BNEN301DCT

Introduction to British Literature

B.A. (Hons.)
4 Year Programme
Third Semester (English)

Centre for Distance and Online Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Hyderabad-32, Telangana-India

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Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC accreditation and the mandate of the university is: (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. The non-availability of books in Urdu is a matter of concern and Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national process of providing course material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that could significantly affect the intellectual abilities of the Urdu knowing community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school/college level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. To achieve these objectives, MANUU makes available course material in the form of Self Learning Material (SLM) to the students of Distance Learning. The same is also available for sale to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material and will fulfill the mandate of this University and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes,

Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Vice Chancellor
MANUU, Hyderabad

Message

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at CDOE are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a dual mode university catering to both distance and traditional mode of learning, to achieve its goal in line with the UGC-DEB guidelines, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG programmes containing 6 blocks with 24 units and 4 blocks with 16 units respectively.

The Centre for Distance and Online Education offers a total of seventeen (17) programmes comprising UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Centre for Distance and Online Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Centre for Distance and Online Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Centre for Distance and Online Education will play a vital role to bring the educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. In near future, changes will be made in various programmes under the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

Prof. Mohd Razaullah Khan
Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education
MANUU, Hyderabad

Introduction to the Course

The course *Introduction to British Literature* (BNEN301DCT) is prescribed as a Core Paper in the 3rd Semester of BA. This course is a continuation of the English Compulsory Core Course under the FYUG - NEP 2020. The course is designed by the Department of English and is adopted by the CDOE for distance learners as part of syllabus synchronization. The course introduces the learners to British Literature. The defined course outcomes are: to introduce the students to the works of canonical British writers so that they develop aesthetics for literature such as drama and novel. Upon the completion of the course, students are expected to acquire background knowledge of British literature in respect of drama and novel.

In the course on *Introduction to British Literature*, the learners will be introduced to British drama and British novel. They will study a brief survey of drama and novel in British literature. Under the study of drama, the prescribed play is *Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. Apart from a study of plot construction, theme, language, style and characterization, the course provides inputs into Shakespearean drama, romantic comedy and considers the relevance of *Merchant of Venice* to the present times.

The prescribed novel is *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. The course covers plot construction, theme, narrative technique, language along with aspects of novel and a history of English novel and precursors to Dickens.

The SLM on *Introduction to British Literature* includes a sample question paper. There are built-in activities, sample questions, suggested readings and glossary at the end of each Unit.

Suggestions and feedback are welcome on ddeenglish@manuu.edu.in.

Happy reading and Good luck!

Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb

Course Coordinator

Unit - 1: Introduction to British Drama

Structure

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1.0 Introduction

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

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

important to trace the historical growth of drama in England besides understanding the essential elements and the classification of British drama.

Check your Progress

1. How is drama related to literature?

_____

2. What information does British drama provide about the English language and culture?

_____

1.1 Objectives

After going through this Unit, the students will be able to:

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

1.2 British Drama

Etymologically, the word ‘drama’ is of Greek origin, and it may refer to act or to do or to perform. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M. H. Abrams discusses the term ‘drama’ as a form of composition that is designed for performance. A dramatist is a person who writes/produces drama. The word ‘play’; is often used as a substitute for the word ‘drama’. Accordingly, those who write plays are called playwrights. Drama as a genre has played a vital role in the spread of the English language, literature and culture across the globe. Dramatic texts written in English, their translations and adaptations have been performed across the globe. To understand that let us examine a short historical overview of drama in England.

1.2.1 Drama in England:

In Britain, Drama has always enjoyed popularity and patronage as a form of literature and art. British dramatists/playwrights who earned global recognition for their contribution to the field of drama include Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, G. B. Shaw, T. S. Eliot, Oscar Wilde, John Osborne, Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter, to name a few. Their dramatic creations earned recognition across the globe and positively contributed to the spread of the English language and culture include the following: *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson, *Pygmalion* by G. B. Shaw, *Murder in the Cathedral* by T. S. Eliot, *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter.

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

a. Elizabethan drama:

The mid-sixteenth century England saw tremendous growth in theatrical activities and brought unprecedented recognition to British drama. Since this development took place during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the drama and dramatists of this time and tradition are known as Elizabethans. The writings and performances of plays during this time; amply manifest the social attitude, scientific temper and religious beliefs conditioned according to the renaissance that entire Europe was experiencing. It would not be wrong to say that English drama saw its peak during the Elizabethan Age. With Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare representing this Age, English drama started to impress the audience and inspire the authors beyond the territorial boundaries of England. The dramatic tradition during the Elizabethan Age; was highly

influenced by religious institutions. However, secular views also started penetrating drama during this Age. Also, new models for dramatic works developed during this time has perfected the models derived from the works of Latin and Greek philosophers.

b. Jacobean drama:

The death of Queen Elizabeth shifted the power to King James during, whose reign writing and performance of plays in England experienced a recognizable shift. The plays following this new trend are known as Jacobean Plays. Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton, and William Rowley are the chief representatives of the Jacobean Age. William Shakespeare was actively writing during this era, but he followed the Elizabethan style and tradition. That is why his plays are not included in the list of Jacobean Drama. *The White Devil* by John Webster and *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Jonson are significant plays of this tradition.

c. Restoration drama:

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

d. Victorian drama:

During the reign of Queen Victoria, dramatic writings seem to have declined, although dramatic works remained popular all over England. It was a time when lyrical poetry remained popular as earlier and fiction writing saw an unprecedented growth. The theatres flourished as their numbers grew manifold while the performances of plays of earlier greats like William Shakespeare drew big crowds. The drama during this phase focused on social problems and issues of ordinary people. Most dramatic works during this era comprised three acts while some came in the form of episodes. Prominent dramatic works of the Victorian era include *The*

Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, *The Playboy of the Western World* by John Millington Synge and *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw.

e. Modern drama:

