satyajit Ray's film *Apur Sansar*. Fifteen new volumes appeared, among them prose-poem works *Punashcha* (1932), *Shes Saptak* (1935), and *Patraput* (1936). Experimentation continued in his prose-songs and dance-dramas: *Chitra* (1914), *Shyama* (1939), and *Chandalika* (1938); and in his novels: *Dui Bon* (1933), *Malancha* (1934), and *Char Adhyay* (1934).

Tagore's remit expanded to science in his last years, as hinted in *Visva-Parichay*, 1937 collection of essays. His respect for scientific laws and his exploration of biology, physics, and astronomy informed his poetry, which exhibited extensive naturalism and verisimilitude. He wove the process of science, the narratives of scientists, into stories in *Se* (1937), *Tin Sangi* (1940), and *Galpasalpa* (1941). His last five years were marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. These began when Tagore lost consciousness in late 1937; he remained comatose and near death for a time. This was followed in late 1940 by a similar spell. He never recovered. Poetry from these valetudinarian years is among his finest. A period of prolonged agony ended with Tagore's death on 7 August 1941, aged eighty; he was in an upstairs room of the Jorasanko mansion he was raised in. The date is still mourned. A.K. Sen, brother of the first chief election commissioner, received dictation from Tagore on 30 July 1941, a day prior to a scheduled operation: his last poem.

"I'm lost in the middle of my birthday. I want my friends, their touch, with the earth's last love. I will take life's final offering, I will take the human's last blessing. Today my sack is empty. I have given completely whatever I had to give. In return if I receive anything—some love, some forgiveness—then I will take it with me when I step on the boat that crosses to the festival of the wordless end."

10.2 Works of Rabindranath Tagore

Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; he is indeed credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature. Such stories mostly borrow from deceptively simple subject matter: commoners. Tagore's non-fiction grappled with history, linguistics, and spirituality. He wrote autobiographies. His travelogues, essays, and lectures were compiled into several volumes, including *Europe Jatrir Patro* (Letters from Europe) and *Manusher Dhormo* (The Religion of Man). His brief chat with Einstein, "Note on the Nature of Reality", is included as an appendix to the latter. On the occasion of Tagore's 150th birthday an anthology (titled *Kalanukromik Rabindra Rachanabali*) of the total body of his works is currently being published in Bengali in chronological order. This includes all versions of each work and fills about eighty volumes. In 2011, Harvard University Press collaborated with Visva-Bharati University to publish *The Essential Tagore*, the largest anthology of Tagore's works available in English; it was edited by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravarthy and marks the 150th anniversary of Tagore's birth.



Example: With an infinite sympathy and rare psychological insight, Tagore works out the emotional possibilities of different human relations." For example, B.C. Chakravorty says of "The Postmaster," counted among Tagore's finest short stories, "The story by itself is hopelessly uninteresting. But it acquires immense interest on account of the passages of lyrical grandeur which give a poetic expression to the feelings of the orphan girl and those of the postmaster."

10.2.1 Music

Tagore was a prolific composer with 2,230 songs to his credit. His songs are known as *rabindrasangit* ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised. Influenced by the *thumri* style of Hindustani music, they ran the entire gamut of human emotion, ranging from his early dirge-like Brahma devotional hymns to quasi-erotic compositions. They emulated the tonal color of classical ragas to varying extents. Some songs mimicked a given raga's melody and rhythm

Notes

faithfully; others newly blended elements of different ragas. Yet about nine-tenths of his work was not bhanga gaan, the body of tunes revamped with “fresh value” from select Western, Hindustani, Bengali folk and other regional flavours “external” to Tagore’s own ancestral culture.

Tagore influenced sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarodiyas Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan. His songs are widely popular and undergird the Bengali ethos to an extent perhaps rivalling Shakespeare’s impact on the English-speaking world. It is said that his songs are the outcome of five centuries of Bengali literary churning and communal yearning. Dhan Gopal Mukerji has said that these songs transcend the mundane to the aesthetic and express all ranges and categories of human emotion. The poet gave voice to all—big or small, rich or poor. The poor Ganges boatman and the rich landlord air their emotions in them. They birthed a distinctive school of music whose practitioners can be fiercely traditional: novel interpretations have drawn severe censure in both West Bengal and Bangladesh.

For Bengalis, the songs’ appeal, stemming from the combination of emotive strength and beauty described as surpassing even Tagore’s poetry, was such that the Modern Review observed that “[t]here is in Bengal no cultured home where Rabindranath’s songs are not sung or at least attempted to be sung ... Even illiterate villagers sing his songs”. A. H. Fox Strangways of The Observer introduced non-Bengalis to rabindrasangit in *The Music of Hindostan*, calling it a “vehicle of a personality ... [that] go behind this or that system of music to that beauty of sound which all systems put out their hands to seize.”

In 1971, Amar Shonar Bangla became the national anthem of Bangladesh. It was written—ironically—to protest the 1905 Partition of Bengal along communal lines: lopping Muslim-majority East Bengal from Hindu-dominated West Bengal was to avert a regional bloodbath. Tagore saw the partition as a ploy to upend the independence movement, and he aimed to rekindle Bengali unity and tar communalism. *Jana Gana Mana* was written in shadhu-bhasha, a Sanskritised register of Bengali, and is the first of five stanzas of a Brahmo hymn that Tagore composed. It was first sung in 1911 at a Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress and was adopted in 1950 by the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of India as its national anthem.

10.2.2 Paintings

At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France—were held throughout Europe. He was likely red-green color blind, resulting in works that exhibited strange colour schemes and off-beat aesthetics. Tagore was influenced by scrimshaw from northern New Ireland, Haida carvings from British Columbia, and woodcuts by Max Pechstein. His artist’s eye for his handwriting were revealed in the simple artistic and rhythmic leitmotifs embellishing the scribbles, cross-outs, and word layouts of his manuscripts. Some of Tagore’s lyrics corresponded in a synesthetic sense with particular paintings.

The Last Harvest: Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore was an exhibition of Rabindranath Tagore’s paintings to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, India and organised with NGMA Delhi as the nodal agency. It consisted of 208 paintings drawn from the collections of Visva Bharati and the NGMA and presented Tagore’s art in a very comprehensive way. The exhibition was curated by Art Historian R. Siva Kumar. Within the 150th birth anniversary year it was conceived as three separate but similar exhibitions, and travelled simultaneously in three circuits. The first selection was shown at Museum of Asian Art, Berlin, Asia Society, New York, National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Petit Palais, Paris, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Rome, National Visual Arts Gallery (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Ontario, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

10.2.3 Theatre

Notes

At sixteen, Tagore led his brother Jyotirindranath's adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. At twenty he wrote his first drama-opera: *Valmiki Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki). In it the pandit Valmiki overcomes his sins, is blessed by Saraswati, and compiles the *Râmâyana*. Through it Tagore explores a wide range of dramatic styles and emotions, including usage of revamped kirtans and adaptation of traditional English and Irish folk melodies as drinking songs. Another play, *Dak Ghar* (The Post Office), describes the child Amal defying his stuffy and puerile confines by ultimately "falling asleep", hinting his physical death. A story with borderless appeal—gleaning rave reviews in Europe—*Dak Ghar* dealt with death as, in Tagore's words, "spiritual freedom" from "the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds". In the Nazi-besieged Warsaw Ghetto, Polish doctor-educator Janusz Korczak had orphans in his care stage *The Post Office* in July 1942. In *The King of Children*, biographer Betty Jean Lifton suspected that Korczak, agonising over whether one should determine when and how to die, was easing the children into accepting death. In mid-October, the Nazis sent them to Treblinka.

His other works fuse lyrical flow and emotional rhythm into a tight focus on a core idea, a break from prior Bengali drama. Tagore sought "the play of feeling and not of action". In 1890 he released what is regarded as his finest drama: *Visarjan* (Sacrifice). It is an adaptation of *Rajarshi*, an earlier novella of his. "A forthright denunciation of a meaningless [and] cruel superstitious rite[s]", the Bengali originals feature intricate subplots and prolonged monologues that give play to historical events in seventeenth-century Udaipur. The devout Maharaja of Tripura is pitted against the wicked head priest Raghupati. His latter dramas were more philosophical and allegorical in nature; these included *Dak Ghar*. Another is Tagore's *Chandalika* (Untouchable Girl), which was modelled on an ancient Buddhist legend describing how Ananda, the Gautama Buddha's disciple, asks a tribal girl for water.

In *Raktakarabi* ("Red" or "Blood Oleanders"), a kleptocrat rules over the residents of *Yaksha puri*. He and his retainers exploit his subjects—who are benumbed by alcohol and numbered like inventory—by forcing them to mine gold for him. The naive maiden-heroine *Nandini* rallies her subject-compatriots to defeat the greed of the realm's sardar class—with the morally roused king's belated help. Skirting the "good-vs.-evil" trope, the work pits a vital and joyous *lèse majesté* against the monotonous fealty of the king's varletry, giving rise to an allegorical struggle akin to that found in *Animal Farm* or *Gulliver's Travels*. The original, though prized in Bengal, long failed to spawn a "free and comprehensible" translation, and its archaic and sonorous didacticism failed to attract interest from abroad. *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika*, and *Shyama* are other key plays that have dance-drama adaptations, which together are known as *Rabindra Nritya Natya*.

10.2.4 Novels

Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them *Chaturanga*, *Shesher Kobita*, *Char Odhay*, and *Noukadubi*. *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World)—through the lens of the idealistic zamindar protagonist *Nikhil*—excoriates rising Indian nationalism, terrorism, and religious zeal in the *Swadeshi* movement; a frank expression of Tagore's conflicted sentiments, it emerged from a 1914 bout of depression. The novel ends in Hindu-Muslim violence and *Nikhil's*—likely mortal—wounding.

Gora raises controversial questions regarding the Indian identity. As with *Ghare Baire*, matters of self-identity (*jāti*), personal freedom, and religion are developed in the context of a family story and love triangle. In it an Irish boy orphaned in the Sepoy Mutiny is raised by Hindus as the titular *gora*—"whitey". Ignorant of his foreign origins, he chastises Hindu religious backsliders out of love for the indigenous Indians and solidarity with them against his hegemon-

Notes

compatriots. He falls for a Brahmo girl, compelling his worried foster father to reveal his lost past and cease his nativist zeal. As a “true dialectic” advancing “arguments for and against strict traditionalism”, it tackles the colonial conundrum by “portray[ing] the value of all positions within a particular frame [...] not only syncretism, not only liberal orthodoxy, but the extremest reactionary traditionalism he defends by an appeal to what humans share.” Among these Tagore highlights “identity [...] conceived of as dharma.”

In *Jogajog* (Relationships), the heroine Kumudini—bound by the ideals of *Úiva-Sati*, exemplified by *Dākshāyani*—is torn between her pity for the sinking fortunes of her progressive and compassionate elder brother and his foil: her roue of a husband. Tagore flaunts his feminist leanings; pathos depicts the plight and ultimate demise of women trapped by pregnancy, duty, and family honour; he simultaneously trucks with Bengal’s putrescent landed gentry. The story revolves around the underlying rivalry between two families—the Chatterjees, aristocrats now on the decline (Biprodas) and the Ghosals (Madhusudan), representing new money and new arrogance. Kumudini, Biprodas’ sister, is caught between the two as she is married off to Madhusudan. She had risen in an observant and sheltered traditional home, as had all her female relations.

Others were uplifting: *Shesher Kobita*—translated twice as *Last Poem* and *Farewell Song*—is his most lyrical novel, with poems and rhythmic passages written by a poet protagonist. It contains elements of satire and postmodernism and has stock characters who gleefully attack the reputation of an old, outmoded, oppressively renowned poet who, incidentally, goes by a familiar name: “Rabindranath Tagore”. Though his novels remain among the least-appreciated of his works, they have been given renewed attention via film adaptations by Ray and others: *Chokher Bali* and *Ghare Baire* are exemplary. In the first, Tagore inscribes Bengali society via its heroine: a rebellious widow who would live for herself alone. He pillories the custom of perpetual mourning on the part of widows, who were not allowed to remarry, who were consigned to seclusion and loneliness. Tagore wrote of it: “I have always regretted the ending”.

10.2.5 Stories

Tagore’s three-volume *Galpaguchchha* comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author’s surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles. Tagore associated his earliest stories, such as those of the “*Sadhana*” period, with an exuberance of vitality and spontaneity; these traits were cultivated by zamindar Tagore’s life in *Patisar*, *Shajadpur*, *Shelaidaha*, and other villages. Seeing the common and the poor, he examined their lives with a depth and feeling singular in Indian literature up to that point. In “*The Fruitseller from Kabul*”, Tagore speaks in first person as a town dweller and novelist imputing exotic perquisites to an Afghan seller. He channels the lucubrate lust of those mired in the blasé, nidorous, and sudorific morass of subcontinental city life: for distant vistas. “There were autumn mornings, the time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it [...] I would fall to weaving a network of dreams: the mountains, the glens, the forest [...]”

The *Golpoguchchho* (Bunch of Stories) was written in Tagore’s *Sabuj Patra* period, which lasted from 1914 to 1917 and was named for another of his magazines. These yarns are celebrated fare in Bengali fiction and are commonly used as plot fodder by Bengali film and theatre. The Ray film *Charulata* echoed the controversial Tagore novella *Nastanirh* (The Broken Nest). In *Atithi*, which was made into another film, the little Brahmin boy *Tarapada* shares a boat ride with a village zamindar. The boy relates his flight from home and his subsequent wanderings. Taking pity, the elder adopts him; he fixes the boy to marry his own daughter. The night before his wedding, *Tarapada* runs off—again. *Strir Patra* (The Wife’s Letter) is an early treatise in female

emancipation. Mrinal is wife to a Bengali middle class man: prissy, preening, and patriarchal. Travelling alone she writes a letter, which comprehends the story. She details the pettiness of a life spent entreating his viraginous virility; she ultimately gives up married life, proclaiming, *Amio bachbo. Ei bachlum: "And I shall live. Here, I live."*

Haimanti assails Hindu arranged marriage and spotlights their often dismal domesticity, the hypocrisies plaguing the Indian middle classes, and how Haimanti, a young woman, due to her insufferable sensitivity and free spirit, foredid herself. In the last passage Tagore blasts the reification of Sita's self-immolation attempt; she had meant to appease her consort Rama's doubts of her chastity. Musalmani Didi eyes recrudescence Hindu-Muslim tensions and, in many ways, embodies the essence of Tagore's humanism. The somewhat auto-referential *Darpaharan* describes a fey young man who harbours literary ambitions. Though he loves his wife, he wishes to stifle her literary career, deeming it unfeminine. In youth Tagore likely agreed with him. *Darpaharan* depicts the final humbling of the man as he ultimately acknowledges his wife's talents. As do many other Tagore stories, *Jibito o Mrito* equips Bengalis with a ubiquitous epigram: *Kadombini moriya proman korilo she more nai—"Kadombini died, thereby proving that she hadn't."*

10.2.6 Poetry

Tagore's poetic style, which proceeds from a lineage established by 15th- and 16th-century Vaishnava poets, ranges from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic. He was influenced by the atavistic mysticism of Vyasa and other rishi-authors of the Upanishads, the Bhakti-Sufi mystic Kabir, and Ramprasad Sen. Tagore's most innovative and mature poetry embodies his exposure to Bengali rural folk music, which included mystic Baul ballads such as those of the bard Lalou. These, rediscovered and repopularised by Tagore, resemble 19th-century *Kartābhajā* hymns that emphasise inward divinity and rebellion against bourgeois *bhadralok* religious and social orthodoxy. During his *Shelaidaha* years, his poems took on a lyrical voice of the *moner manush*, the *Bâuls'* "man within the heart" and Tagore's "life force of his deep recesses", or meditating upon the *jeevan devata*—the demiurge or the "living God within". This figure connected with divinity through appeal to nature and the emotional interplay of human drama. Such tools saw use in his *BhānusiCha* poems chronicling the Radha-Krishna romance, which were repeatedly revised over the course of seventy years.

Tagore reacted to the half-hearted uptake of modernist and realist techniques in Bengali literature by writing matching experimental works in the 1930s. These include *Africa* and *Camalia*, among the better known of his latter poems. He occasionally wrote poems using *Shadhu Bhasha*, a Sanskritised dialect of Bengali; he later adopted a more popular dialect known as *Cholti Bhasha*. Other works include *Manasi*, *Sonar Tori* (Golden Boat), *Balaka* (Wild Geese, a name redolent of migrating souls), and *Purobi*. *Sonar Tori's* most famous poem, dealing with the fleeting endurance of life and achievement, goes by the same name; hauntingly it ends: *Shunno nodir tire rohinu po'i / Jaha chhilo loe gēlo shonar tori—"all I had achieved was carried off on the golden boat—only I was left behind."* *Gitanjali* (গীতাঞ্জলি) is Tagore's best-known collection internationally, earning him his Nobel.

10.2.7 Politics

Tagore opposed imperialism and supported Indian nationalists, and these views were first revealed in *Manast*, which was mostly composed in his twenties. Evidence produced during the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial and latter accounts affirm his awareness of the Ghadarites, and stated that he sought the support of Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake and former Premier Ōkuma Shigenobu. Yet he lampooned the Swadeshi movement; he rebuked it in "The Cult of the Charka", an acrid 1925 essay. He urged the masses to avoid victimology and instead

Notes

seek self-help and education, and he saw the presence of British administration as a “political symptom of our social disease”. He maintained that, even for those at the extremes of poverty, “there can be no question of blind revolution”; preferable to it was a “steady and purposeful education”.

Such views enraged many. He escaped assassination—and only narrowly—by Indian expatriates during his stay in a San Francisco hotel in late 1916; the plot failed when his would-be assassins fell into argument. Yet Tagore wrote songs lionising the Indian independence movement. Two of Tagore’s more politically charged compositions, “Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo” (“Where the Mind is Without Fear”) and “Ekla Chalo Re” (“If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone”), gained mass appeal, with the latter favoured by Gandhi. Though somewhat critical of Gandhian activism, Tagore was key in resolving a Gandhi–Ambedkar dispute involving separate electorates for untouchables, thereby mooting at least one of Gandhi’s fasts “unto death”.

10.2.8 Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati

Tagore despised rote classroom schooling: in “The Parrot’s Training”, a bird is caged and forced textbook pages—to death. Tagore, visiting Santa Barbara in 1917, conceived a new type of university: he sought to “make Santiniketan the connecting thread between India and the world [and] a world center for the study of humanity somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography.” The school, which he named Visva-Bharati, had its foundation stone laid on 24 December 1918 and was inaugurated precisely three years later. Tagore employed a brahmacharya system: gurus gave pupils personal guidance—emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Teaching was often done under trees. He staffed the school, he contributed his Nobel Prize monies, and his duties as steward-mentor at Santiniketan kept him busy: mornings he taught classes; afternoons and evenings he wrote the students’ textbooks. He fundraised widely for the school in Europe and the United States between 1919 and 1921.

10.3 Theft of Nobel Prize

On 25 March 2004, Tagore’s Nobel Prize was stolen from the safety vault of the Visva-Bharati University, along with several other of his personal belongings. On 7 December 2004, the Swedish Academy decided to present two replicas of Tagore’s Nobel Prize, one made of gold and the other made of bronze, to the Visva Bharati University.

10.4 Impact

Every year, many events pay tribute to Tagore: Kabipranam, his birth anniversary, is celebrated by groups scattered across the globe; the annual Tagore Festival held in Urbana, Illinois; Rabindra Path Parikrama walking pilgrimages from Calcutta to Santiniketan; and recitals of his poetry, which are held on important anniversaries. Bengali culture is fraught with this legacy: from language and arts to history and politics. Amartya Sen scantily deemed Tagore a “towering figure”, a “deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker”. Tagore’s Bengali originals—the 1939 Rabindra Rachanâvalī—is canonised as one of his nation’s greatest cultural treasures, and he was roped into a reasonably humble role: “the greatest poet India has produced”.

Tagore was renowned throughout much of Europe, North America, and East Asia. He co-founded Dartington Hall School, a progressive coeducational institution; in Japan, he influenced such figures as Nobel laureate Yasunari Kawabata. Tagore’s works were widely translated into English, Dutch, German, Spanish, and other European languages by Czech indologist Vincenc Lesný, French Nobel laureate André Gide, Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, former Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, and others. In the United States, Tagore’s lecturing circuits, particularly those of 1916–1917, were widely attended and wildly acclaimed.

10.5 Major Works of Rabindranath Tagore

Notes

Original in Bengali**Poetry:**

Bhanusimha Thakurer Padavali (Songs of Bhanusimha Thakur)	1884
Manasi (The Ideal One)	1890
Sonar Tari (The Golden Boat)	1894
Gitanjali (Song Offerings)	1910
Gitimalya (Wreath of Songs)	1914
Balaka (The Flight of Cranes)	1916

Dramas:

Valmiki-Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki)	1881
Visarjan (The Sacrifice)	1890
Raja (The King of the Dark Chamber)	1910
Dak Ghar (The Post Office)	1912
Achalayatan (The Immovable)	1912
Muktadhara (The Waterfall)	1922
Raktakaravi (Red Oleanders)	1926

Fiction:

Nastanirh (The Broken Nest)	1901
Gora (Fair-Faced)	1910
Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)	1916
Yogayog (Crosscurrents)	1929

Memoirs:

Jivansmriti (My Reminiscences)	1912
Chhelebelā (My Boyhood Days)	1940

Translated In English

Chitra	1914
Creative Unity	1922
The Crescent Moon	1913
The Cycle of spring	1919
Fireflies	1928
Fruit-Gathering	1916
The Fugitive	1921
The Gardener	1913

Notes	Gitanjali: Song Offerings	1912
	Glimpses of Bengal	1991
	The Home and the World	1985
	The Hungry Stones	1916
	I Won't Let you Go: Selected Poems	1991
	The King of the Dark Chamber	1914
	The Lover of God	2003
	Mashi	1918
	My Boyhood Days	1943
	My Reminiscences	1991
	Nationalism	1991
	The Post Office	1914
	Sadhana: The Realisation of Life	1913
	Selected Letters	1997
	Selected Poems	1994
	Selected Short Stories	1991
	Songs of Kabir	1915
	The Spirit of Japan	1916
	Stories from Tagore	1918
	Stray Birds	1916
	Vocation	1913

10.6 Short Story

Once there was a King

"Once upon a time there was a king."

When we were children there was no need to know who the king in the fairy story was. It didn't matter whether he was called Shiladitya or Shaliban, whether he lived at Kashi or Kanauj. The thing that made a seven-year-old boy's heart go thump, thump with delight was this one sovereign truth, this reality of all realities: "Once there was a king."

But the readers of this modern age are far more exact and exacting. When they hear such an opening to a story, they are at once critical and suspicious. They apply the searchlight of science to its legendary haze and ask: "Which king?"

The story-tellers have become more precise in their turn. They are no longer content with the old indefinite, "There was a king," but assume instead a look of profound learning and begin: "Once there was a king named Ajatasatru."

The modern reader's curiosity, however, is not so easily satisfied. He blinks at the author through his scientific spectacles and asks again: "Which Ajatasatru?"

When we were young, we understood all sweet things; and we could detect the sweets of a fairy story by an unerring science of our own. We never cared for such useless things as knowledge. We only cared for truth. And our unsophisticated little hearts knew well where the Crystal Palace of Truth lay and how to reach it. But today we are expected to write pages of facts, while the truth is simply this:

“There was a king.”

I remember vividly that evening in Calcutta when the fairy story began. The rain and the storm had been incessant. The whole of the city was flooded. The water was knee-deep in our lane. I had a straining hope, which was almost a certainty, that my tutor would be prevented from coming that evening. I sat on the stool in the far corner of the verandah looking down the lane, with a heart beating faster and faster. Every minute I kept my eye on the rain, and when it began to diminish I prayed with all my might: “Please, God, send some more rain till half-past seven is over.” For I was quite ready to believe that there was no other need for rain except to protect one helpless boy one evening in one corner of Calcutta from the deadly clutches of his tutor.

If not in answer to my prayer, at any rate according to some grosser law of nature, the rain did not give up.

But, alas, nor did my teacher!

Exactly to the minute, in the bend of the lane, I saw his approaching umbrella. The great bubble of hope burst in my breast, and my heart collapsed. Truly, if there is a punishment to fit the crime after death, then my tutor will be born again as me, and I shall be born as my tutor.

As soon as I saw his umbrella I ran as hard as I could to my mother’s room. My mother and my grandmother were sitting opposite one another playing cards by the light of a lamp. I ran into the room, and flung myself on the bed beside my mother, and said:

“Mother, the tutor has come, and I have such a bad headache; couldn’t I have no lessons today?”

I hope no child of immature age will be allowed to read this story, and I sincerely trust it will not be used in text-books or primers for junior classes. For what I did was dreadfully bad, and I received no punishment whatever. On the contrary, my wickedness was crowned with success.

My mother said to me: “All right,” and turning to the servant added: “Tell the tutor that he can go back home.”

It was perfectly plain that she didn’t think my illness very serious, as she went on with her game as before and took no further notice. And I also, burying my head in the pillow, laughed to my heart’s content. We perfectly understood one another, my mother and I.

But everyone must know how hard it is for a boy of seven years old to keep up the illusion of illness for a long time. After about a minute I got hold of Grandmother and said: “Grannie, do tell me a story.”

I had to ask this many times. Grannie and Mother went on playing cards and took no notice. At last Mother said to me: “Child, don’t bother. Wait till we’ve finished our game.” But I persisted: “Grannie, do tell me a story.” I told Mother she could finish her game tomorrow, but she must let Grannie tell me a story there and then.

At last Mother threw down the cards and said: “You had better do what he wants. I can’t manage him.” Perhaps she had it in her mind that she would have no tiresome tutor on the morrow, while I should be obliged to be back at those stupid lessons.

As soon as ever Mother had given way, I rushed at Grannie. I got hold of her hand, and, dancing with delight, dragged her inside my mosquito curtain on to the bed. I clutched hold of the bolster with both hands in my excitement, and jumped up and down with joy, and when I had got a little quieter said: “Now, Grannie, let’s have the story!”

Notes

Grannie went on: "And the king had a queen."

That was good to begin with. He had only one!

It is usual for kings in fairy stories to be extravagant in queens. And whenever we hear that there are two queens our hearts begin to sink. One is sure to be unhappy. But in Grannie's story that danger was past. He had only one queen.

We next hear that the king had not got any son. At the age of seven I didn't think there was any need to bother if a man had no son. He might only have been in the way.

Nor are we greatly excited when we hear that the king has gone away into the forest to practise austerities in order to get a son. There was only one thing that would have made me go into the forest, and that was to get away from my tutor!

But the king left behind with his queen a small girl, who grew up into a beautiful princess.

Twelve years pass away, and the king goes on practising austerities, and never thinks all this while of his beautiful daughter. The princess has reached the full bloom of her youth. The age of marriage has passed, but the king does not return. And the queen pines away with grief and cries: "Is my golden daughter destined to die unmarried? Ah me, what a fate is mine!"

Then the queen sent men to the king to entreat him earnestly to come back for a single night and take one meal in the palace. And the king consented.

The queen cooked with her own hand, and with the greatest care, sixty-four dishes. She made a seat for him of sandal-wood and arranged the food in plates of gold and cups of silver. The princess stood behind with the peacock-tail fan in her hand. The king, after twelve years' absence, came into the house, and the princess waved the fan, lighting up all the room with her beauty. The king looked in his daughter's face and forgot to take his food.

At last he asked his queen: "Pray, who is this girl whose beauty shines as the gold image of the goddess? Whose daughter is she?"

The queen beat her forehead and cried: "Ah, how evil is my fate! Do you not know your own daughter?"

The king was struck with amazement. He said at last: "My tiny daughter has grown to be a woman."

"What else?" the queen said with a sigh. "Do you not know that twelve years have passed by?"

"But why did you not give her in marriage?" asked the king.

"You were away," the queen said. "And how could I find her a suitable husband?"

The king became vehement with excitement. "The first man I see tomorrow," he said, "when I come out of the palace shall marry her."

The princess went on waving her fan of peacock feathers, and the king finished his meal.

The next morning, as the king came out of his palace, he saw the son of a Brahman gathering sticks in the forest outside the palace gates. His age was about seven or eight.

The King said: "I will marry my daughter to him."

Who can interfere with a king's command? At once the boy was called, and the marriage garlands were exchanged between him and the princess.

At this point I came up close to my wise Grannie and asked her eagerly: "When then?"

In the bottom of my heart there was a devout wish to substitute myself for that fortunate wood-gatherer of seven years old. The night was resonant with the patter of rain. The earthen lamp by

my bedside was burning low. My grandmother's voice droned on as she told the story. And all these things served to create in a corner of my credulous heart the belief that I had been gathering sticks in the dawn of some indefinite time in the kingdom of some unknown king, and in a moment garlands had been exchanged between me and the princess, beautiful as the Goddess of Grace. She had a gold band on her hair and gold earrings in her ears. She had a necklace and bracelets of gold, and a golden waist-chain round her waist, and a pair of golden anklets tinkled above her feet.

If my grandmother were an author, how many explanations she would have to offer for this little story! First of all, everyone would ask why the king remained twelve years in the forest? Secondly, why should the king's daughter remain unmarried all that while? This would be regarded as absurd.

Even if she could have got so far without a quarrel, still there would have been a great hue and cry about the marriage itself. First, it never happened. Secondly, how could there be a marriage between a princess of the Warrior Caste and a boy of the priestly Brahman Caste? Her readers would have imagined at once that the writer was preaching against our social customs in an underhand way. And they would write letters to the papers.

So I pray with all my heart that my grandmother may be born a grandmother again, and not through some cursed fate take birth as her luckless grandson.

With a throb of joy and delight, I asked Grannie: "What then?"

Grannie went on: Then the princess took her little husband away in great distress, and built a large palace with seven wings, and began to cherish her husband with great care.

I jumped up and down in my bed and clutched at the bolster more tightly than ever and said: "What then?"

Grannie continued: The little boy went to school and learnt many lessons from his teachers, and as he grew up his class-fellows began to ask him: "Who is that beautiful lady living with you in the palace with the seven wings?"

The Brahman's son was eager to know who she was. He could only remember how one day he had been gathering sticks and a great disturbance arose. But all that was so long ago that he had no clear recollection.

Four or five years passed in this way. His companions always asked him: "Who is that beautiful lady in the palace with the seven wings?" And the Brahman's son would come back from school and sadly tell the princess: "My school companions always ask me who is that beautiful lady in the palace with the seven wings, and I can give them no reply. Tell me, oh, tell me, who you are!"

The princess said: "Let it pass today. I will tell you some other day." And every day the Brahman's son would ask: "Who are you?" and the princess would reply: "Let it pass today. I will tell you some other day." In this manner four or five more years passed away.

At last the Brahman's son became very impatient and said: "If you do not tell me today who you are, O beautiful lady, I will leave this palace with the seven wings." Then the princess said: "I will certainly tell you tomorrow."

Next day the Brahman's son, as soon as he came home from school, said: "Now, tell me who you are." The princess said: "Tonight I will tell you after supper, when you are in bed."

The Brahman's son said: "Very well"; and he began to count the hours in expectation of the night. And the princess, on her side, spread white flowers over the golden bed, and lighted a gold lamp with fragrant oil, and adorned her hair, and dressed herself in a beautiful robe of blue, and began to count the hours in expectation of the night.

Notes

That evening when her husband, the Brahman's son, had finished his meal, too excited almost to eat, and had gone to the golden bed in the bedchamber strewn with flowers, he said to himself: "Tonight I shall surely know who this beautiful lady is in the palace with the seven wings."