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

Check your Progress

1. Mention the name of two important playwrights of the Jacobean period.

_____

2. Who is considered as the father of modern drama?

_____

1.2.2 Elements of Drama:

Plot, setting, scene, characters, conflicts, dialogues, and theme are indispensable elements of drama. In addition to these, the background and structure of a play are significant too. Understanding these elements; will help one to understand, analyse and appreciate drama in fullness. Let us examine them individually to understand why they are essential to a theatrical performance.

a. Plot:

The term ‘plot’ refers to the arrangement or sequence of events in a play. This term is comparable with ‘storyline’. The plot is also relevant to stories, films, and novels. In drama, the plot unfolds through acts or scenes. It is a vital component of a play because all characters enact their roles according to the plot. A plot can either be simple or complex. A simple plot has the sequence of events determined by one turning point. In other words, a simple plot is a straightforward string of events. Characters and events in a simple plot are predictable. In

contrast, a complex plot may have more than one turning point. The events in complex plots are interwoven and have several twists and unpredictable characters. Major playwrights like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe are known for their distinct plot styles. The plot tells what happens to the characters. It contains the events that control the progress of the play and determine its end. Several scholars discuss the plot from the standpoint of a cause-and-effect relationship between the events. The major types of plays such as; comedy and tragedy; are determined by the plot they have. The plot in British drama has seen domination of structural trends; therefore, British drama is distinct from the drama of other places and is easily identifiable too. The term 'script' refers to the written/print pages according to which all actions happen in a play.

b. Setting and scene:

The term 'setting' refers to the sum total of time, place and circumstance in which the play is enacted. The setting of a play contains the socio-cultural milieu and politico-economic situations that govern the play or that the play intends to portray. However, the term 'scene' refers to a part of a play that is often marked by a brief situation of action and ends with the fall of the curtains. A defining characteristic of a scene is that it has all actions in one (distinct) place and at one (point of) time. Some plays are lengthy i.e., they are of considerable time duration. Such plays are divided into smaller parts known as Acts and Scenes. The division of a lengthy play into acts and scenes provides the actors and backstage workers reasonable time to regroup, change costumes and prepare the stage according to the flow of narration. Acts and scenes serve as units of analysis of dramatic work and help the audience to easily follow the narration. The terms 'act' and 'scene' are often used synonymously as both refer to a part of a play. However, it is important to note that act and scene are not identical. Act and scene differ in their length. An act not only runs longer than a scene, but it can also comprise several scenes. Usually, drama in the Elizabethan Age comprises five acts whereas drama in the Modern Age comprises three acts. One-act plays (dramatic performance comprising just one-act) are also common in modern times.

c. Characters and characterisation:

The term 'character' refers to the real-life or imaginary person being represented in a drama. Characters are actors performing their roles according to the script. The persons being represented by the characters may be real-life persons of socio-political, cultural, and historical

significance. Alternatively, the persons represented by characters in a play may be fictional. Characters portray the desires, actions, contemplations etc. of people. The following four types of characters are most common: (a) Static characters, (b) Dynamic characters, (c) Stock characters, and (d) Symbolic characters.

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

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

The characters are also studied based on the action they perform in the play. Accordingly, the plot moves around the main character known as the protagonist or hero. Usually, the protagonist stands for the virtues established by society. The protagonist positively affects the lives of the people around them by heroic actions and inspires the audience by their courage and decisions. Occasionally, the protagonist does negative actions too. They would be called 'anti-hero' and their role as 'negative role.' In contrast, the protagonist and his/her actions are obstructed by another dissimilar character known as antagonist or villain. The main purpose of an antagonist in a play is to do evil things, create obstacles for the hero and add to his difficulties. Predominantly, the antagonists are persons; but sometimes the antagonist can be a situation also.

In numerous plays antagonists are responsible for the rise of the hero. The antagonists are often portrayed as more powerful than the protagonists. Still, the protagonists can overcome the challenges and difficulties and defeat the antagonists, especially for the fact that they uphold social and moral values.

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

d. Conflicts:

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

i. Internal conflict: A conflict in which a character is shown to struggle against his/her ideas, beliefs, and desires. The internal conflict portrays the mental state of the character including the dilemma she/he is having. The internal conflict is purely psychological, and it may be understood as; a person versus self.

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

e. Themes:

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

f. Song, chorus, and dialogue:

Song and chorus are important elements of drama because they help in creating a psychological impact on the audience. Song and chorus have always been a part of the dramatic performances in England. Chorus refers to singing by a group of people. Songs and chorus are integral constituents of drama because they are performed in sync with the scene of a play. Song

and choruses add emphasis to the scene being depicted. Often, the chorus would also include dancing by the group singing the song. Song and chorus have played a contributory role in dramas, especially that of William Shakespeare.

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

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

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

Some plays have a long speech delivered by a character in a scene or act. Such an instance of one-way speech is called a monologue. A monologue is not a play in itself but is a part of a scene or an act in which only one character speaks. The monologue is presented as a speech that one character speaks to other characters. In contrast, a soliloquy is what an actor says to himself/herself. Monologue and soliloquy exhibit the state of mind of the character who delivers it. Occasionally, dramatic scenes have instances of 'aside', that are short utterances made by a character, that the audience can hear; but other characters cannot hear. The instances of aside in a dramatic performance are contemplative and suggestive. Asides have the potential to engage the audience in the narrative and may be used to induce humorous effects on them.

1.2.3 Classification of Drama:

Drama as performance and as a genre of literature is of several types depending upon how a researcher wants to analyse it. Drama can be classified based on its effect on the audience, size, age/time in which it was written, style/motive, content, etc.