The princess took for her food that which was left over by her husband, and slowly entered the bedchamber. She had to answer that night the question, who was the beautiful lady that lived in the palace with the seven wings. And as she went up to the bed to tell him she found a serpent had crept out of the flowers and had bitten the Brahman's son. Her boy-husband was lying on the bed of flowers, with face pale in death.

My heart suddenly ceased to throb, and I asked with choking voice: "What then?"

Grannie said: "Then ..."

But what is the use of going on any further with the story? It would only lead on to what was more and more impossible. The boy of seven did not know that, if there were some "What then?" after death, no grandmother of a grandmother could tell us all about it.

But the child's faith never admits defeat, and it would snatch at the mantle of death itself to turn him back. It would be outrageous for him to think that such a story of one teacherless evening could so suddenly come to a stop. Therefore the grandmother had to call back her story from the ever-shut chamber of the great End, but she does it so simply: it is merely by floating the dead body on a banana stem on the river, and having some incantations read by a magician. But in that rainy night and in the dim light of a lamp death loses all its horror in the mind of the boy, and seems nothing more than a deep slumber of a single night. When the story ends the tired eyelids are weighed down with sleep. Thus it is that we send the little body of the child floating on the back of sleep over the still water of time, and then in the morning read a few verses of incantation to restore him to the world of life and light.



Did u know? (1) Strict asceticism practiced for a while might lead the gods to grant fertility. (2) Such childhood marriages used to be quite common in India, although they are illegal today. The idea was to guarantee that the girl was married while still a virgin. The couple were not expected to consummate the relationship (and often not even to live together) until she reached puberty. A case like this in which the boy marries an older woman would be quite rare, but perhaps appealing to a romantic young boy.

10.6.1 Explanation

Short stories are traditionally considered to be brief tales representing a sense of limited action. Therefore, they become synonymous with thematic unity and concentration of effect. Contemporary short stories, however, tend to reject these ideas of order and highlight author's deliberate maintenance of distance from the characters. This authorial stance of detachment results in ambiguity and paradox. Ambiguous effects, in turn, emphasize that the short story, a consciously created artifice, highlights this very feature of the contemporary world. This invites us to analyse construction of contemporary short stories as expressions of the fragmented, alienating postmodern world.

In the early days when short stories had barely started gaining ascendancy in the western literary world, Edgar Allan Poe's stress on ensuring 'unity of effect or impression' as the prerequisite of successful story, had appeared to be all-important. Joyce's narration in short stories led to an epiphanic moment, a flash of recognition of some fact hitherto hidden from consciousness. In other words, short stories not only depended on but also firmly marched towards a single emotionally challenging conclusion. Nowadays, however, we have an

open-ended structure in this genre so that the emotional effect and the ending of short stories often remain inconclusive. The quintessential postmodern, ambiguous shortest of short narratives could be one where on two sides of the same paper are written — ‘once upon a time’ and ‘there was a story’ respectively. If the reader goes on and on, turning from one side of the paper to the other, even then it remains inconclusive, which is the beginning and which the end? As a reflection of the inconclusive, confusing, unstable world today, short stories eschew a strict maintenance of causality leading to an ending that clinches a moral, and question, through their deliberate structure, both the nature of the readers’ involvement with the text and possible readings of our world.

Rabindranath Tagore, famous as the Nobel winning mystic, oriental poet, had started writing short stories in 1891 and had written nearly a hundred of them. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian context, we cannot expect Tagore’s stories to have themes that suit our jet age, computerized tastes. In terms of chronology, moreover, we do not expect them to deal with meta-fictional narrative modes and postmodernist ambiguity, because their setting remains limited to the experiences of Bengali men and women under British rule. It can be found that Tagore anticipates these postmodern emphases on the permutations and combinations governing character-structure today, especially in the open-ended ‘closure’ of narration in ‘The Lost Jewels’, ‘Hungry Stones’, ‘Once there was a King’, ‘The Victory’ and ‘Vision’, among other famous short stories of his.

In ‘Once There Was a King’ the story begins with the sentence “once upon a time there was a king” and the narration continues with that. The narrator says that though a very young child does not differentiate between one king and another so long as there is a king in the story, modern readers are more perceptive and exact, critical and suspicious. They ask the name of the king and if, for example, the answer is Ajatsatru, the next series of questions flow freely as to which of the Ajatsatrus of different historical periods was being referred to. Only when the storyteller makes a proper reference to history does the modern audience accept the story as one that is instructive. Continuing with the reference to childhood love of stories and a willing suspension of disbelief, the narrator says that an appeal to his mother had given him respite from his tutor for a day. The comment that follows is interesting because it reads: “I hope no child... will be allowed to read this story, and I sincerely trust it will not be used in text-books or primers for schools” (Omnibus, 881). Dispelling the illusion of the autonomy and integrity of the world of his narration deliberately, the author permits real life to impinge upon fictional construction generally presented as a complete world. This is definitely an anticipation of metafictional narrative strategies used extensively with full consciousness of the significance of such authorial stance in late twentieth century fiction. Again, as the story continues, the grandmother telling the tale tells her audience that the king had left behind the queen and princess in an attempt to pray alone in the woods so that he would be blessed with a son. When he returned to the palace after twelve years and decided to marry his beautiful daughter to the first man he came across next morning, she was married off to a Brahmin boy of seven or eight years. The story is interrupted again:

If my grandmother were an author how many explanations she would have to offer for this little story! This would be regarded as absurd.

Even if she could have got so far without a quarrel, still there would have been a great hue and cry about the marriage itself. First, it never happened. Second, how could there be a marriage between a princess of the warrior caste and a boy of the priestly brahman caste? Here readers would have imagined at once that the writer was preaching against our social customs in an underhand way. And they would write letters to the papers. (Omnibus, 885).

A mere telling of a fairy tale by a grandmother is turned by Tagore into a truly postmodern narrative where gaps, questions, puzzles and multiple possibilities in audience-response are

Notes

interweaved with a subversion of social and moral norms and the propensity of the intelligentsia to politicize everything. Deliberately breaking off, dismantling the fictional edifice and introducing the author's own figure in the middle of a story about kings and princesses are strategic narrative decisions that anticipate the meta-fictional writing of today.

Tagore, as evident in these three examples, had experimented freely and openly with narrative and structure of short stories in the late nineteenth century but the world is unaware of his pioneering efforts in this genre. It is the existence of traces of a superbly postmodern consciousness that does not try to offer facile simplistic solutions to insoluble problems and puzzles in the human experience of 'being and nothingness' that posits Tagore as our contemporary.

10.6.2 Analysis

In this story *Once there was a King*; Rabindranath Tagore begins with some amusing sentences about the dull, matter of fact character of modern scientific people, who cannot enjoy a fairy story without asking "Is it true?" The Poet implies that there are deeper truths than modern science has yet discovered. The ending of the present story will show this more clearly.

Sovereign truth - There is a play upon the word "sovereign" which can mean "kingly" and also "supreme."

Exacting - There is further play here with the words "exact" and "exacting." "Exact" means precise and "exacting" means making others precise.

Legendary haze - The ancient legends are very obscure, just like an object seen through a mist.

Knowledge - Mere book knowledge,—knowledge of outside things.

Truth - Inner truth such as comes from the heart of man and cannot be reasoned or disputed.

Half past seven - The time when his tutor was due.

No other need - As if God would continue the rain merely to keep his tutor away!

If not - Though it might not have been caused by his prayers, still for some reason the rain did continue.

Nor did my teacher - Supply the words "give up."

Punishment to fit the crime - An amusing reference to the doctrine of *karma*, which states that each deed will have its due reward or punishment.

As me - Strictly speaking it should be "I" not "me" but he is writing not too strictly.

I hope no child - The author here amusingly pretends that the child's way of getting out of his lessons was too shocking for young boys in the junior school to read about.

I will marry my daughter to him. The verb to "marry" in English can be used in two senses:—

- (1) To wed some one: to take in marriage.
- (2) To get someone wedded: to give in marriage.

The later sense is used here.

In the dawn of some indefinite time - In some past existence long ago.

If my grandmother were an author - Here Rabindranath returns to his mocking humour. A modern author, he says, would be obliged to explain all sorts of details in the story.

Hue and cry - This is a phrase used for the noise and bustle that is made when people are searching for a thief.

Her readers - Referring back to the Grandmother.

Notes

In an underhand way - Under the disguise of a fairy story.

Grandmother again - That is, in the old conditions when people were not too exacting about accuracy.

Luckless grandson - A humorous way of referring to himself. The author had the misfortune to be born in the modern age of science.

Seven wings - The word "wings" is here used, not for "wings" like those of birds, but for the sides of a large building, projecting out at an angle from the main building.

But what is the use.... The author here breaks off the story, as though it were useless to go on any further in these modern days when everything has to be scientifically proved.

Some "what then?" Some future existence about which explanations might be asked.

No grandmother of a grandmother - No one, however old.

Never admits defeat - Refuses to believe in death.

Teacher-less evening - Evening on which the teacher did not come.

Chamber of the great end - Death itself is referred to; it is the end of human life on earth and what is beyond death is shut out from us.

Incantation - Sacred verses or *mantras*.

Self Assessment

Write the correct answer:

- When was Rabindranath Tagore born?
(a) 7 May 1861 (b) 12 June 1858
(c) 22 March 1865 (d) 31 August 1871
- Where was Rabindranath Tagore born?
(a) Calcutta (b) Murshidabad
(c) Serampore (d) Chandranagore
- Which university was founded by Rabindranath Tagore?
(a) Benaras Hindu University (b) Calcutta University
(c) Visvabharati (d) Bombay University
- In which year was Tagore awarded Nobel Prize for Literature?
(a) 1901 (b) 1913
(c) 1928 (d) 1930
- When did Rabindranath Tagore die?
(a) 7 August 1941 (b) 21 June 1947
(c) 8 April 1936 (d) 18 August 1945

10.7 Summary

- Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet, writer, philosopher was the ambassador of Indian culture to the rest of the world. He is probably the most prominent figure in the cultural world of Indian subcontinent and the first Asian person to be awarded with the Nobel Prize.
- Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941) born on Tuesday, 7th May 1861 in a wealthy family in Calcutta was a Bengali polymath who reshaped his region's literature and music. Author of *Gitanjali* and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.
- The youngest of thirteen surviving children, Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Calcutta, India to parents Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and Sarada Devi (1830–1875). The Tagore family came into prominence during the Bengal Renaissance that started during the age of Hussein Shah (1493–1519).
- Tagore was raised mostly by servants; his mother had died in his early childhood and his father travelled widely. His home hosted the publication of literary magazines; theatre and recitals of both Bengali and Western classical music featured there regularly, as the Jorasanko Tagores were the centre of a large and art-loving social group. Tagore's oldest brother Dwijendranath was a respected philosopher and poet.
- Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Of Tagore's prose, his short stories are perhaps most highly regarded; he is indeed credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic, and lyrical nature.
- Tagore was a prolific composer with 2,230 songs to his credit. His songs are known as *rabindrasangit* ("Tagore Song"), which merges fluidly into his literature, most of which—poems or parts of novels, stories, or plays alike—were lyricised.
- At sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; successful exhibitions of his many works—which made a debut appearance in Paris upon encouragement by artists he met in the south of France—were held throughout Europe. He was likely red-green colour blind, resulting in works that exhibited strange colour schemes and off-beat aesthetics.
- At sixteen, Tagore led his brother Jyotirindranath's adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. At twenty he wrote his first drama-opera: *Valmiki Pratibha* (The Genius of Valmiki).
- Tagore wrote eight novels and four novellas, among them *Chaturanga*, *Shesher Kobita*, *Char Odhay*, and *Noukadubi*. *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World)—through the lens of the idealistic zamindar protagonist Nikhil—excoriates rising Indian nationalism, terrorism, and religious zeal in the Swadeshi movement; a frank expression of Tagore's conflicted sentiments, it emerged from a 1914 bout of depression.
- Tagore's three-volume *Galpaguchchha* comprises eighty-four stories that reflect upon the author's surroundings, on modern and fashionable ideas, and on mind puzzles.
- Tagore's poetic style, which proceeds from a lineage established by 15th- and 16th-century Vaishnava poets, ranges from classical formalism to the comic, visionary, and ecstatic.
- On 25 March 2004, Tagore's Nobel Prize was stolen from the safety vault of the Visva-Bharati University, along with several others of his personal belongings.

- It can be found that Tagore anticipates these postmodern emphases on the permutations and combinations governing character-structure today, especially in the open-ended 'closure' of narration in 'The Lost Jewels', 'Hungry Stones', 'Once there was a King', 'The Victory' and 'Vision', among other famous short stories of his.
- In 'Once There Was a King' the story begins with the sentence "once upon a time there was a king" and the narration continues with that. The narrator says that though a very young child does not differentiate between one king and another so long as there is a king in the story, modern readers are more perceptive and exact, critical and suspicious.

10.8 Keywords

Aesthetics: It can be defined as the branch of philosophy which deals with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic, etc. It is basically the study of mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty.

Ambassador: An accredited diplomat sent by a state as its permanent representative in a foreign country.

Lineage: The word lineage is used to describe everyone who descends from a particular ancestor.

Novella: A short novel often characterized by moral teaching or satire is called novella.

Perceptive: It means having or showing an ability to understand or notice something easily or quickly.

Philosopher: A person engaged or learned in philosophy, especially as an academic discipline.

Prolific: It means producing abundant works or results for instance, a prolific artist.

Travelogue: A movie, book, or illustrated lecture about the places visited and experiences encountered by a traveller is called a travelogue.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (a)
2. (a)
3. (c)
4. (b)
5. (a)

10.9 Review Questions

1. Write an introductory paragraph about Rabindranath Tagore.
2. Throw light on the major works of Rabindranath Tagore.
3. Throw light on the life of Rabindranath Tagore.
4. Why was Rabindranath Tagore given Nobel Prize?
5. Name a few short stories written by Rabindranath Tagore.
6. What were Rabindranath Tagore's views on politics?
7. Write briefly about Tagore's contribution to Poetry.
8. What appeals to you in the story *Once There was a King*?
9. What does this story *Once There was a King* have to say about death?

Notes

10. How have the readers of this modern age been described in the story *Once There was a King*?
11. How was the situation in Calcutta when the story began?
12. Critically analyse the story *Once There was a King*.
13. Discuss about the teaching system adopted in Tagore's school Visva Bharati.

10.10 Further Readings



Books

- Majumdar A.K.B. (1993) *Rabindranath Tagore: The Poet of India*, Indus Publishing.
- Rao R., Premchand, Tagore R., Dr. Raj Anand and Singh K. (2003) *5 Indian Masters*, Jaico Publishing House.
- Tagore R. (2008) *The Hungry Stones & Other Stories*, Arc Manor LLC.
- Tagore R. (2010) *The Victory and Once There Was a King*, Kessinger Publishing.



Online links

- <http://www.calcuttaweb.com/tagore/>
- <http://www.enotes.com/topics/rabindranath-tagore/critical-essays/tagore-rabindranath>
- http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-article.html
- http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-bio.html

Unit 11: The Conjurers Revenge by Stephen Leacock

Notes

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

- 11.1 About Stephen Butler Leacock
 - 11.1.1 Early Life
 - 11.1.2 Academic and Political Life
 - 11.1.3 Literary Life
 - 11.1.4 Memorial Medal for Humour
 - 11.1.5 Personal Life
 - 11.1.6 Death and Tributes
 - 11.1.7 Screen Adaptations
 - 11.1.8 Bibliography
- 11.2 The Conjuror's Revenge
 - 11.2.1 Analysis
- 11.3 Summary
- 11.4 Keywords
- 11.5 Review Questions
- 11.6 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the life and works of Stephen Butler Leacock
- Explain his short story The Conjurers Revenge
- Summarise 'The Conjurers Revenge'

Introduction

Stephen Butler Leacock (1869-1944), is a celebrated author of satire and sharp humour. His short stories have realistic irony exposing the social weaknesses of modern life. This Canadian author is remembered for his best-selling book Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town (1912) and the numerous honours and awards he received during his illustrious lifetime as an author, lecturer, professor and humourist.

The Conjurers revenge written by Stephen Butler Leacock is a short story which bears realistic irony that exposes social weaknesses. The Quick Man plays the role of a fault finding person who is keen to see it that the Conjuror's reputation goes down and he is exposed in front of the

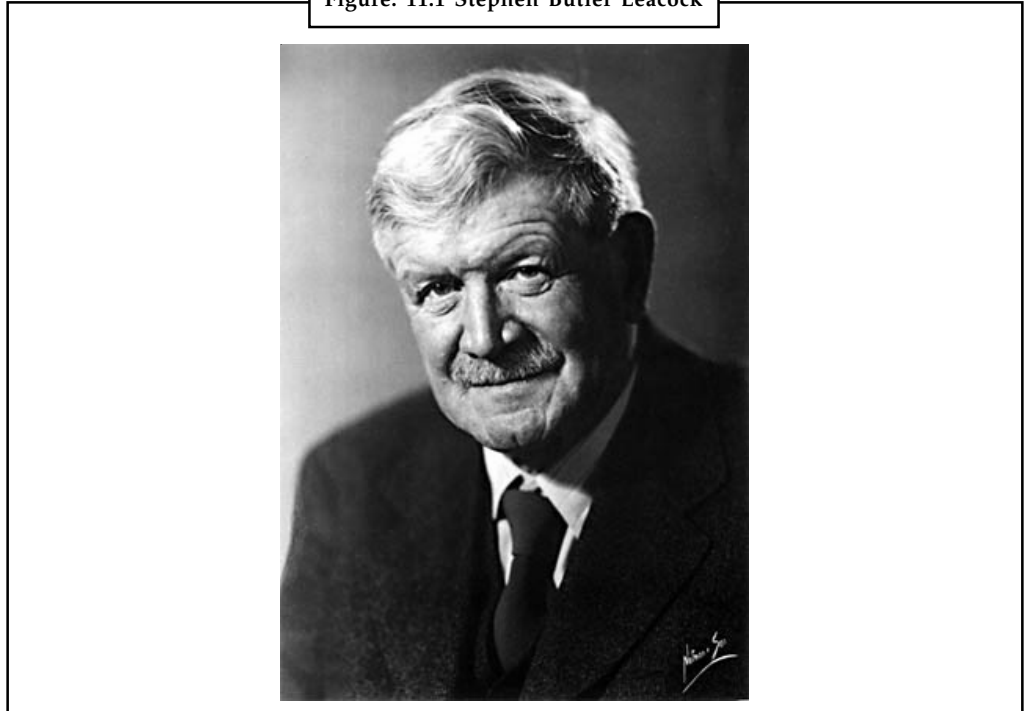
Notes

audience. The Quick Man instead of enjoying the show is busy criticising the Conjuror throughout the show. The Conjuror's patience gets exhausted at the end and the Quick Man finds himself at the receiving end.

In this unit we will study more about Stephen Butler Leacock and *The Conjurors Revenge*.

11.1 About Stephen Butler Leacock

Figure: 11.1 Stephen Butler Leacock



Source: http://s3.amazonaws.com/findagrave/photos/2001/361/2146_1009547212.jpg

Stephen Butler Leacock, FRSC (30 December 1869 – 28 March 1944) was an English-born Canadian teacher, writer, political scientist and humourist. In the early part of the 20th century he was the best-known humourist in the English-speaking world. He is known for his light humour along with criticisms of people's stupidities and irrationalities. The Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour was named in his honour.

The recipient of several honorary degrees, awards and distinctions (the Lorne Pierce Medal, the Governor General's Award, a postage stamp issued in his honour, the Leacock Medal for Humour established in his honour), Stephen Leacock was the English-speaking world's best-known humourist from 1915 to 1925.

11.1.1 Early Life

Stephen Leacock was born in Swanmore, Hampshire. He was the third of eleven children born to Walter Peter Leacock, who was born and grew up at Oak Hill on the Isle of Wight, an estate that his grandfather had purchased after returning from Madeira where his family had made a fortune out of plantations and Leacock's Madeira wine, founded in 1760. Stephen's mother, Agnes, was born at Soberton, the youngest daughter by his second wife Caroline Linton Palmer of the Rev. Stephen Butler, of Bury Lodge, the Butler estate that overlooked the village of Hambleton, Hampshire. Stephen Butler for whom Leacock was named, was the maternal

grandson of Admiral James Richard Dacres and a brother of Sir Thomas Dacres Butler, Usher of the Black Rod. Leacock's mother, Agnes, was the half-sister of Major Thomas Adair Butler, who won the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny.

Peter's father, Thomas Murdock Leacock J.P., had already fostered plans to eventually send his son out to the colonies, but when he discovered that at age eighteen Peter had married Agnes Butler without his permission, almost immediately he shipped them out to South Africa where he had bought them a farm. The farm in South Africa failed and Stephen's parents returned to Hampshire, where he was born. When Stephen was six, he came out with his family to Canada, where they settled on a farm near the village of Sutton, Ontario, and the shores of Lake Simcoe. Their farm in the township of Georgina in York County was also unsuccessful, and the family was kept afloat by money sent from Leacock's paternal grandfather. His father became an alcoholic; in the fall of 1878, he travelled west to Manitoba with his brother E.P. Leacock (the subject of Stephen's book *My Remarkable Uncle*, published in 1942), leaving behind Agnes and the children.

Stephen Leacock, always of obvious intelligence, was sent by his grandfather to the elite private school of Upper Canada College in Toronto, also attended by his older brothers, where he was top of the class and was chosen as head boy. Leacock graduated in 1887, and returned home to find that his father had returned from Manitoba. Soon after, his father left the family again and never returned. There is some disagreement about what happened to Peter Leacock; some suggest that he went to live in Argentina, while other sources indicate that he moved to Nova Scotia and changed his name to Lewis.

In 1887, seventeen-year-old Leacock started at University College at the University of Toronto, where he was admitted to the Zeta Psi fraternity. His first year was bankrolled by a small scholarship, but Leacock found he could not return to his studies the following year because of financial difficulties. He left university to work as a teacher — an occupation he disliked immensely — at Strathroy, Uxbridge and finally in Toronto. As a teacher at Upper Canada College, his alma mater, he was able simultaneously to attend classes at the University of Toronto and, in 1891, earn his degree through part-time studies. It was during this period that his first writing was published in *The Varsity*, a campus newspaper.



Task Give a speech on Stephen Leacock and his works.

11.1.2 Academic and Political Life

Disillusioned with teaching, in 1899 he began graduate studies at the University of Chicago under Thorstein Veblen, where he received a doctorate in political science and political economy. He moved from Chicago, Illinois to Montreal, Quebec, where he eventually became the William Dow Professor of Political Economy and long-time chair of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.

He was closely associated with Sir Arthur Currie, former commander of the Canadian Corps in the Great War and principal of McGill from 1919 until his death in 1933. In fact, Currie had been a student observing Leacock's practice teaching in Strathroy in 1888. In 1936, Leacock was forcibly retired by the McGill Board of Governors—an unlikely prospect had Currie lived.

Leacock was both a social conservative and a partisan Conservative. He opposed giving women the right to vote, disliked non-Anglo-Saxon immigration and supported the introduction of social welfare legislation. He was a staunch champion of the British Empire and the Imperial Federation Movement and went on lecture tours to further the cause.

Notes

Although he was considered as a candidate for Dominion elections by his party, it declined to invite the author, lecturer, and maverick to stand for election. Nevertheless, he would stump for local candidates at his summer home.

11.1.3 Literary Life

Early in his career, Leacock turned to fiction, humour, and short reports to supplement (and ultimately exceed) his regular income. His stories, first published in magazines in Canada and the United States and later in novel form, became extremely popular around the world. It was said in 1911 that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada. Also, between the years 1915 and 1925, Leacock was the most popular humourist in the English-speaking world.

A humourist particularly admired by Leacock was Robert Benchley from New York. Leacock opened correspondence with Benchley, encouraging him in his work and importuning him to compile his work into a book. Benchley did so in 1922, and acknowledged the nagging from north of the border.

Near the end of his life, the American comedian Jack Benny recounted how he had been introduced to Leacock's writing by Groucho Marx when they were both young vaudeville comedians. Benny acknowledged Leacock's influence and, fifty years after first reading him, still considered Leacock one of his favourite comic writers. He was puzzled as to why Leacock's work was no longer well known in the United States.

During the summer months, Leacock lived at Old Brewery Bay, his summer estate in Orillia, across Lake Simcoe from where he was raised and also bordering Lake Couchiching. A working farm, Old Brewery Bay is now a museum and National Historic Site of Canada. Gossip provided by the local barber, Jefferson Short, provided Leacock with the material which would become *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), set in the thinly-disguised Mariposa.

Although he wrote learned articles and books related to his field of study, his political theory is now all but forgotten. Leacock was awarded the Royal Society of Canada's Lorne Pierce Medal in 1937, nominally for his academic work.

"The proper punishment for the Hohenzollerns, and the Hapsburgs, and the Mecklenburgs, and the Muckendorfs, and all such puppets and princelings, is that they should be made to work; and not made to work in the glittering and glorious sense, as generals and chiefs of staff, and legislators, and land-barons, but in the plain and humble part of labourers looking for a job. (Leacock 1919: 9)"



Notes His 2 masterpieces are *SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN* (1912) and *ARCADIAN ADVENTURES WITH THE IDLE RICH* (1914) *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, by Stephen (Toronto, New York, London, 1912), is a series of vignettes dramatizing the comedy of day-to-day life in Mariposa, a bustling and big-time small town on the shores of the magnificent Lake Wissanotti. Thrumming with self-importance, endowed with a solemnly quirky populace, Mariposa is modelled on ORILLIA, Ont; for generations of readers, it has also been the centre of Leacock's fondest and most amusing portrait of small-town life. Leacock's humour depends on his gift for creating a straight-faced storyteller, an earnestly deadpan narrator who cannot imagine what his readers are laughing about. Nowhere is this gift more apparent than in Leacock's warm but gently mocking scrutiny of both the foibles and pretensions of his Mariposan Canadians.

Contd...

Notes

Arguably Stephen Leacock's funniest book (1914), *Arcadian Adventures* is certainly one of his best and most popular works. It was published two years after *SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN* (1912), and numerous parallels between the two books in overall structure and detail make it a companion piece. The short story cycle portrays the full flowering in a large, unnamed American city (actually based on Montréal) of the seeds of corrupt materialism and individualism already detected in smalltown Mariposa. The plutocrats who inhabit Plutoria Avenue pursue money and power, and unrestricted capitalism corrupts the city's social, religious, educational, and political institutions. *Arcadian Adventures* exposes to laughter and ridicule the human greed, hypocrisy and pride behind such things as stock-market scams, the rage for mystical experience, the back-to-nature vogue, financially expedient ecumenism and muck-raking politics. Unlike *Sunshine Sketches*, *Arcadian Adventures* shows sympathy not for those it satirizes but only for their hapless victims. In its bitter satire of the "conspicuous consumption" and leisure of the "idle rich," it shows the influence of *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) by Thorstein Veblen, Leacock's teacher at the University of Chicago. As the book proceeds it becomes progressively darker; in its final chapter, "The Great Fight for Clean Government," the triumph of plutocratic totalitarianism grimly foreshadows the violence and tyranny of the 1920s and 1930s.

11.1.4 Memorial Medal for Humour

The Stephen Leacock Associates is a foundation chartered to preserve the literary legacy of Stephen Leacock, and oversee the annual award of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour. It is a prestigious honour, given to encourage Canadian humour writing and is awarded for the best in Canadian humour writing. The foundation was instituted in 1946 and awarded the first Leacock Medal in 1947. The presentation occurs in June each year at the Stephen Leacock Award Dinner, at the Geneva Park Conference Centre in Orillia, Ontario.

11.1.5 Personal Life

In 1900 Leacock married Beatrix ("Trix") Hamilton, niece of Sir Henry Pellatt (who had built Casa Loma, the largest castle in North America). In 1915 — after 15 years of marriage — the couple had their only child, Stephen Lushington Leacock. While Leacock doted on the boy, it became apparent early on that "Stevie" suffered from a lack of growth hormone. Growing to be only four feet tall, he had a love-hate relationship with Leacock, who tended to treat him like a child. His wife Beatrix Hamilton died in 1925 due to breast cancer.

Stephen Leacock, one of Canada's leading humour writers, was born in England in 1869. His father, Peter Leacock, and his mother, Agnes Emma Butler Leacock, were both from well-to-do families. The family, eventually to consist of eleven children, immigrated to Canada in 1876, settling on a one hundred-acre farm in Sutton, Ontario. There Stephen was home-schooled until he was enrolled in Upper Canada College, Toronto. He became the head boy in 1887, and then entered the University of Toronto to study languages and literature. Despite completing two years of study in one year, he was forced to leave the university because his father had abandoned the family. Instead, Leacock enrolled in a three-month course at Strathroy Collegiate Institute to become a qualified high school teacher.



Did u know? He grew up on a farm near Lake Simcoe, Ont, and was educated at Upper Canada College (where he taught for 9 years), the University of Toronto and the University of Chicago, where he studied economics and political science (PhD 1903). On the 15th of December, 1925, Leacock's wife Beatrix (Trix) died of breast cancer.

Notes

His first appointment was at Uxbridge High School, Ontario, but he was soon offered a post at Upper Canada College, where he remained from 1889 through 1899. At this time, he also resumed part-time studies at the University of Toronto, graduating with a B.A. in 1891. However, Leacock's real interests were turning towards economics and political theory, and in 1899 he was accepted for postgraduate studies at the University of Chicago, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1903. In 1900, Leacock married Beatrix Hamilton, an aspiring actress; the couple had one son, born in 1915.

Leacock was offered a post at McGill University, where he remained until he retired in 1936. In 1906, he wrote *Elements of Political Science*, which remained a standard college textbook for the next twenty years and became his most profitable book. He also began public speaking and lecturing, and he took a year's leave of absence in 1907 to speak throughout Canada on the subject of national unity. He typically spoke on national unity or the British Empire for the rest of his life.

Leacock began submitting articles to the Toronto humour magazine *Grip* in 1894, and soon was publishing many humorous articles in Canadian and American magazines. In 1910, he privately published the best of these as *Literary Lapses*. The book was spotted by a British publisher, John Lane, who brought out editions in London and New York, assuring Leacock's future as a writer. This was confirmed by *Nonsense Novels* (1911), and probably his best book of humorous sketches, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Leacock's humorous style was reminiscent of Mark Twain and Charles Dickens at their sunniest. However, his *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914) is a darker collection that satirizes city life. Collections of sketches continued to follow almost annually at times, with a mixture of whimsy, parody, nonsense, and satire that was never bitter. Leacock was enormously popular not only in Canada but in the United States and Britain.

In later life, Leacock wrote on the art of humour writing and also published biographies of Twain and Dickens. After retirement, a lecture tour to western Canada led to his book *My Discovery of the West: A Discussion of East and West in Canada* (1937), for which he won the Governor General's Award. He also won the Mark Twain medal and received a number of honorary doctorates. Other nonfiction books on Canadian topics followed and he began work on an autobiography. Leacock died of throat cancer in Toronto in 1944. A prize for the best humour writing in Canada was named after him, and his house at Orillia on the banks of Lake Couchiching became the Stephen Leacock Museum.

11.1.6 Death and Tributes

Predeceased by Trix (who had died of breast cancer in 1925), Leacock was survived by Stevie, who died in his fifties. In accordance with his wishes, after his death from throat cancer, Leacock was buried in the St George the Martyr Churchyard (St. George's Church, Sibbald Point), Sutton, Ontario.

Shortly after his death, Barbara Nimmo, his niece, literary executor and benefactor, published two major posthumous works: *Last Leaves* (1945) and *The Boy I Left Behind Me* (1946). His physical legacy was less treasured, and his abandoned summer cottage became derelict. It was rescued from oblivion when it was declared a National Historic Site of Canada in 1958 and ever since has operated as a museum called the Stephen Leacock Memorial Home.