Classification of drama

Purpose/Effect on audience

Comedy, Tragedy, Tragi-comedy

Era/Age

Elizabethan drama, Jacobean drama, Restoration drama, Victorian drama, Modern drama

Style/Motive

Mystery play, Miracle play, Morality play, Absurd play, Masque

Length/no. of acts

One-act play, Three-act play, Five-act play, Episodic play, Drama cycles,

Technological platform

Radio play, TV drama, Stage play, Closet drama

Size of the play:

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

Comedy:

One of the most widely available and easily identifiable sub-genres of drama is comedy. It developed in Greece and was immensely popular in England too. The purpose of a comedy is to make the audience laugh. Comedy is marked by the presence of content that the audience finds hilarious. The hilarious content may come in the form of dialogues or situations arising in the play. Comedy performances usually have happy endings. Comedy comprises a diverse range of plays, including farce, romantic comedy, comedy of manners, comedy of humours, tendency comedy, festive comedy etc. Some comic plays that have enriched the English literature are as follows: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare; *Volpone* and *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Jonson; and *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde.

Tragedy:

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

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

Tragicomic dramas:

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

History plays:

History plays, also known as chronicle plays, are dramatic works based on persons and events of historical significance. John Heminges and Henry Condell edited perhaps the first

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

Problem plays:

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

Masque:

Masque is a distinct sub-genre of drama in which actors use masks. Masque used to be very lively and dramatic as the actors would represent mythological figures disguised in masks. A masque performance would occur in courts and involve actors in specially designed costumes besides immense singing and dancing. Such performances were popular during the Elizabethan Age as well as the Jacobean Age. *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare has masque performances in it.

Closet drama:

The term closet drama refers to a distinct form of drama that is written for reading. The drama of this category is not intended for production and stage performances. This form gained a lot of popularity when theatres were banned in England from 1642 AD to 1660 AD and play reading replaced theatre-going for all who loved drama. Since non-stage ability is a defining characteristic of closet drama, all forms of drama could be written with slight adjustments in the writing style and to make audience through readership. Closet drama saved the money; required for paying the actors for performance and rent of theatres. The theme of the dramas written in this category varied from serious to non-serious ones. Lord Byron and P. B. Shelley, well-known

for their poetic excellence, also produced closet drama. A social advantage of this form of drama writing was that the women writers of England who remained out of public performances could also engage in drama writing. Margaret Lucas Cavendish emerged as a highly successful playwright. A political advantage of writing closet drama was that it could deal with sensitive issues and still escape the scrutiny and censorship that were applicable to stage performances.

Radio and television plays:

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

Check your Progress

1. What was the main purpose of closet drama?

_____

2. What does the term 'theme' refer?

_____

1.3 Learning Outcomes

This Unit introduced you to the genre of drama; in general and English drama in particular. It also exposed how drama/play as a form of literature reveals the socio-political, cultural, and historical information about the place where it is written or performed. This unit acquainted the readers with the dramatic traditions that have prevailed in England; and explained various conceptual terminologies important to understand drama. The readers have read and

understood the essential elements of drama; plot, scene, characters, conflicts, themes etc. They have also learnt about the classification of drama with particular reference to; English literature. This unit provided the readers with some introductory ideas about British drama. The readers are now ready to understand and appreciate the place of drama in British literature.

1.4 Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protagonist: The leading or main character in a drama.

Soliloquy: A form of speech or monologue in which the character speaks his thoughts aloud there by showing his/her disturbed state of mind.

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

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

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

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The play *Murder in the Cathedral* was written by _____.

    (a) Ben Jonson

    (b) T. S. Eliot

    (c) William Shakespeare

    (d) Henrik Ibsen

2. The credit of writing the play, *Doctor Faustus* goes to _____.

    (a) William Shakespeare

    (b) G. B. Shaw

    (c) Ben Jonson

    (d) Christopher Marlowe

3. A typical Elizabethan drama has _____.

    (a) Five acts

    (b) Three acts

    (c) One act

    (d) Seven acts

4. The play *Every Man in His Humour* is written by _____.

(a) **Ben Jonson**

(b) T. S. Elliot

(c) William Shakespeare

(d) Harold Pinter

5. Arms *and the Man* is written by _____.

(a) Henrik Ibsen

(b) G. B. Shaw

(c) Charles Dickens

(d) Samuel Beckett

Fill in the blanks:

1. A Midsummer Night's Dream is an example of Shakespearean ……..

2. Restoration drama is named so because …… took the reign of England and monarchy was restored there.

3. Tragicomedy is a mixture of ……. and comedy.

True/False:

1. A closet drama was primarily meant for performance.

2. The dramatic works of William Shakespeare belong to the Elizabethan Age.

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the plot and distinguish between simple plot and complex plot.

2. Distinguish between act and scene as components of drama.

3. Distinguish between internal conflict and external conflict.

4. Distinguish between comedy and tragedy as subgenres of drama.

5. Distinguish between Elizabethan drama and Jacobean drama.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write an essay on dramatic traditions in English literature.

2. Discuss the essential elements of drama.

3. Discuss the classification of British drama with examples.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams, M. H. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms (7th Edition)*. Boston, Mass: Thomson Wadsworth.
2. Banham, Martin (ed.). 1998. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre. London*: Cambridge University Press.
3. Carter, Ronald and John McRae. 1997. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. London: Routledge.
4. Drabble, Margaret (ed.). 2000. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: OUP.
5. Nicoll, Allardyce. 1925. *British Drama*. London: George G. Harrap.

Unit - 2: A Brief Survey of British Drama

Structure

2.0 Introduction
2.1 Objectives
2.2 A Brief History of British Drama
- **2.2.1** Liturgical Plays
- **2.2.2** Mystery and Miracle Plays
- **2.2.3** Morality Plays
- **2.2.4** Interludes
- **2.2.5** Tragedy and Comedy Plays
- **2.2.6** Modern Drama

2.3 Learning Outcomes
2.4 Glossary
2.5 Sample Questions
2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

2.0 Introduction

The beginning of drama in every nation is deeply related to the way religion is practised in that nation. The role and connection of drama go side by side as these are inseparable things. It is not only the case with British drama, but with drama all over the world. If we look at the ancient forms of drama enacted by Romans and Greeks, we will find that they too were related to the religious affairs and ceremonies of that time. The importance of religion resulted in the creation of dramatic form. As most of the Bible was originally written in Hebrew hence; the masses were unable to have any insight into it. To fill that gap and to make it accessible to the Common man, new ways and means were devised to acquaint them with the teachings of their religious books. For that purpose, they devised a method of enacting stories from the Bible before the viewers termed as; drama, in which characters performed and acted out the stories.