In 1947, the Stephen Leacock Award was created to recognize the best in Canadian literary humour. In 1969, the centennial of his birth, Canada Post issued a six cent stamp with his image on it. The following year, the Stephen Leacock Centennial Committee had a plaque erected at his English birthplace and a mountain in the Yukon was named after him.

A number of buildings in Canada are named after Leacock, including the Stephen Leacock Building at McGill University, Stephen Leacock Public School in Ottawa, a theatre in Keswick, Ontario, and a school in Toronto.

11.1.7 Screen Adaptations

Notes

Two Leacock short stories have been adapted as National Film Board of Canada animated shorts by Gerald Potterton: *My Financial Career* and *The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones*. *Sunshine Sketches*, based on *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, aired on CBC Television in 1952-1953; it was the first Canadian broadcast of an English-language dramatic series, as it debuted on the first night that television was broadcast in Toronto. In 2012, a screen adaptation based on *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* was aired on CBC Television to celebrate both the 75th anniversary of the CBC and the 100th anniversary of Leacock's original collection of short stories. The recent screen adaptation featured Gordon Pinsent as a mature Leacock.

11.1.8 Bibliography

Fiction

- *Literary Lapses* (1910)
- *Nonsense Novels* (1911)
- *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912)
- *Behind the Beyond* (1913)
- *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914)
- *Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy* (1915)
- *Further Foolishness* (1916)
- *Essays and Literary Studies* (1916)
- *Frenzied Fiction* (1918)
- *The Hohenzollerns in America* (1919)
- *Winsome Winnie* (1920)
- *My Discovery of England* (1922)
- *College Days* (1923)
- *Over the Footlights* (1923)
- *The Garden of Folly* (1924)
- *Winnowed Wisdom* (1926)
- *Short Circuits* (1928)
- *The Iron Man and the Tin Woman* (1929)
- *The Dry Pickwick* (1932)
- *Afternoons in Utopia* (1932)
- *Hellements of Hickonomics in Hiccoughs of Verse Done in Our Social Planning Mill* (1936)
- *Funny Pieces* (1936)
- *My Discovery of the West* (1937)
- *Model Memoirs* (1938)

Notes

- Too Much College (1939)
- My Remarkable Uncle (1942)
- Happy Stories (1943)
- How to Write (1943)
- Last Leaves (1945)

Non-fiction

- Elements of Political Science (1906)
- Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks: Responsible Government (1907)
- Practical Political Economy (1910)
- Adventurers of the Far North (1914)
- The Dawn of Canadian History (1914)
- The Mariner of St. Malo (1914)
- The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice (1920)
- Mackenzie, Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks (1926)
- Economic Prosperity in the British Empire (1930)
- The Economic Prosperity of the British Empire (1931)
- Humour: Its Theory and Technique, with Examples and Samples (1935)
- The Greatest Pages of American Humor (1936)
- Humour and Humanity (1937)
- Here Are My Lectures (1937)
- Our British Empire (1940)
- Canada: The Foundations of Its Future (1941)
- Our Heritage of Liberty (1942)
- Montreal: Seaport and City (1942)
- Canada and the Sea (1944)
- While There Is Time (1945)

Biography

- Mark Twain (1932)
- Charles Dickens: His Life and Work (1933)

Autobiography

- The Boy I Left Behind Me (1946)

11.2 The Conjurer's Revenge

Notes

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said the conjurer, "having shown you that the cloth is absolutely empty, I will proceed to take from it a bowl of goldfish. Presto!"

All around the hall people were saying, "Oh, how wonderful! How does he do it?"

But the Quick Man on the front seat said in a big whisper to the people near him, "He-had-it-up-his-sleeve."

Then the people nodded brightly at the Quick Man and said, "Oh, of course"; and everybody whispered round the hall, "He-had-it-up-his-sleeve."

"My next trick," said the conjurer, "is the famous Hindostanee rings. You will notice that the rings are apparently separate; at a blow they all join (clang, clang, clang)—Presto!"

There was a general buzz of stupefaction till the Quick Man was heard to whisper, "He-must-have-had-another-lot-up-his-sleeve."

Again everybody nodded and whispered, "The-rings-were-up-his-sleeve."

The brow of the conjurer was clouded with a gathering frown.

"I will now," he continued, "show you a most amusing trick by which I am enabled to take any number of eggs from a hat. Will some gentleman kindly lend me his hat? Ah, thank you—Presto!"

He extracted seventeen eggs, and for thirty-five seconds the audience began to think that he was wonderful. Then the Quick Man whispered along the front bench, "He-has-a-hen-up-his-sleeve," and all the people whispered it on. "He-has-a-lot-of-hens-up-his-sleeve."

The egg trick was ruined.

It went on like that all through. It transpired from the whispers of the Quick Man that the conjurer must have concealed up his sleeve, in addition to the rings, hens, and fish, several packs of cards, a loaf of bread, a doll's cradle, a live guinea-pig, a fifty-cent piece, and a rocking-chair.

Notes

The reputation of the conjurer was rapidly sinking below zero. At the close of the evening he rallied for a final effort.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “I will present to you, in conclusion, the famous Japanese trick recently invented by the natives of Tipperary. Will you, sir,” he continued turning toward the Quick Man, “will you kindly hand me your gold watch?”

It was passed to him.

“Have I your permission to put it into this mortar and pound it to pieces?” he asked savagely.

The Quick Man nodded and smiled.

The conjurer threw the watch into the mortar and grasped a sledge hammer from the table. There was a sound of violent smashing, “He’s-slipped-it-up-his-sleeve,” whispered the Quick Man.

“Now, sir,” continued the conjurer, “will you allow me to take your handkerchief and punch holes in it? Thank you. You see, ladies and gentlemen, there is no deception; the holes are visible to the eye.”

The face of the Quick Man beamed. This time the real mystery of the thing fascinated him.

“And now, sir, will you kindly pass me your silk hat and allow me to dance on it? Thank you.”

The conjurer made a few rapid passes with his feet and exhibited the hat crushed beyond recognition.

“And will you now, sir, take off your celluloid collar and permit me to burn it in the candle? Thank you, sir. And will you allow me to smash your spectacles for you with my hammer? Thank you.”

By this time the features of the Quick Man were assuming a puzzled expression. “This thing beats me,” he whispered, “I don’t see through it a bit.”

There was a great hush upon the audience. Then the conjurer drew himself up to his full height and, with a withering look at the Quick Man, he concluded:

“Ladies and gentlemen, you will observe that I have, with this gentleman’s permission, broken his watch, burnt his collar, smashed his spectacles, and danced on his hat.

If he will give me the further permission to paint green stripes on his overcoat, or to tie his suspenders in a knot, I shall be delighted to entertain you. If not, the performance is at an end."

And amid a glorious burst of music from the orchestra the curtain fell, and the audience dispersed, convinced that there are some tricks, at any rate, that are not done up the conjurer's sleeve.



Caution Remember that here while the Conjurer makes efforts to make his magic shows enjoyable, the Quick Man constantly tries to pull him down by adopting a fault – finding and doubt creating approach.

11.2.1 Analysis

The Conjurer called the attention of the people and showed an empty cloth. He said, 'Presto!' He took out a bowl of goldfish. All around the hall people wondered how the Conjurer did it. But the Quick Man on the front seat said in a big whisper to the people that he had it up his sleeve. Then everybody whispered round the hall that he had it up his sleeve. The Conjurer instantly said that his next trick was the famous Hindostanee rings. He showed that the rings were separate. At a blow they all joined. The Quick Man whispered that he had another lot up his sleeve. Again everybody nodded and whispered that the rings were up his sleeve.

The conjurer despite getting worried continued to perform his tricks. The Conjurer got a hat from the audience and he extracted seventeen eggs in thirty five seconds. The audience began to think that he was wonderful. Then the Quick Man whispered along the front bench that he had a hen up his sleeve and so all the people whispered it on that he had a lot of hens up his sleeve. The egg trick was ruined. It went on like that all through. Whatever the tricks he did, he got the same response. It seemed that the Conjurer must have concealed his sleeve. The reputation of the conjurer was rapidly sinking below zero.

He rallied for a final effort. He said that he would present to them the famous Japanese trick recently invented by the natives of Tipperary. He turned toward the Quick Man and requested him to give his gold watch. It was passed to him. The Conjurer asked the Quick Man if he had his permission to put it into that mortar and pound it to pieces. The Quick Man nodded and smiled. The conjurer threw the watch into the mortar and grasped a sledge hammer from the table and smashed it. The Quick Man whispered that he had slipped it up his sleeve. The conjurer asked him whether he would allow him to take his handkerchief and punch holes in it. He made visible holes in it. The real mystery of the thing fascinated the Quick Man.

Then the Conjurer asked for the Quick Man's permission to dance on his silk hat. The conjurer passed on the hat with his feet and crushed his it. Then he got his celluloid collar and burnt it with his permission. Then he got his spectacles and smashed it with hammer. The Quick Man puzzled and he whispered that he didn't see through it a bit. The Conjurer concluded that he had broken his watch, burnt his collar, smashed his spectacles and danced on his hat with his permission. The audience dispersed with an acceptance that there were some tricks that were not done up the Conjurer's sleeve.



Example: When the Conjurer puts up the magic show, the audience loves it. This is evident from the line "Oh, how wonderful! How does he do it?"

Notes

Self Assessment

Choose the correct answer.

1. The constant comments by the Quick Man made the audience
 - (a) feel that the tricks were nothing special.
 - (b) restless and ready to leave.
 - (c) enjoy all the tricks.
 - (d) wait in suspense for the next trick.
2. What the Conjuror did at the end was
 - (a) to entertain the audience like never before.
 - (b) to ensure that he had a weak ending to the show.
 - (c) to ultimately have his revenge.
 - (d) to end the show with a grand trick.
3. Towards the end of the show, the Quick Man realised that
 - (a) the Conjuror was successful in teaching him a lesson for spoiling his show.
 - (b) he could perform them better.
 - (c) he could see through all the tricks of the Conjuror.
 - (d) the Conjuror was performing his best trick.
4. It is evident from the story that the Conjuror
 - (a) had very little imagination.
 - (b) was a person who could take revenge.
 - (c) was a meek and humble person.
 - (d) was ready to be the receiver of others' jokes.
5. According to me, the villain of this story is
 - (a) no one in particular.
 - (b) the Quick Man.
 - (c) the Conjuror.
 - (d) the man who sat next to the Quick Man.

11.3 Summary

- Stephen Butler Leacock (1869-1944), is a renowned author of sharp humour and satire. His short stories have some realistic irony exposing the social weaknesses of modern life.
- The Conjurors revenge written by Stephen Butler Leacock is a short story which bears realistic irony that exposes social weaknesses. The Quick Man plays the role of a fault finding person who is keen to see it that the Conjuror's reputation goes down and he is exposed in front of the audience.

Notes

- Stephen Leacock was born in Swanmore, Hampshire. He was the third of eleven children born to (Walter) Peter Leacock (b.1848), who was born and grew up at Oak Hill on the Isle of Wight, an estate that his grandfather had purchased after returning from Madeira where his family had made a fortune out of plantations and Leacock's Madeira wine, founded in 1760.
- Disillusioned with teaching, in 1899 he began graduate studies at the University of Chicago under Thorstein Veblen, where he received a doctorate in political science and political economy. He moved from Chicago, Illinois to Montreal, Quebec, where he eventually became the William Dow Professor of Political Economy and long-time chair of the Department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University.
- Early in his career, Leacock turned to fiction, humour, and short reports to supplement (and ultimately exceed) his regular income. His stories, first published in magazines in Canada and the United States and later in novel form, became extremely popular around the world. It was said in 1911 that more people had heard of Stephen Leacock than had heard of Canada. Also, between the years 1915 and 1925, Leacock was the most popular humourist in the English-speaking world.
- The Stephen Leacock Associates is a foundation chartered to preserve the literary legacy of Stephen Leacock, and oversee the annual award of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour.
- In 1900 Leacock married Beatrix ("Trix") Hamilton, niece of Sir Henry Pellatt (who had built Casa Loma, the largest castle in North America). In 1915 — after 15 years of marriage — the couple had their only child, Stephen Lushington Leacock. While Leacock doted on the boy, it became apparent early on that "Stevie" suffered from a lack of growth hormone. Growing to be only four feet tall, he had a love-hate relationship with Leacock, who tended to treat him like a child. His wife Beatrix Hamilton died in 1925 due to breast cancer.
- In 1947, the Stephen Leacock Award was created to recognize the best in Canadian literary humour. In 1969, the centennial of his birth, Canada Post issued a six cent stamp with his image on it.
- Two Leacock short stories have been adapted as National Film Board of Canada animated shorts by Gerald Potterton: My Financial Career and The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones.
- In 2012, a screen adaptation based on Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town was aired on CBC Television to celebrate both the 75th anniversary of the CBC and the 100th anniversary of Leacock's original collection of short stories. The recent screen adaptation featured Gordon Pinsent as a mature Leacock.

11.4 Keywords

Adaptation: Adaptation refers to the change by which a specific organism becomes better suited to its present surrounding or environment.

Awful: Something which is very bad or unpleasant.

Disillusion: It means having lost faith or trust in something : disappointed that something is not as good, valuable, and true as it appeared.

Doctorate: It is the highest degree awarded by a university faculty or other approved educational organization.

Notes

Featured: When something is featured, it is given a place of prominence.

Humour: It is the ability to appreciate or express that which is humorous

Satire: It is a genre of literature, and sometimes graphic and performing arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, and society itself, into improvement. Even though satire is normally supposed to be funny, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit as a weapon and as a tool to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society.

Stamp: It is an instrument for stamping a pattern or mark, in particular an engraved or inked block or die.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 1. (a) | 2. (c) |
| 3. (a) | 4. (b) |
| 5. (a) | |

11.5 Review Questions

1. Who is Stephen Leacock?
2. Throw light on Stephen Leacock life.
3. Talk about Stephen Leacock's later years and death.
4. Throw light on Stephen Leacock major works.
5. Talk about the academic and political life of Stephen Leacock.
6. What is the Stephen Leacock Associates?
7. Was the Quick Man justified in his remark?
8. Why does the author use the name Quick Man in the story *The Conjuror's Revenge*?
9. Where does *The Conjuror's Revenge* take place?
10. By referring to the story, narrate how the Conjuror carries on his performance despite the Quick Man's objections.
11. Give the character sketch of the Conjuror. What do you find humorous in this character?
12. How does the Conjuror keep up the suspense till the end of the show?
13. What role does Quick Man play in the story? If the Quick Man were not there, how would the story end?

11.6 Further Readings



Books

Clute C.E. (1977) *Sleight of crime: fifteen classic tales of murder, mayhem, and magic*, H. Regnery Co.

Leacock S. (2006) *Literary Lapses*, Echo Library.

Lynch G. (1988) *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*, McGill-Queen's Press.

Staines D. (1986) *Stephen Leacock, a Reappraisal*, University of Ottawa Press.
Together with English Literature, Rachna Sagar Pvt. Ltd.

Notes



Online links

<http://leacockmuseum.com/>

<http://quizlet.com/6730670/the-conjurers-revenge-flash-cards/>

<http://www.online-literature.com/stephen-leacock/>

<http://www.online-literature.com/stephen-leacock/literary-lapses/20/>

Unit 12: The Big Brother by Munshi Premchand

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

12.1 About Munshi Premchand

12.1.1 Early Life

12.1.2 Stay at Kanpur

12.1.3 Gorakhpur

12.1.4 Back to Benares

12.1.5 Mumbai

12.1.6 Last Days

12.1.7 Death

12.1.8 Style and Influences

12.2 Major Works of Munshi Premchand

12.2.1 Adaptations of Premchand's Works

12.3 The Big Brother by Munshi Premchand

12.3.1 Analysis

12.4 Summary

12.5 Keywords

12.6 Review Questions

12.7 Further Readings

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Munshi Premchand's life
- Describe the works of Munshi Premchand
- Summarise the short story *The Big Brother*
- Critically analyse *The Big Brother*

Introduction

A pioneer of modern Urdu and Hindi social fiction, Munshi Premchand's real name was Dhanpat Rai. Premchand wrote almost 300 stories and novels. Among his best known novels are: Rangmanch, Sevasadan, Gaban, Godan and Nirmala. Most of Premchand's best work is to be found in his 250 short stories, collected in Hindi under the title Manasarovar. Three of Premchand's novels have also been made into films. He began his literary career by working as a freelancer and writing in Urdu.

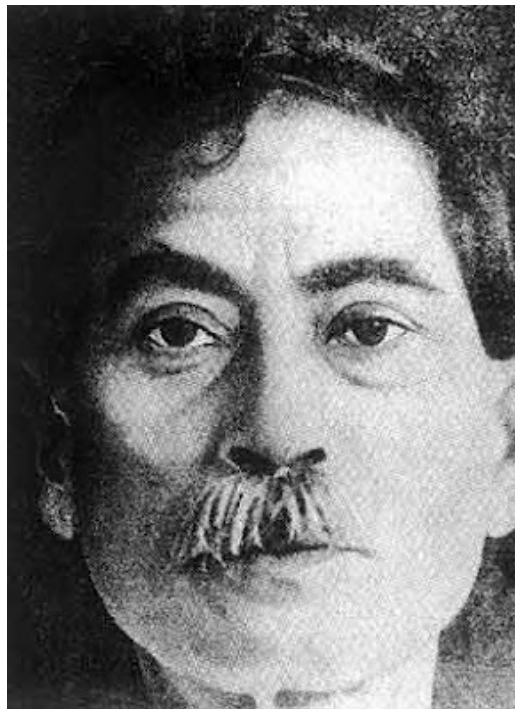
Premchand got realism to Hindi literature. He wrote on realistic issues such as corruption, communalism, zamindari, poverty, debt, colonialism, etc. He avoided the use of highly sanskritised Hindi and instead used the dialect of the common people.

Munshi Premchand's "Bade Bhai Sahab" (The Big Brother) is a gripping and moving tale of a hapless elder brother slowly getting frightened by the rapid yet casual academic strides of his happy-go-lucky younger sibling. Each time he builds a wall of defences in a desperate attempt to prove his might, he finds it mistakenly crushed by the little one. Lurking in this simple story are numerous shades of human emotions.

In this unit we will study more about Munshi Premchand and "Bade Bhai Sahab" (The Big Brother).

12.1 About Munshi Premchand

Figure 12.1: Munshi Premchand



Source: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-sjfncVG5OEo/UBdqSRLZgHI/AAAAAAAAAsY/7k-yqVZJMmU/s400/31+july+2012,+munshi+premchand,+Munshi+Premchand+132th+Birth+anniversary+today,+munshi+premchand+aniversary,+the+legends+of+art+and+leterature4.jpg>

Munshi Premchand (31 July 1880 – 8 October 1936) was an Indian writer famous for his modern Hindustani literature. He is one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent, and is regarded as one of the notable Hindustani writers of the early twentieth century. Born Dhanpat Rai Srivastav, he began writing under the pen name "Nawab Rai", but afterwards switched to "Premchand", while he is also known as "Munshi Premchand", Munshi being an honorary prefix. A novel writer, dramatist and story writer, he has been referred to as the "Upanyas Samrat" ("Emperor among Novelists") by several Hindi writers. His works include more than a dozen novels, several essays, around 250 short stories and translations of numerous foreign literary works in Hindi.

Notes

12.1.1 Early Life

Munshi Premchand was born on 31 July 1880 in Lamahi, a village located near Varanasi (Benares). His ancestors came from a large family, which owned six bighas of land. His grandfather Gur Sahai Lal was a patwari also called a village accountant, and his father Ajaib Lal was a post office clerk. His mother was Anandi Devi of Karauni village, who could have been the inspiration behind the character Anandi in his *Bade Ghar Ki Beti*. Premchand was the fourth child of Ajaib Lal and Anandi. The first two children were girls who died as children, and the third one was a girl named Suggi. His parents named him Dhanpat Rai which means the master of wealth, while his uncle, Mahabir, a rich landowner, nicknamed him “Nawab” (“Prince”). “Nawab Rai” was the first pen name chosen by Premchand.

When he was 7 years old, Premchand began his education at a madarsa in Lalpur. Premchand learnt Persian and Urdu from a maulvi in the madarsa. Premchand’s mother died after a long illness when he was 8 years old. His grandmother, who took the responsibility of raising him, died soon after his mother’s death. Premchand felt isolated, as his elder sister had already been married, and his father was always busy with work. His father, who was now posted at Gorakhpur, married again, but Premchand got little affection from his step-mother. The step-mother later became a recurring theme in Premchand’s works.

After his mother’s death, Premchand found solace in fiction, and developed a fascination for books. He heard the stories from the Persian-language fantasy epic *Tilism-e-Hoshrub* at a tobacconist’s shop. He started selling books for a book wholesaler, thus having the opportunity to read a lot of books. He learnt English at a missionary school, and studied numerous works of fiction including George W. M. Reynolds’s eight-volume *The Mysteries of the Court of London*. He composed his first literary work at Gorakhpur, which never got published and is now lost. It was a farce on a bachelor, who falls in love with a low-caste woman. The character was based on Premchand’s uncle, who often scolded him for being obsessed with reading fiction; the farce was probably written as a revenge for this.

After his father’s posted in Jamniya in the mid-1890s, Premchand joined the Queen’s College at Benaras as a day scholar. In 1895, he was married at the age of 15, when he was in the 9th grade. The match was arranged by his maternal step-grandfather. The girl was from a rich landlord family and was older than Premchand. He found her argumentative and not good-looking.

Premchand’s father died in 1897 after prolonged illness. He was able to pass the matriculation exam with second division. Though, only the students with first division were given fee concession at the Queen’s College. Premchand then wanted admission at the Central Hindu College, but failed due to his poor arithmetic skills. As a result he had to discontinue his studies.

Premchand then obtained an assignment to coach an advocate’s son in Benares at a monthly salary of five rupees. He used to reside in a mud-cell over the advocate’s stables, and used to send a major part of his salary back home. Munshi Premchand read a lot during these days. In 1899, after racking up numerous debts, he once went to a book shop to sell one of his collected books. There, he met the headmaster of a missionary school at Chunar, who offered him a job as a teacher, at a monthly salary of ₹ 18. He also started teaching a student at a monthly fees of 5.

Premchand, in 1900, secured a job as an assistant teacher at the Government District School, Bahraich, at a monthly salary of 20. After three months, he was transferred to the District School in Pratapgarh, where he stayed in an administrator’s bungalow and tutored his son.

Dhanpat Rai first wrote under the pseudonym “Nawab Rai”. His first short novel was *Asrar e Ma’abid* (*Devasthan Rahasya* in Hindi, “The Mystery of God’s Abode”), which sees corruption amongst the temple priests and their sexual exploitation of underprivileged women. The novel was published in a series in the Benares-based Urdu weekly *Awaz-e-Khalk* from 8 October 1903

to February 1905. Siegfried Schulz states that “his inexperience is quite evident in his first novel”, which is not well-organised, features stereotyped characters and lacks a good plot. Prakash Chandra Gupta says it is “immature work”, which shows a tendency to “see life only white or black”.

12.1.2 Stay at Kanpur

From Pratapgarh, Dhanpat Rai was moved to Allahabad for training, and then posted at Kanpur in 1905. Premchand stayed in Kanpur for four years, from May 1905 to June 1909. There he met Daya Narain Nigam, the editor of the magazine *Zamana*, in which he later published numerous stories and articles.

Premchand visited his village Lamahi during the summer vacation, but did not find the stay enjoyable due to several reasons. He did not find the weather of the atmosphere conducive for writing. He also faced domestic trouble due to arguments between his step-mother and his wife. Premchand angrily scolded his wife, after she tried to commit suicide by hanging herself. Discouraged, she went to her father’s house, and Premchand showed no interest in bringing her back. In 1906, Premchand married a child widow, Shivarani Devi, who was the daughter of a landlord from a village near Fatehpur. This step he took was thought of as revolutionary at that time, and Premchand faced a lot of social opposition. After his death, Shivarani Devi wrote a book on him, titled *Premchand Ghar Mein* (“Premchand in House”).

In 1905, enthused by the nationalist activism, Premchand published an article on the Indian National Congress leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale in *Zamana*. He disapproved of Gokhale’s methods for achieving political freedom, and instead recommended adoption of more extremist measures adopted by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. *Duniya Ka Sabse Anmol Ratan* (“The Most Precious Jewel in the World”) was the first published story written by Premchand’s and it appeared in *Zamana* in 1907. According to this story, the most precious ‘jewel’ was the last drop of blood necessary to attain independence. Majority of Premchand’s early short stories had patriotic overtones, influenced by the Indian independence movement.

Premchand’s second short novel *Hamkhurma-o-Hamsavab* (*Prema* in Hindi), published in 1907, and was penned under the name “Babu Nawab Rai Banarsi”. It focuses on the issue of widow remarriage in the contemporary conservative society: the protagonist Amrit Rai overcomes social opposition to marry the young widow Poorna, giving up his rich and beautiful fiancée Prema. According to Prakash Chandra Gupta, “while containing seeds of his future greatness in many ways, the novel is still youthful and lacks the discipline which full maturity brings”.

In 1907, Premchand short novel, *Kishna* was published by the Medical Hall Press of Benares. This 142-page novel, which satirises women’s fondness for jewellery, is now lost. Literary critic Nobat Rai criticised the work in *Zamana*, stating that it is a mockery of the women’s conditions.

During April–August 1907, Premchand’s story *Roothi Rani* was published in serial form in *Zamana*. Also in 1907, the publishers of *Zamana* published Premchand’s first short story collection, titled *Soz-e-Watan*. This collection, which was later banned, included four stories which were written to inspire the Indians in their struggle for political freedom.

12.1.3 Gorakhpur

In August 1916, Premchand was relocated to Gorakhpur on a promotion. He became the Assistant Master at the Normal High School, Gorakhpur. At Gorakhpur, he developed a friendship with the bookseller Buddhi Lal, and borrowed novels for reading, in exchange for selling exam cram books at the school. Premchand was an enthusiastic reader of classics in other languages, and translated a number of these works in Hindi.

Notes

By 1919, Premchand had published four novellas, of about a hundred pages each. In 1919, Premchand's first major novel *Seva Sadan* was published in Hindi. The novel was initially written in Urdu under the title *Bazaar-e-Husn*, but was published in Hindi first by a Calcutta-based publisher, who gave Premchand 450 for his work. Later in 1924, the Urdu Publisher of Lahore published the novel, paying Premchand 250. The novel talks about a story of an unhappy housewife, who first becomes a courtesan, and then manages an orphanage for the young daughters of the courtesans. It was well received by critics, and helped Premchand gain widespread recognition.

In 1919, Premchand acquired a BA degree from Allahabad. By 1921, he had been promoted to Deputy Inspectors of Schools. On 8 February 1921, Premchand attended a meeting in Gorakhpur, where Mahatma Gandhi asked people to resign from government jobs as part of the non-co-operation movement. Premchand, though physically unwell and with two kids and a pregnant wife to support, thought about it for 5 days and decided, with the consent of his wife, to resign from his government job.

12.1.4 Back to Benares

After leaving his job, Premchand left Gorakhpur for Benares on 18 March 1921, and decided to focus on his literary career. Till his death in 1936, he faced severe financial problems and chronic ill health.

In 1923, Premchand established a printing press and publishing house in Benares, christened "Saraswati Press". The year 1924 saw the publication of Premchand's *Rangabhumi*, which has a blind beggar called Surdas as its tragic hero. Schulz mentions that in *Rangabhumi*, Premchand comes across as a "superb social chronicler", and though the novel contains some "structural flaws" and "too many authorial explanations", it shows a "marked progress" in Premchand's writing style. Schulz said that it was in *Nirmala* (1925) and *Pratigya* (1927) that Premchand found his way to "a balanced, realistic level" that surpasses his earlier works and manages to "hold his readers in tutelage". *Nirmala*, a novel dealing with the dowry system in India, was first serialised in the magazine *Chand*, before being published as a novel. *Pratigya* ("The Vow") dealt with the subject of widow remarriage.

In 1928, Premchand's novel *Gaban* ("Embezzlement") was published. This novel focuses on the middle class' greed. In March 1930, Premchand launched a literary-political weekly magazine titled *Hans*, meant to inspire the Indians to mobilise against the British rule. The magazine, famous for its politically provocative views, could not reap any benefits. Premchand then took over and edited another magazine called *Jagaran*, which too ran at a loss.

In 1931, Premchand moved to Kanpur as a teacher in the Marwari College, but had to leave because of difference with the college administration. He then returned to Benares, and became the editor of the *Maryada* magazine. In 1932, he published another novel titled *Karmabhumi*. He briefly worked as the headmaster of the Kashi Vidyapeeth, a local school. After the school's closure, he became the editor of the *Madhuri* magazine in Lucknow.

12.1.5 Mumbai

Premchand arrived in Mumbai on 31 May 1934 to try his luck in the Hindi film industry. He had accepted a script writing job for the production house Ajanta Cinetone, hoping that the yearly salary of 8000 would help him overcome his financial crises. Premchand stayed in Dadar, and wrote the script for the film *Mazdoor* ("The Labourer"). Directed by Mohan Bhawnani, this film depicted the poor conditions on the labour class. Premchand himself did a cameo as the leader of labourers in the film. Some influential businessmen managed to get a stay on its release in

Mumbai. The film was released in Lahore and Delhi, but was banned again after it enthused the mill workers to stand up against the owners.

Ironically, the film inspired the workers of his own loss-making press in Benares to launch a strike, as these workers were not getting their salaries. By 1934–35, Premchand's Saraswati Press was under a heavy debt of 4000, and Premchand was forced to discontinue the publication of *Jagaran*. In the meantime, Premchand started hating the non-literary commercial environment of the Mumbai film industry, and wanted to return to Benares. However, he had signed a one-year contract with the production house. He finally left Mumbai on 4 April 1935, before the completion of one year. Himanshu Roy, the founder of Mumbai Talkies, tried to convince Premchand to stay back, but Premchand refused.

12.1.6 Last Days

Premchand wanted to settle in Allahabad, after leaving Mumbai where his sons Amrit Rai and Sripat Rai were studying. He also planned to publish *Hans* from there. Though, owing to his ill-health and his financial situation, he had to hand over *Hans* to the Indian Literary Counsel and move to Benares.

Elected as the first President of the Progressive Writers' Association in Lucknow, in 1936, Premchand, died on 8 October 1936, after prolonged sickness.

Munshi Premchand's last completed work, *Godaan* (*The Gift of a Cow*, 1936), is usually accepted as his best novel, and is considered as one of the finest Hindi novels. The protagonist, Hori, a poor peasant, desperately wants a cow, which is a symbol of prestige and wealth in rural India. According to Schulz, "*Godan* is a well-structured and well-balanced novel which amply fulfils the literary requirements postulated by the Western literary standards." Unlike other contemporary well-known authors such as Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand was not appreciated much outside India. Siegfried Schulz feels that the main reason behind this was the absence of good translations of his work. Also, unlike Iqbal and Tagore, Premchand never went outside India, studied abroad or mingled with the famous foreign literary figures.

Premchand also published *Kafan* ("Shroud"), in 1936, in which a poor man collects money for the funeral rites of his dead wife, but spends it on drinks and food. *Cricket Match*, was Premchand's last published story which appeared in *Zamana* in 1937, after his death.

12.1.7 Death

It is upsetting to know that a writer of such vision and calibre was not even appreciated while he was alive. He went through a very bad phase financially. He was unable to incur opportunities to earn himself a proper living. Premchand struggled throughout his life financially and lived in utter poverty. Despite suffering from health issues, Premchand continued writing till the end of his life. In fact when he died he was actually in the middle of writing a novel called *Mangalsootra*, which remains unfinished till date. This great literary personality of India breathed his last on October 8, 1936.