When drama originated in Britain or English is not known for sure. However, it is deemed that it made its way into England when Norman Conquest took place in 1066. Some of the view that Norman brought it while few others think that Romans brought drama into

England. The very word drama is derived from Greek and means “action,” “to do,” or “to act. In the word of William J. Long, drama can be; “an old story told in the eye; a story put into the action by living performers. As drama had a distinctive connection with religion it did not fully flourish until the 10th century, when the Church itself began to utilize drama for different religious purposes and rituals. The exact reason for dramatic incorporation into religious norms is unknown; nonetheless, it gave an in- depth comprehension and developed the interest of its believers in religion and its rituals.

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

Then from liturgical drama, it turned towards other forms of dramatic art such as Miracle and Mystery plays. In France, Mystery plays represent what was derived from the scriptures, and Miracle plays gave insight into the life events of saints. However, in England, there was no such distinction. Even Miracle plays were meant to highlight both: the scriptures and the life of saints. It is also significant to note that the earliest of the Miracle play known to us was “*Ludus Santa de Katherina*”. The writer of this play is unknown; however, a French school instructor, Geoffrey, performed it. Since their origin, Miracle plays have captivated the attention of the masses and attained their fame to a considerable length. These originated from the church, began to make their way into the courts and courtyards. Then it happened that these plays started to interfere with the rituals of the church and thus banned in churches. So, by the 13th Century Miracle plays were entirely shifted outside the church and religious places.

When plays were entirely moved outside the churches, the production and norms of the plays were decided by men other than the clergy. So, there were certain amendments and modifications, which perhaps marked the beginning of British drama. Since the language of the church was Latin, so the plays were performed in the Latin language. In the 14th and 15th centuries, these plays used local languages instead of Latin, hence becoming more accessible to the people. The actors were also taken from the local community, replacing the clergymen; who used to act in the plays. They were no longer confined to a particular place and indebted to specific themes and versions. The dramas acted on moving platforms were termed; "pageants" and the acting area of those plays were called 'pletea.' The stage where these were performed was distinguished into three sections-hell, earth, and heaven. The left side of the stage was for hell, the centre for the earth; and on the right side was heaven. The costumes of the characters who represented God, angels, biblical figures or saints; were that of churchmen, while those who enacted the role of common people wore the garments of the people of that time.

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

The last but the most artistic period of English or British drama was the period which was termed as the "artistic" period. It neither preached religious rituals nor taught the audience any morality, but it showed the people as they were. During that period, English drama was still under the influence of classical plays and their norms. The first comedy of this type was *Ralph Roister Doister,* written by Nicholas Udall in 1556. It was written in a rhyming couplet and divided into scenes and acts. The first tragedy was *Gorboduc,* written by Thomas Sackville and his fellow Thomas Northon in 1562. It was inscribed in blank verse and also divided into acts and scenes. After that, English drama gradually began to make its mark on the literary and

artistic horizon in the form of regular plays and dramas. It developed during the Elizabethan period and reached its present shape and form.

So, it can be concluded that the drama started for religious purposes in the church by the clergymen passed through many phases such as liturgical drama, Miracle and Morality plays, interludes. With the influence of the classical form of drama, it reached its artistic form, which is still in vogue. Initially, the British drama which was under religious dominance, was later transformed into secular plays, and the church was replaced by the marketplace. It was meant to perform and exhibit religious rituals but later got transformed and became a source of entertainment. It was short and conventional but later became diverse, manifold, and multi-layered. At present, it is not limited to just one or two types and themes, the subject matters are also numerous, and dramatic forms too have transformed and have become versatile.

2.1 Objectives

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

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

2.2 A Brief Survey of British Drama

2.2.1 Liturgical Plays:

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

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

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

2.2.2 Mystery and Miracle Plays:

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

Now the play no more remained within the hold of clergymen rather it became a form of entertainment. After the change of venue, the previous place of enactment and performers tried

to get back the hold they had over this form of dramatic art. But in the marketplace, it is not so easy that things remain within the control, and subsequently, all the control of the enactment and subject matter completely shifted from church and clergymen to guilds. Despite all the opposition from religious segments and churches, they continued to flourish this form of art. After church, there were some notable centres for performing art and especially that of dramatic art. The centres which have contributed a great deal in holding such activities were Chester, York, Coventry, Wakefield and Townley.

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

2.2.3 Morality Plays:

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

Such plays were true, real and had an abundance of comic and humorous elements as far as the content was concerned. Here, the author has attained much relevance and significance as

he is the one who has to handle the themes and bring to light the psychological trauma going on among characters in the plays and between good and evil in actuality. Two things gained much priority during the phase of Morality plays; these were the construction of the plot and the art of character depiction. Like other forms of drama, such as comedy and tragedy, Morality plays too have acts and scenes. Some notable series of Morality plays are *Everyman*, *Hyckescorner*, *Mankind*, *The Castell of Perseverance*, *The world and the Child*, *Wyt and Science*, *The Pride of Life* and *The Three Estates*. The role of Morality plays is significant in the development of English drama as it completely freed the play from the clutches of religion and church.

2.2.4 Interludes:

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

2.2.5 Tragedy and Comedy Plays:

The next phase of English drama is that of tragedy and comedy plays, which were greatly under the stimulus of the Renaissance and tragedy was mainly influenced by Seneca. Seneca was a Latin playwright of the Nero era. The theme of revenge and blood was the most fascinating element to which the English tragedian was indebted to him. The first tragedy in English literature, *Gorboduct,* was written on the same line. Even after that, almost all the earliest tragedies were under the indebtedness of Seneca, either in style or theme. A tragedy has subsequent formative elements, such as; plot, characters, thought, diction, spectacle and song. As

this sort of play has an unhappy and tragic ending, the concept of a tragic hero is also an essential factor as far as the development of the plot is concerned.