12.1.8 Style and Influences

Premchand is considered the first Hindi author whose writings importantly featured realism. His novels focus on the problems of the urban middle-class and the poor. His works show a rationalistic outlook, which sees religious values as something that allows the powerful hypocrites to exploit the weak. Premchand used literature to arouse public awareness about social and national issues and frequently wrote about topics related to prostitution, corruption, child widowhood, feudal system, colonialism, poverty and on the India's freedom movement.

Notes

During the late 1900s, Premchand started taking an interest in political affairs while at Kanpur, and this is reflected in his early works, which have patriotic implications. His political thoughts were originally influenced by the moderate Indian National Congress leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and then later, he relocated towards the more extremist Bal Gangadhar Tilak. According to him, the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms and the Minto–Morley Reforms were inadequate, and he supported greater political freedom. Many of his early works, such as *A Little Trick* and *A Moral Victory*, satirised the Indians who worked together with the British Government. He did not specifically mention the British in some of his stories, due to strong government censorship, but disguised his opposition in settings from the medieval era and the foreign history. He also got influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

In the 1920s, he was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's non-co-operation movement and the associated struggle for social reform. During this period, his works dealt with the social issues such as zamindari exploitation (*Premashram*, 1922), dowry system (*Nirmala*, 1925), poverty, educational reform and political oppression (*Karmabhumi*, 1931). Premchand concentrated on the economic liberalisation of the peasantry and the working class, and was opposed to the rapid industrialisation, which Premchand felt would hurt the oppression of the workers and the interests of the peasants. This can be seen in works like *Rangabhumi* (1924).

In his last days, he laid emphasis on village life as a stage for complex drama, as seen in the short-story collection *Kafan* (1936) and in novel *Godan* (1936). Premchand believed that social realism was the way for Hindi literature, as opposed to the "feminine quality", emotion and tenderness of the contemporary Bengali literature.

12.2 Major Works of Munshi Premchand

When it comes to writing Urdu short stories and novels, Premchand definitely has a distinct place of his own. His style of writing novels began as fantasy tales of kings and queens. However as Premchand became increasingly conscious of what was happening around him, he started to write on social problems and his novels had the element of evoking the feeling of social responsibility and consciousness. He wrote about the realities of life and the numerous problems faced by the common man in a turbulent society.

Premchand's mainly focussed on rural India and exploitation faced by a common villager at the hands of landlords, priests, loan sharks, etc. He also stressed upon the unity of Muslims and Hindus. A few of his well-known works are *Pratigya*, *Gaban*, *Godaan*, *Karmabhoomi*, etc. His famous short stories include popular names such as *Udhar Ki Ghadi*, *Atmaram*, *Bade Ghar Ki Beti*, etc. A few of his works were also made into films by renowned filmmaker, Satyajit Ray.

Besides being good at writing, Premchand was also famous for his proficiency in Urdu language. His strong command over Urdu language earned him a reputation of a brilliant journalist. As a journalist his writing was influenced by the independence movement going on in India at the time. In his writing he used to express his desire to actively participate in the freedom movement. He compiled a book of short stories called *Soz-e-Watan*, influenced with the on-going patriotism of that time. This work by Premchand was considered to be of a very bold nature. It was thought to be rebellious. This book was also responsible for provoking several Indians to take part in the freedom struggle against the British rule. This resulted in a cruel reaction from the side of British government. The government took possession of *Soz-e-Watan* and burnt all of its copies.

Premchand brought realism into Hindi literature, which was thought of as a revolutionary development in Hindi literature at that time as a majority of the writers before him mainly wrote on fantastical stories or mythological and religious tales. He was a visionary and social reformer. Premchand used reality and realistic situations in most of his stories. All of his characters were real people with genuine problems. He also wrote about the social evils that existed in

India around that time. These social evils included: poverty, dowry, corruption, colonialism, Zamindari, etc. His stories were set up in simple environment and portrayed simple and honest human emotions. His work is translated into several languages other than Urdu and Hindi, such as: Chinese, Russian, English, etc.



Task Write an essay about your relationship with your sibling.

12.2.1 Adaptations of Premchand's Works

Satyajit Ray filmed two of Premchand's works— Sadgati and Shatranj Ke Khiladi. Sadgati (Salvation) is a short story focussing on poor Dukhi, who dies of exhaustion while hewing wood for a paltry favour. Shatranj ke Khiladi (The Chess Players) is based on the decadence of nawabi Lucknow, where the obsession with a game consumes the players, making them unaware of their responsibilities in the middle of a crisis.

Sevasadan (first published in 1918) was made into a film with M.S. Subbulakshmi in the lead role. The novel is set in Varanasi, the holy city of Hindus. Sevasadan ("House of Service") is an institute built for the daughters of courtesans. The lead of the novel is a beautiful, brainy and talented girl called Suman. She belongs to a high caste. She is married to a much older, cruel man. She then understands that a loveless marriage is just like prostitution except that there is only one client. Bholi, a courtesan, lives opposite Suman. Suman realises that Bholi is "outside purdah", while she is "inside it". Suman then leaves her husband and becomes a successful entertainer of gentlemen. But after a brief period of success, she ends up as a victim of a political drama played out by self-righteous Hindu social moralists and reformers.

The Actor Factor Theatre Company, a young Delhi based theatre group, staged Kafan in 2010 in New Delhi. It is an original stage adaptation of Premchand's short story *Kafan*. Kafan is a dark comedy. In the play, puppetry is explored to depict the tussle between two classes and the plight of Budhia, who is caught in the crossfire. Bleakness of hope in the story and unpleasantness of the father-son duo find a delicate balance. Sometimes the situations break into morbid humour. In the end a wine-house becomes the stage for Madhav's (son) and Ghisu (father) rebellious dance, defying not only the laws of the land but also that of the Gods.

A 1977 Telugu film, Oka Oori Katha (English title: The Marginal Ones) directed by Mrinal Sen is based on the story Kafan written by Munshi Premchand. It is amongst the few Art films made in Telugu language.

Dramatech, a 28-year old amateur theatre group in Delhi, staged Premchand: Three Comedies for Families and Children, at Sri Ram Centre, Delhi in August, September and October 2012. The stories by Premchand included Shatranj ke khiladi, Do bailon ki katha and Nimantran. The stories were dramatised and directed by Ravi Raj Sagar.



Notes Gaban, one of the most celebrated novels of Munshi Premchand, was first published in 1931. It tells the story of Ramanath, a charming but morally weak young man, who in order to fulfil his beautiful wife's Jalpa excessive craving for jewellery involves himself in complex economic and personal relationships, which eventually leads to his apparent ignominy, and his escape from home. He doesn't even bother to realise that by doing so he brings disgrace to his family honour and leaves his dear wife alone. However, Jalpa's brave attitude brings a sense of redemption in Ramanath and they unite again. One of the

Contd....

Notes

classics of Indian literature, Gaban gives an engrossing picture of Indian society. It also captures the social and economic conditions and conflicts of a North Indian society in pre-independence India. It is a must read for readers interested in regional Indian literature. In 1910, he was hauled up by the District Magistrate in Jamirpur for his anthology of short stories *Soz-e-Watan* (Dirge of the Nation), which was labelled seditious. His book *Soz-e-Watan* was banned by the then British government, which burnt all of the copies. Initially Premchand wrote in Urdu under the name of Nawabrai. However, when his novel *Soz-e-Watan* was confiscated by the British, he started writing under the pseudonym Premchand. Before Premchand, Hindi literature consisted mainly of fantasy or religious works. Premchand brought realism to Hindi literature. He wrote over 300 stories, a dozen novels and two plays. The stories have been compiled and published as *Maansarovar*. His famous creations are: *Panch Parameshvar*, *Idgah*, *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*, *Poos Ki Raat*, *Bade Ghar Ki Beti*, *Kafan*, *Udhar Ki Ghadi*, *Namak Ka Daroga*, *Gaban*, *Godaan*, and *Nirmala*.

12.3 The Big Brother by Munshi Premchand

My brother, though five years my senior in age, was only three classes ahead. He started going to school at the same age as I, but in a vital matter like education, he did not wish to be hasty. He wanted to lay a solid foundation so that later he could build a magnificent palace over it. He did one year's work in two. Sometimes it took him even three years. If the foundations were weak, how would the house be sturdy?

I was younger than him. He was fourteen and I was nine. He had every right, by virtue of his birth, to watch over me and rebuke me. As far as I was concerned, courtesy demanded that I look upon his orders as law.

He was very studious by nature and always sat with a book before him. Perhaps to give a little rest to his brain he doodled. He sometimes drew pictures of birds, dogs and cats on his notebooks or along the margin of his books. Sometimes he wrote a single name or word or sentence several times over. Sometimes he copied down a couplet in a beautiful hand, again and again. He often wrote things that had neither meaning nor logic. For example, once I saw on his notebook the following text — special, Amina, between brothers, in truth, two brothers, Radhey Shyam, Mr. Radhey Shyam, within an hour... There followed the face of a man. I tried hard to find an answer to this riddle, but failed, and did not have the courage to ask him. He was in class nine and I in class five. It was presumptuous of me to expect to understand his composition.

I was not at all interested in studies. It was a monumental task to sit with my books even for an hour. At the first opportunity, I would run out of the hostel and on to the field. Sometimes I played with pebbles, at other times I made paper butterflies and flew them. If I ran into a friend, my happiness knew no bounds. Sometimes we would scramble up the compound wall and jump down, sometimes we would swing on the gate and by pushing it back and forth derive the pleasure of a joy-ride in a car. But when I came back and saw my brother's severe countenance, I would be scared to death. His first question would invariably be, "Where were you?" Always the same question, always asked in the same tone. And my only reply to it would be silence. I don't know why I couldn't utter a simple thing like, "I was out playing." My silence appeared to be a confession of guilt and my brother had no choice but to scold me, "If this is how you go about reading English, you will be at it all your life and not learn a single word. Learning English is no joke. Not many people can do it, or else every Tom, Dick and Harry would become a scholar of English. We have to pore over books night and day and undergo terrible strain. And what do we learn but a smattering? Even great scholars can't write chaste English, much less speak it. And I must say you are a fool not to take a leaf out of my book. You see perfectly well how hard I work. If you don't see it, you must be blind and stupid too! So many fairs and shows are held here. Have you ever seen me attend any? Cricket and hockey matches are played every

day, but I don't go anywhere near them. I'm studying all the time. Even then I spend two or three years in each class. How then can you hope to pass when you spend all your time fooling around? I take two or three years, you will spend your entire life rotting in the same class. If you are bent upon wasting your life in this manner, better go home and enjoy yourself playing gullidanda. Why waste your father's hard-earned money?"

On being thus rebuked I always burst into tears. What could I say in reply? I was guilty, but who can stand reproof? He would make such caustic remarks that I would be heart-broken and lose all confidence in myself. I did not feel equal to a strenuous activity like studying and would begin to think despondently, "Why don't I go home? Why should I ruin my life by attempting something that is beyond my capacity?" I was not content to remain a fool but could not possibly work so hard. Such thoughts would make me dizzy, but after an hour or two the clouds would lift and I would resolve to put my heart and soul into my studies. A time-table was made in a flash. Without advance planning and a proper scheme, how could I start? The time-table did not allow for any respite in the shape of games. It ran, "Get up early morning. After a wash and breakfast, sit down to study at six. From six to eight — English. Eight to nine — Arithmetic. Nine to nine-thirty — History, followed by lunch and school. After return from school at three-thirty — half an hour's rest, From four to five — Geography, five to six — Grammar, followed by a half-hour stroll in front of the hostel. From six-thirty to seven — English composition. After dinner, from eight to nine — translation, nine to ten — Hindi. Ten to eleven — other subjects, thereafter sleep."

But it is one thing to make a time-table and quite another to follow it. From the very first day I would begin to transgress it. So many things drew me quite unawares and irresistibly — the peaceful green of the fields, gentle puffs of breeze, the bounce of a game of football, the swiftness and agility of volley-ball and the dodges of kabaddi. Once there I forgot everything else. I forgot that killer time-table and those books that all but destroyed the eyesight. I remembered neither and once again Bhai Sahib got a chance to preach to me.

I ran from his very shadow and tried my best to avoid him, entering a room softly so that he would not become aware of my presence. The moment he raised his eyes and saw me, I nearly died of fright. I always felt as if there was a naked sword poised over my head. Yet, in spite of all the scolding, I could not give up games and sports just as, caught between death and disaster; man is still bound by attachment and desire.

The annual examination was held, Bhai Sahib failed; I not only passed but stood first in my class. Now the gap between us was reduced to two years. I felt like taking Bhai Sahib to task and asking him, "Where did your penance get you? Look at me. I played around happily and still managed to stand first in my class." But he was so depressed and unhappy that my heart went out to him and the very idea of rubbing things in appeared contemptible. I became a little proud and self-assured. Bhai Sahib no longer had the old influence over me. I freely joined in sports and games. If he preached to me again, I would bluntly say, "What have you achieved by killing yourself? Look at me. I kept playing and still stood first." Although I did not have the guts to give voice to this boast, it was clear from my conduct that Bhai Sahib had lost his hold on me. Bhai Sahib understood this. He had a very robust common sense and one morning when I came back after a session of gulli-danda he set upon me, armed with a sword, as it were: "I can see that you have grown conceited because you passed and stood first in class. But the pride of even the greatest has been humbled. What is your standing? You must have read in history what happened to Ravana. What lesson have you learnt from his character? Or did you read through it casually? Simply passing an examination is nothing; the main thing is the development of your brains. You must understand the significance of what you read. Ravana was the lord of the earth. An empire such as his is called chakravarty. These days the British have a vast empire. But we cannot call it chakravarty. Several nations of the world refuse to acknowledge the supremacy of the British. They are absolutely independent. But Ravana was a chakravarty raja. All the kings of

Notes

the world paid him tribute. The greatest among the gods were like his slaves. The gods of fire and water were also his servants. But what was his end? His pride wiped out both him and his race, there was not a soul left. Whatever evil deeds a man may do, let him not indulge in pride. Let him not put on airs. If he is proud, he loses in both the material and the spiritual worlds. You must also have read what happened to Satan. He was proud that there was no greater and truer devotee of God than himself. In the end he was cast out from heaven into hell. Once the Emperor of Rome also gave way to pride. He died begging for alms. If your head has turned on clearing just one class, then your progress is indeed assured! You can take it from me that you have not succeeded through hard work, but through sheer luck. This kind of thing can happen only once, not again. Sometimes when playing gulli-danda one makes a hit by chance but this does not make one a successful player. A successful player is one whose shots never miss their mark. Don't go by my failure. When you reach my class you will sweat and toil, battling with things like algebra and geometry and English history. It is not easy to remember the names of kings. There have been as many as eight Henrys. Do you think it is easy to remember in which Henry's reign a particular event took place? Write Henry VIII instead of Henry VII and you lose all marks! Not even a zero will you get, not even a zero! Have you ever thought of that? There have been dozens of Jameses, dozens of Williams, scores of Charleses. The brain reels, one feels giddy thinking of them. The unfortunate British could not even find names. They simply affixed Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth to a single name. Had they asked me I would have suggested a million names. As for geometry, God help us! Write ABC instead of ACB and all your marks are cut. There is no one to ask these heartless examiners what, after all, the difference is between ABC and ACB and why they slaughter candidates for such trivial reasons. How does it matter whether you eat dal and rice and roti or rice and dal and roti But are these examiners concerned with anything beyond the book? They want the boys to learn every single letter by heart. And such cramming has been given the name of education. After all what is the use of reading things that have neither head nor tail? 'If you drop a perpendicular on this line, the base will be twice the perpendicular'.

"What, one may ask, is the use of this? How do I care whether it is twice or four times the size or remains a mere half? But if you want to pass an exam you must learn all this rubbish. You are told to write an essay on 'punctuality', not less than four pages in length. All you do is, open your notebook, pick up your pen and curse them. Who doesn't know that punctuality is a very good thing? It brings discipline into a man's life. Other people begin to have a regard for him and his business prospers. But how can one write four pages on a little thing like that? What, anyway, is the use of writing four pages on something that can be said in a single sentence? I would call this folly. Overstressing a thing without sufficient reason is not economy but misuse of time. We want a man who says quickly what he has to say. But no. You are compelled to colour four pages, no matter how you do it. And mind you, foolscap pages at that. Isn't this a cruelty to students? The irony of the whole situation is that you are told to write briefly. Write a brief essay, not less than four pages! Fine! A brief essay means four pages. Otherwise we would have to write a hundred or two-hundred pages. It's like running both fast and slow. Isn't that a contradiction? Even a child can understand a little thing like that but not these teachers. When you come to my class, sir, you will know just what is what. You have topped in this class so you are walking on air. Take my advice. I might fail a hundred-thousand times, still I am older than you and have more experience of the world than you have. Make a note of what I say or you'll be sorry."



Caution The story is in first person account which interestingly switches the actors from being the narrators and players while the narration forming the part of dialogue between the two brothers.

It was nearly time for school; otherwise God knows when this sermon would have ended. My food seemed tasteless to me. When I was being harangued on having passed, perhaps I would have been killed if I had failed. I was terrified by the fearful picture of studies in his class that Bhai Sahib had painted. It is a wonder that I did not leave school and run away home. But in spite of all these warnings I still remained uninterested in books. I never lost an opportunity to play games. I studied too, but very little, just enough to complete the day's task and to avoid being disgraced in class. The self-confidence that had taken root within me disappeared again, and once more I began to live the life of a thief.

Again the annual exams were held and as chance would have it, again I passed and Bhai Sahib failed. I did not work very hard but somehow managed to stand first in class. I was myself surprised. Bhai Sahib had put heart and soul into his work. He had swallowed every single word of the course, working till ten in the night, from four in the afternoon, and from six to nine-thirty before going to school. He looked completely drained with the effort but still he failed. I felt sorry for him. When the result was announced he burst into tears and I also began to cry. My joy at my success was halved. Had I also failed Bhai Sahib would not have been so unhappy. But who can divert destiny?

Between Bhai Sahib and me there now remained a gap of only one class. An evil thought sprang up within me: if Bhai Sahib failed another year I would be his equal. On what basis then would he preach to me? But I forcibly thrust this uncharitable thought from my heart. "After all, he scolds me for my own good. At this time I doubtless find it unpleasant but perhaps it is due to his sermons that I pass again and again and secure such good marks too."

By now Bhai Sahib had softened to a great extent. Several times, even on finding an opportunity to scold me, he showed great patience. Perhaps now he had himself come to understand that he no longer had a right to scold me, or at best, to a very small extent. I became more and more self-willed and began to take advantage of his tolerance. I had the conviction that I would pass, whether I studied or not. Luck was on my side. Thus I stopped studying what little I used to for fear of Bhai Sahib. I had developed a new interest — flying kites — and now all my time was devoted to it. Even so, I respected my brother and flew kites in secret. Preparing the manjha, correcting the balance of the kite, planning for kite tournaments and allied problems were all solved in secrecy. I did not want Bhai Sahib to suspect that my respect and regard for him had gone down.

One evening, at some distance from the hostel, I was running recklessly to loot a drifting kite. My eyes were turned upwards to the sky and my heart lay with this traveller who came gliding slowly, rolling towards a fall, like a restless soul coming out of heaven to inhabit a new world. A whole army of children was surging towards it to welcome it, armed with sticks and bamboos. Nobody was aware of his surroundings. Everyone was, as it were, flying with that kite up in the sky, where everything is smooth and there are neither cars, nor trams or trains.

Suddenly I ran into Bhai Sahib who was perhaps returning from the market. Then and there he caught me by the hands and said angrily, "Aren't you ashamed, running after a worthless kite with these street urchins? You don't have any consideration for the fact that now you are no longer in a junior class. On the contrary you are in class eight and only one class below me. After all, man should have some regard for his position. There was a time when people used to become naib-tehsildars after passing class eight. I know several middlechis who are first class magistrates or superintendants. So many who have passed class eight are our leaders and the editors of our newspapers. Great scholars work under them. And you, having come to the same class, are running after a kite with these street urchins! I am grieved by your lack of sense. Without a doubt, you are clever, but what use is cleverness if it destroys one's self-respect? You

Notes

must be thinking to yourself, 'I am only one class below Bhai Sahib and now he has no right to say anything to me. 'But this is where you are mistaken. I am five years older than you and even if you come to my class today — (and if this is the attitude of examiners, then without a doubt, next year you will be my class-fellow and perhaps after a year you will be ahead of me) — the five years' difference between you and me cannot be erased by God himself, to say nothing of you. I am, and shall always remain, five years older than you. You cannot equal my experience of life and this world, even if you become an M.A. and D. Phil, and D.Litt. Our mother has not passed a single class and even our father has, perhaps, not gone beyond class five or six. But they will always retain the right to guide and correct us, even if we acquire all the knowledge in the world. Not only because they have given us life but also because they have and will always continue to have more experience of the world than we do. What kind of government America has, or how many times Henry VIII married, or how many planets there are in the sky — these things they may not know. But there are thousands of things which they know better than you or I. God forbid, if I were to fall ill today, you would be at your wits' end. You would not be able to think of anything save sending a wire to Dada. But if Dada were in your place he would not send a wire to anyone, nor would he get nervous or panicky. First he would diagnose the illness himself and then proceed to treat it. If he were unsuccessful, he would call a doctor. But an illness is a big thing. The two of us do not even know how to stretch our monthly allowance to last a whole month. Whatever Dada sends, we finish by the twentieth or twenty-second and then become paupers. We have to cut out snacks and avoid meeting the dhobi and the barber. But living on half of what we are spending now, Dada has managed a large portion of his life with credit and honour. He has raised a family in which there are a total of nine members. Look at our own Headmaster Sahib. Isn't he an M.A.? And not an M.A. from here, but an M.A. from Oxford. He gets a thousand rupees, but who is managing his household? His old mother. Headmaster Sahib's degree proved useless in this matter. Earlier he used to run the household himself but there was never enough money. He incurred debts. Ever since his mother has taken the management into her own hands, it is as if Lakshmi has come into the house. So, my dear brother, root out from your mind the notion that you have come close to me and are now independent. You will not be able to go astray while I am there to watch over you. If you don't obey me, I can make use of this too [indicating a slap]. I know that my words are like poison to you."

I felt humbled at this new attitude of his. I honestly became aware of my smallness and a deep regard for Bhai Sahib took root within me. I said with tears in my eyes, "Certainly not! Whatever you are saying is absolutely true and you have a right to say it."

Bhai Sahib embraced me and said, "I am not forbidding you to fly kites. Even I long to do so but what can I do? If I go astray myself how can I safeguard you? This duty has also fallen to my lot."

As luck would have it, just at that moment a kite drifted above our heads. Its string was trailing and a horde of boys came running after it. Bhai Sahib was tall. He leapt and caught the string and raced towards the hostel. I ran after him.



Did u know? BADE BHAI SAHAB is not only one of Munshi Premchand's well-known stories but has also been frequently adapted for the stage. On the surface of it the narrative may appear dated given the period in which it was written but its enduring appeal lies in its ability to convey the different shades that lurk beneath a familial relationship. What makes it further enjoyable is its simple prose, which is capable of being perceptive at the same time.

12.3.1 Analysis

Notes

Munshi Premchand, the iconic figure of Urdu and Hindi literature was way ahead of his time. Premchand always said his message by his authentic delineation of characters and his powerful accounts of situations. He could understand the flaws of the education system which are ruining generations over decades. His short story "Bade Bhai Sahab" not only critically analyses the education system which lays more emphasis on marks but also brings forward the emotions of human minds. In the story that follows, Premchand gives an instance of our examination-oriented and book-oriented educational system by showing the interaction of two brothers. The story is communicated with an abundance of wit and contains a thoughtful denunciation of the manner in which children in our schools are stifled and how they are deprived of the actual joy of learning and of combining work and play. Bade Bhai Sahab is the story that focuses on the delicate ties between two brothers. The younger one, is younger to his elder brother by five years and hence bade bhai sahab takes it on him to paramash the younger one on everything. The elder brother is a victim of the examination system. Considering the fact that the elder brother completes one year's work in the space of two to three years, we may think him to be a dunce. The story which is in first person account interestingly switches the actors from being the players and narrators while the narration forming the part of dialogue between the two brothers.

The younger brother is portrayed as being intelligent and he can thus afford to play gullidanda [a simple stick game] without spoiling his examination results. His elder brother's conservative and orthodox attitude towards sports and games is so forcefully expressed that he feels guilty when he engages in educative activities, even though he admits that he is "not at all interested in studies". It is a simple, candid criticism of the manner in which lessons are made so dull that they are not even of interest to the intelligent students. The ending of the story is the kicker though, as it is the brother who recovers the kite end and goes running off. The story also emphasises on traditional values and reverence for age, but here possibly is also a treatment of balance in the kinds of traits that one needs.

In addition to the amusing personal idiosyncrasies of the two brothers, we have in this short story Bade Bhai Sahab (The Big Brother) an instructive indictment of an educational system that stops pupils from becoming good pupils. The tragi-comedy of the younger brother and the comi-tragedy of the elder brother are typical instances of what students experience in their everyday life in school and at home, bound in a triple prison of syllabus system, lecture system and examination system. The two brothers both have the potential of becoming good pupils, but are still prevented from growing freely along the lines appropriate to their inclinations. The conclusion Munshi Premchand draws is that as long as the system smothers and grinds down the students, one cannot expect the flowering of good pupils. Only in a garden of joy and freedom, only under the conditions of right guidance and help can good pupils blossom and prosper.



Example: The story at times takes a dig on the education system. For instance, exam papers say 'write an essay in more than 200 words on...' and the pages given are four. "Iske bade mein 400 lafz, aur woh bhi, 4 sasure full scape paper mein?" laughs bhai Sahab.

Self Assessment

State True or False:

1. In the story The Big Brother, the younger brother is considered intelligent and can afford to play without spoiling his examination results.
2. Munshi Premchand could comprehend the flaws of the education system.

Notes

3. In *Bade Bhai Sahab*, Premchand gives an example of our book-oriented and examination-oriented educational system by portraying the interaction of two brothers.
4. *Oka Oori Katha* is a 1979 Telugu film directed by Mrinal Sen.
5. A young Delhi based theatre group, The Actor Factor Theatre Company, staged *Kafan* in 2013 in New Delhi.

12.4 Summary

- A pioneer of modern Hindi and Urdu social fiction, Munshi Premchand's real name was Dhanpat Rai. He wrote nearly 300 stories and novels. Among his best known novels are: *Sevasadan*, *Rangmanch*, *Gaban*, *Nirmala* and *Godan*.
- Munshi Premchand (31 July 1880 – 8 October 1936) was an Indian writer famous for his modern Hindustani literature. He is one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent, and is regarded as one of the foremost Hindustani writers of the early twentieth century.
- When he was 7 years old, Premchand began his education at a madarsa in Lalpur, located around 2½ km from Lamahi. Premchand learnt Urdu and Persian from a maulvi in the madarsa. When he was 8, his mother died after a long illness. His grandmother, who took the responsibility of raising him, died soon after. Premchand felt isolated, as his elder sister had already been married, and his father was always busy with work.
- From Pratapgarh, Dhanpat Rai was relocated to Allahabad for training, and subsequently posted at Kanpur in 1905. Premchand stayed in Kanpur for around four years, from May 1905 to June 1909. There he met Daya Narain Nigam, the editor of the magazine *Zamana*, in which he later published several articles and stories.
- In 1905, inspired by the nationalist activism, Premchand published an article on the Indian National Congress leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale in *Zamana*. He criticised Gokhale's methods for achieving political freedom, and instead recommended adoption of more extremist measures adopted by Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- In August 1916, Premchand was transferred to Gorakhpur on a promotion. He became the Assistant Master at the Normal High School, Gorakhpur. At Gorakhpur, he developed a friendship with the bookseller Buddhi Lal, who allowed him to borrow novels for reading, in exchange for selling exam cram books at the school. Premchand was an enthusiastic reader of classics in other languages, and translated several of these works in Hindi.
- After quitting his job, Premchand left Gorakhpur for Benares on 18 March 1921, and decided to focus on his literary career. Till his death in 1936, he faced severe financial difficulties and chronic ill health.
- In 1932, he published another novel titled *Karmabhumi*. He briefly served as the headmaster of the Kashi Vidyapeeth, a local school. After the school's closure, he became the editor of the *Madhuri* magazine in Lucknow.
- In 1936, Premchand also published *Kafan* ("Shroud"), in which a poor man collects money for the funeral rites of his dead wife, but spends it on food and drink. Premchand's last published story was *Cricket Match*, which appeared in *Zamana* in 1937, after his death.
- When it comes to writing Urdu novel and short stories, Premchand definitely has his own special place. His style of writing novels began as fantasy tales of kings and queens. But as he became more and more conscious of what was happening around him, he started to write on social problems and his novels had the element of evoking the feeling of social

consciousness and responsibility. He wrote about the realities of life and the various problems faced by the common man in a turbulent society.

- Sevasadan (first published in 1918) was made into a film with M.S. Subbulakshmi in the lead role.
- Satyajit Ray filmed two of Premchand's works—Sadgati and Shatranj Ke Khiladi. Sadgati (Salvation) is a short story revolving around poor Dukhi, who dies of exhaustion while hewing wood for a paltry favour.
- The Actor Factor Theatre Company, a young Delhi based theatre group, staged Kafan in 2010 in New Delhi. It is an original stage adaptation of Premchand's short story.
- Munshi Premchand, the iconic figure of Urdu and Hindi literature was way ahead of his time. Premchand always brought home his message by his penetrating accounts of situations and his authentic delineation of characters.
- In his short story "Bade Bhaisahab" Premchand gives a simple example of our book-oriented and examination-oriented educational system by portraying the interaction of two brothers.

12.5 Keywords

Closure: It can be defined as an act or process of closing something, mainly an institution, thoroughfare, or frontier.

Enthusiastic: It means having or showing intense and eager enjoyment, approval or interest.

Evoke: It means to bring or recall a feeling, memory, or an image to the conscious mind.

Fiction: It can be defined as literature in the form of prose, especially novels, which describe imaginary events and people.

Hewing: It means to chop or cut something, mainly wood or coal with an axe, pick, or other tool.

Paltry: (of an amount) very small or meagre. Something which is very petty.

Portray: Depict or describe someone or something in a work of art or literature.

Turbulent: Something which is characterized by conflict, confusion or disorder.

Answers: Self Assessment

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. True | 2. True |
| 3. True | 4. False |
| 5. False | |

12.6 Review Questions

1. Who is Munshi Premchand?
2. Throw light on Munshi Premchand life.
3. Talk about Munshi Premchand's later years and death.
4. Throw light on Munshi Premchand major works.

Notes

5. Throw light on the adaptations of Premchand's works.
6. What is Munchi Premchand's real name?
7. In his story, *The Big Brother*, what does Premchand emphasise upon?
8. What did the elder brother always ask the younger one?
9. Which aspects did the younger brother consider while making his time table?
10. Why couldn't the younger brother follow the time table he made?
11. Why did the younger brother respect the elder one?
12. How does the younger brother describe his elder brother in the story *bade bhai sahab*?
13. Critically analyse the story *The Big Brother*?

12.7 Further Readings



Books

Gopal M. (1964) *Munshi Premchand: a literary biography*, Asia Pub. House.

Narain G. (1978) *Munshi Prem Chand*, Twayne Publishers.

Sigi R. (2006) *Munshi Prem Chand*, Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.

Swan R.O. (1969) *Munshi Premchand of Lamhi village*, Duke University Press.



Online links

<http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/premchand.html>

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/doherty/premchand.html>

<http://www.robertmorris.edu/profiles/cbrunt/2011-01-20/>

LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

Jalandhar-Delhi G.T. Road (NH-1)

Phagwara, Punjab (India)-144411

For Enquiry: +91-1824-300360

Fax.: +91-1824-506111

Email: odl@lpu.co.in