In addition, the persona of comedy could be traced in both morality and interlude form of plays which is culminated under the classical influence in this phase. This sort of play is meant to provide entertainment and amuse the audience through laughter. Unlike tragedy, where high-class people are involved, here people from humble and low backgrounds are involved. The environment of the comedy is also light and cheerful. It is usually dealt with those plays which are to end happily. Though comedy was meant to correct and reform the conduct of human beings in a light and satirical manner. It has different types such as Classical Comedy, Sentimental Comedy, Romantic Comedy, Comedy of Manners and Comedy of Humours. Satire and irony are the two topmost devices used in comedy to maximise the effect. The first known comedy *Ralph Roister Doister* was written by Nicholas Udall. Apart from this, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* by William Stevenson was also highly popular in his time.

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

2.2.6 Modern Drama:

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

with the problems of life in a realistic manner. The modern drama has developed in line with the tone of a problem play.

These dramatists dealt with the problems such as marriage, law and justice, which were and are the problem of everyday life of common people. They had utilized theatre as a medium to voice out the problems, and to bring about reforms in society. Problem play was yet a new sort of play that had taken drama away from its conventional tones. Modern plays were, in addition, the drama of ideas rather than of action. Dramatists utilized this medium to convey certain ideas to the people and society. The reality of life too is based on the problem of everyday life and ideas. Initially, modern dramatists were realists, and they brought to light ideas, but later on, they shifted their attention from the bitter realities and turned towards the romantic aspect. T.S. Eliot was the one who introduced the poetic form of drama in English literature. The bibliographical drama was yet another trend of drama that was introduced in the modern era of English drama. These made use of historical and autobiographical elements as dramatic techniques.

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

Another popular trend that emerged after World War II; was the drama based on the absurdity of human existence, termed; Theater of the Absurd. It became a trend of the writers of the 1950s and 1960s. To such dramatists and playwrights, human existence is meaningless and without any purpose. To them, the world is beyond human comprehensions man should not bother about it. It will always remain absurd, and we have no choice but to accept it. Samuel Beckett; was the chief pioneer of such school of drama, and *Waiting for Godot* is a masterpiece and true representative of the Absurd School of thought. These writers, however, were not very

comfortable with the term absurd, and they preferred to be called “anti theatre” or new theatre. The dramatists of this trend were much influenced by existentialism. They raised questions about the very existence of man. They deemed language as a meaningless medium of communication. Characters were engaged in meaningless speeches, and illogical plots were frequent among Absurd dramatists. Time, place and no characters; or lack of characters was also common among them. They had, however, a fondness for abstract values of life.

Modern English drama is characterized; by its unique handling of subject matters related to the realities of life. It also has an illustrious tone for them as far as the utilization of simile, metaphor, symbolism, and imagery are concerned. Characters of modern drama are common people. Usually, it centres around the common social issues of the common people. It further is illuminated with the utilization of natural and real dialogues of the characters. Themes usually revolve around politics, the impact of war, women’s rights, depression, anxiety, mental health, race, class discrimination etc. The language of this sort of drama is very natural and realistic. Modern dramatists have dealt with the psychological and inner descriptions of characters so well that it captures the attention of their audience. The flow of the dialogues and interaction among the characters is also natural and realistic. Last but not; least, there are numerous trends that are key as far as modern drama is concerned. These include social drama, poetic drama, angry drama, Absurd play and menace plays. Henrik Ibsen; is deemed to be the father of modern drama.

2.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- clearly mark the origin of drama in general and British drama in particular.
- understand the different phases through which British drama has gone through to reach its current form.
- distinguish between liturgical, Morality, Mystery, interlude, and artistic form of drama.
- designate the role of church and clergymen in the initial enrichment of dramatic form and how later on, the focus of attention in both form and shape changes.

2.4 Glossary

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

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

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

Elizabethan Era: It is usually referred, to as a period of literary works done in England between 1562 to 1642. Marlowe and Shakespeare are chief dramatists of this notable era.

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

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

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

Tragedy: It is related to the type of play or drama that is the opposite of comedy. Here tragic events and incidents are presented which, culminating in a tragic end and the collapse of the major character.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The earliest form of drama was written in Roman and Greek but was staged first in England.

(a) Yes

(b) No

2. The first comedy of British drama was written by Ralph Roister; under classical influence.

(a) Yes

(b) No

3. The first tragedy of British drama was written in the year 1560 by John Lyly.

(a) Yes

(b) No

4. The liturgical form of British drama was mainly under the influence of the church; and religious in theme.

(a) Yes

(b) No

5. Seneca was a Latin playwright of the Nero era who greatly influenced the concept of tragedy in English drama.

(a) Yes

(b) No

6. The earliest dramas of British were staged at the marketplace where clergymen were the performers.

(a) Yes

(b) No

7. History plays set the tone for the nourishment of the Renaissance for the English or British drama.

(a) Yes

(b) No

8. The first phase of British drama in England was the Morality and Interlude form of plays.

(a) Yes

(b) No

9. The first tragedy of British drama was written by; Thomas Sackville and his fellow Thomas Norton.

(a) Yes

(b) No

10. Morality Plays were meant to create harmony between two opposite facets of vice and virtue.

(a) Yes

(b) No

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

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

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

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

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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

Unit - 3: University Wits

Structure

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- **3.2.1** Christopher Marlowe
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- **3.2.4** Robert Greene and Thomas Nash
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- **3.2.6** Contribution and Role of the University Wits

3.3 Learning Outcomes
3.4 Glossary
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3.0 Introduction

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

These young writers who are in the group of University Wits were acquainted with each other to some extent. One of the most common features among them was that most of these had led an irregular and stormy life which was full of ups and downs. But due to many similar features in their works, they were branded as a group that is widely termed as University Wits. It is noted through the study of their artistic works that there are numerous features which were

common among them. First of all, they have a liking for heroic themes which were centred around the lives of great figures. As their themes were heroic in nature so, they treated them in a marvellous way. In their works, we can trace variety, diversity, fabulous descriptions, lofty speeches, incidents that involve violent acts and are full of emotional scenes.

Secondly, the style of their narration is also heroic, which is in line with the loftiness of their themes. That is why it is noted that they were able to create strong and impactful lines. The most eloquent among them was Christopher Marlowe. He was well versed and is known for his use of blank verse. Thirdly, the themes of these scholars were usually tragic in nature. It is also a very common facet in their works; especially those composed by them in the early phase of their artistic career lacked humorous and comic situations. Even when they tried to incorporate humour and comic elements, it seemed immature and out of place in comparison to other texts. Given below is the list of these scholars who are deemed as the University Wits.

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

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

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

character, that is why his plays are termed as; one-man-show. But, to estimate his true worth, we have to put aside these ideas and have to look at his poetic vision and craftsmanship. He was a lyrical and romantic who had a quest for beauty and love. Artistically his plays are highly poetical. His verse is famous for its energizing burn, matchless diction, sensuous enrichment and its responsiveness towards the varying mood and tones. He is known as; the creator of "mighty lines", a term given by Ben Jonson. His great plays include; *The Jew of Malta*, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II*, *Tamburlaine* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

University Wits contributed a great deal as far as the nourishment of English drama is concerned. As duly acknowledged by Allardyce Nicoll, "they laid a sure basis for the English theatre." Through, their greatness in maintaining the classical norms along with their several innovations; they not only left an everlasting impression on English drama in a very short span of time; but also fanned the imagination of the greatest dramatist of all times, William Shakespeare, in both form and theme. It is due to their contribution that enabled Shakespeare, "a viable and fitting medium for the expression of his genius." Another key feature concerning the contribution of University Wits is that they retained classical traditions of drama but never fell prey to these norms and traditions. They maintained their freedom and individuality even at the risk of violating fundamental principles, such as "the concept of three unities."

The University Wits didn't just copy what Roman and Greeks had inscribed but rather; introduced a new form termed as 'Romantic Drama', which was later adopted and perfected by Shakespeare. Few of these University Wits also contributed to the growth of romantic comedy. The chief among them are John Lyly, George Peele and Robert Greene. While the rest of the University Wits, like Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd, were interested in romantic tragedy. Apart from these, they also focused on reformation and modification of dramatic diction. The utterances of the characters; they introduced were plaintive and responsive in all respects. The diction and tone that is used by; Lyly are highly sophisticated, that of Peele enriched with rare sweetness, Greene utilized openness and geniality, Kyd introduced exaggerative bombast, and Marlowe utilized virtuosic brilliance as far as the use of language is concerned.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- have a glimpse of the life events of the scholars of University Wits
- gain insight into the artistic skills of these dramatists
- explain the key features of the University Wits, which are common among them.
- throw insight into literary and dramatic traits of each of these writers collectively and individually.
- distinguish the role of University Wits in the growth of English drama.
- examine the various innovations; that these scholars bring about in the form and style of drama.

3.2 University Wits

3.2.1 Christopher Marlowe:

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.2 Thomas Kyd:

There is a dearth of information as far as the life events and literary works of Thomas Kyd are concerned. It is reported that he was born in 1558 in London. He was the son of Francis and Anna Kyd. He attended Merchant Taylor's school, where he was in the same period as

Edmund Spenser, the author of the famous *The Faerie Queene*. After leaving school, he used to be the roommate of an illustrious dramatist Christopher Marlowe. Due to this very intimacy, Kyd was arrested due to the charge that was levied against Marlowe, deeming him guilty. But when it was known that it was Marlowe; and not Kyd, then he was released though it is reported that he was tortured during imprisonment and was not able to recover completely from it, and later died in 1594, at the age of 35.

Although very little of his literary work has survived and is known to the world, we can have the idea that Thomas Kyd was an influential writer of his time; as Ben Jonson called him; the "famous Kyd", and Francis Meres called him as "our best for tragedy." It is quoted that in 1589 he wrote his *Ur-Hamlet,* which is the lost and unknown version; on which Shakespeare's *Hamlet;* is based. For the revenge theme, Shakespeare was greatly indebted to Kyd, and he seemed to be very much impressed and fascinated by his style and thematic handling. In addition, his verse is extremely powerful and filled with emotions, which is also the reason behind his success as a dramatist. In 1589 he wrote his masterpiece, *The Spanish Tragedy,* the tale of family revenge and corruption found in the court. It was published in 1592 and went on for nine editions.

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

Lorenzo: Sister, what means this melancholy walk?
Bel-Imperia: That for a while I wish no company.
Lorenzo: But here is a prince is come to visit you.
Bel-Imperia: That argues that he lives in liberty.
Balthazar: No, Madam, but in pleasing servitude.
Bel-Imperia: Your prison then be like your conceit.
Balthazar: Ay, my conceit my freedom is enthralled.

Bel- Imperia: Then with conceit enlarge yourself again.

3.2.3 John Lyly:

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

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

3.2.4 Robert Greene and Thomas Nash:

The writing of Robert Greene is full of wit, imaginative facet and humour which highlighted his role as a key dramatist as far as University Wits are concerned. As far as his style is concerned, it is not of the highest quality, but his sense of humour is matchless. In addition, his method is less strict when we compare it with that of other tragedians. However, he lacks in crafting fabulous characters in his works. Robert Greene has written more and in a reckless manner. His role is very much immense as far as his contribution to English drama is concerned. He enacted *The Arraignment of Paris*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward, the First*, *The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba* and *The Old Wives' Tales*.

Thomas Nash, another scholar of the group, is a journalist by birth. He has participated in political affairs rather actively. The tone of his writing is satirical. His writing, *Unfortunate Traveller*: *or The Life of Jack Wilton,* has contributed significantly as far as the nourishment of English novels is concerned. But as far as his dramatic art and writing are concerned, that is almost inconsiderable. He is more influential for his fiction as compared to his dramatic works.

3.2.5 George Peele and Thomas Lodge:

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

3.2.6 Contribution and Role of the University Wits:

They are the ones who laid the foundation of the genre of English drama. Before them, the form and condition of English drama were chaotic. It had a form, but no enthusiasm and thrill in it, before The University Wits. It was not in proper form, and it was of ill structure. The dramatists of The University Wits gave it not only the form and structure but also the thrill and excitement required for it to be a popular form. They made it in line with the classical conception of drama. They added flavour, poetry, and thrill to it. The group of dramatists centred around Christopher Marlowe. These were dramatists as well as actors. They were well familiar with the

stage and audience; and hence, were quite well versed with what was the need and craze of the audience. All of them had the same unified material through which they derived their stories and characters. Even common and similar names of characters; can be found in their plays. They added romance to their plays which was the true representative feature of the spirit of the renaissance.

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

Through *The Spanish Tragedy*, Thomas Kyd brought the scenes of bloodshed and violence to the stage. The concept of delayed revenge; was also introduced by him. Marlowe introduced Blank Verse, or what is known as mighty lines, with great perfection and authority. His poetic flair is also admirable. The art of character portrayal among the University Wits was also marvellous. Their characters were not mere puppets; they had passion, thrill and fire. Marlowe's characters were lifelike, full of vigour and force. They were forceful and full of passion and desires, as the character of Dr Faustus was. Besides being great contributors to the development of English drama the University wits played an important role in the growth of English prose. Lyly was well known for his plays written in prose style, and he was best known for romantic prose. His prose play, *Euphues,* is best known for its style which is known as the Euphuistic style in the English language. Overall, they adopted a style that was heroic in nature; to match the loftiness of their themes and to create mighty lines.

They were more prone toward tragic themes and subject matters; there was a lack of humour and humorous elements in their plays. Their plays had variety, splendour and grandeur

as far as description and incidents were concerned. They were meant to craft sound and powerful lines that might remain alive forever. The University Wits had due regard for classical plays, and they had retained their forms, but they had their own way of handling the form and subject matters. They enjoyed ample freedom as far as the concept of unities in the classical tragedy was concerned. They were committed not to just presenting before the audience the copy of what Latin and Greek tragedies were rather, they introduced a sort of romantic plays which, were later adopted and perfected by William Shakespeare. They also reformed the language of drama, which was more poetic, powerful, and fully in line with the impact of the dramas. Lyly had adopted the concept of comedy; Peele gave it unusual sweetness, and Christopher Marlowe introduced the most poetic version of language known as mighty lines.

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

They had revolutionized the concept of drama as they had modified the form and structure of the English drama. They made this genre popular amongst the audience as they were dramatists as well as actors who knew well the psychology of the audience. Especially Christopher Marlowe was the first dramatist who divided dramas into scenes and acts which brought about structural coherence. Apart from the collective contribution and impact, each of these dramatists had their impact and contribution. Thomas Kyd was well known for his well-crafted plot and powerful dialogues. His revengeful plots were later adopted by Shakespeare. Robert Greene was illustrious for his romantic settings and liberal utilization of

blank verse. John Lyly was well known for his humour, romance, and prose style. He mingled romance and humour in his dramas. George Peele was famous for his humorous, satirical, and romantic handling. Marlowe was the greatest among the University Wits who introduced ambitions instead of revenge in his drama. His concept of tragic heroes and tragic flaws was also matchless. The most notable contribution of Marlowe was the perfection of mighty lines or blank verse.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know the names of the scholars who are included in University Wits
- remember the life events, literary works, and artistic styles of the scholars of University Wits
- Understand the contribution of the University Wits to the development of English drama.

3.4 Glossary

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

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

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

Elizabethan drama: It is usually referred to as drama; that was written in England between the years 1562 to 1642. Marlowe and Shakespeare are chief dramatists of this notable era.

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

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

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

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The University Wits were closely associated with theatre.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
2. The University Wits wrote in the closing years of the 16th century.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
3. They are termed as University Wits because they attended Harvard University.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
4. Nicoll articulated "the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans" about John Lyly.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
5. Marlowe is known for his mighty lines while John Lyly is for his Euphuism.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
6. Kyd is deemed to be the father of English drama and also the father of Blank verse.
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
7. Marlowe's plays were poorly formed and lacked diversity of characterization, rather these are termed as a one-man show.
   (a) Yes

(b) No

8. Thomas Kyd wrote a marvellous masterpiece, *The Spanish Tragedy,* about which Nicoll articulated as "a Senecan play adapted to popular requirements."

(a) Yes

(b) No

9. George Peele wrote *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* perfected with the utilization of blank verse.

(a) Yes

(b) No

10. Shakespeare was greatly indebted for themes and the use of the matchless style of John Lyly.

(a) Yes

(b) No

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How is Marlowe "the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans"? Illustrate your answers with arguments.

2. Discuss Euphemism and the concept of Mighty Lines?

3. Which of the University Wits impressed Shakespeare due to his theme of revenge? And how?

4. Discuss the concept of heroic themes and loftiness of style in the work of University Wits.

5. Why did Nicoll comment about Thomas Lodge as "the least of the University Wits, for he gave practically nothing to the theatre."

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the role of University Wits; in the development and enhancement of English drama. How have they perfected the dramatic art during the closing years of the 16th century?

2. Why is Christopher Marlowe called "the father of English drama and blank verse"?

3. What are the chief traits that are common to all the scholars of University Wits with regard to their style and art of dramatization?

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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

Unit - 4: Life and Works of William Shakespeare

Structure

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Objectives
4.2 Life and Works of William Shakespeare
  4.2.1 William Shakespeare: A Brief Biography
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4.0 Introduction

> "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts"
>
> - William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

The most influential and world-famous English dramatist, actor, and poet William Shakespeare, who is also known as the Bard of Avon or 'the Bard', was born to an English family of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden in Stratford-upon-Avon on 26th April 1564. His writing is loaded with comedy, tragedy, philosophy, and most importantly diverse hues of human nature and behaviour. Some of the famous quotes from his works are known and applicable to all ages, such as "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 5), "To be, or not to be: that is the question" (*Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1), "More in sorrow than in anger", "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, But in battalions" (*Hamlet*) and "I am no orator, as Brutus is, But (as you know me all) a plain blunt

man. I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech to stir men's blood" (*Julius Caesar*). Such quotes also demonstrate philosophical depth in his writing. Jane Armstrong's book, *Arden Dictionary of Shakespeare Quotations* (1999), scrupulously theme-wise compiled and documented quotations of Shakespeare.

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

4.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce William Shakespeare, one of the best and most notable English writers of all times, who has been translated into almost all major languages and taught and prescribed in almost all languages and countries in the world
- provide a brief biographical detail of the writer; and his career as a playwright and poet
- give a bird's eye view of his works, their characteristics, and his style of writing; to the beginner of English literature
- introduce the creativity and imaginative power of Shakespeare, and his thematic and stylistic engagement as a writer through his works

4.2 Life and Works of William Shakespeare

4.2.1 William Shakespeare: A Brief Biography

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

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

and playwright amidst the criticism from his rival actors, playwrights, and critics. Robert Green used to make fun of and criticize Shakespeare because he was trying to overtake the University-educated playwrights, the University wits. Murray Roston notes, "By 1592, the year of Greene's attack, he must already have been established in London as a rising actor and playwright, particularly as Greene parodied there a line taken from one of his early plays, which readers, it was assumed, would easily recognize. Greene's attack was professional, not personal, and it is significant that in an age of venomous backbiting and professional jealousies, not a single comment has been preserved from that era which was aimed maliciously at Shakespeare as a man" (178).

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

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear,
to dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones"

4.2.2 The Historical Background:

William Shakespeare belongs to the Elizabethan Age (1558 - 1603), which is also known as the golden/renaissance age in English history because of the most powerful and vibrant reign of Queen Elizabeth I, discoveries, innovations, and revival of the classics. This period was also marked; by industrial advancements, empirical superiority, intellectual thinking, adventures and glory, nationalism, education, the revival of Greek and other classical literature, course richness, and the making of distinct English culture and literature. The English drama took a fresh breath before the arrival of Shakespeare on the stage through "university wits"; such as, "Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Nashe, and Thomas Lodge; the generation educated at Oxford and Cambridge universities, who used their poetry to make theatre breathe new life into classical models, and brought a new audience to the issues and conflicts which the stage could dramatize" (Carter, Ronald, and McRae, John 63). The plays of the 1550s and 1660s were having distinct categories of comedy and tragedy inspired and influenced by Latin sources. The comedies are borrowed and designed from the works of Terence and Plautus, whereas the tragedies; are "largely from Seneca, with echoes from Greek antecedents in both cases. The medieval miracle and mystery play, and the kind of court 'interludes' played for the monarch, also contributed to the development of Renaissance drama. Its broad humour, its use of ballad, poetry, dance, and music, and its tendency towards allegory and symbolism flow from this native English source. Thus, although drama went through rapid changes in the period, its historical credentials were rich and varied as indeed were its range and impact. It was an age when the need for a social demonstration of English nationalism and Protestantism climaxed in the public arena of a diverse and energetic theatre. This was the golden age of English drama" (Carter et al 63).

4.2.3 Shakespeare's Plays:

Shakespeare not only helps us to understand the 16th Century Elizabethan English society (1558-1603) but also the general human nature and behaviour, which makes the reading of Shakespeare relevant even in contemporary times. If one looks at the earliest works of Shakespeare, they are merely rooted in English history and dynasties. It was a time when England started to reign in all corners of the world; the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) marked the superiority of the English race over others. Shakespeare has also written some works

based on Roman history, mostly documented in Plutarch's *Lives,* such as; *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus* (1605-1608), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607). His English history plays borrowed from Holinshed's Chronicles (*Macbeth, King Lear, and Cymbeline*). Shakespeare, like other writers of this time, started glorifying the English tradition, culture, history, and manners. He tried "to trace the human elements behind this conquest of power" (Carter et al.82). Apart from history, most Shakespearian plays like *Henry VI* (1589-92), *Richard II* (1595)*, Henry V* (1599), etc. depict the hero-worshipping of man – as a hero, king, and finest creation. In *Hamlet*, a monologue of Prince Hamlet also portrays the same theme of man, "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving; how express and admirable! In action; how like an angel, in apprehension; how like a god!" Hero worship and the idealization of man; were some of the main characteristics of the renaissance age. Another soliloquy in *Hamlet* where Shakespeare tries to define a man,

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

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

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

> Time and again, aspects of human vulnerability are exposed, examined, and exploited for their theatrical possibilities. Love in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the same subject, in a comic vein, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*; the theme of revenge and family duty in

> *Hamlet*; jealousy in *Othello*; sexual corruption and the bounds of justice in *Measure for Measure*; misanthropy, or rejection of the world, in *Timon of Athens*; family rejection and madness in *King Lear*; the power of money and the vulnerability of the minority in *The Merchant of Venice*; the healing effects of the passage of time, and hope in the new generation, in the late plays – with a final return to historical pageantry in *Henry VIII*, the monarch with whose Reformation it all began. (83).

The language of his plays was the language of common people. Shakespearean English was free from Latinized Medieval English. He used modern English by distancing it from medieval English. "The theatre permitted him to create characters who embody the themes directly, and who speak to the audience in a language that is recognizably the same as they speak. From kings to ordinary soldiers; from young lovers to old bawds, Shakespeare's characters speak modern English" (Cater et al. 83).

4.2.4 The First Folio (1623):

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

4.2.5 Categories of Plays:

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

Tragedies	**Comedies**	**Histories**
Antony and Cleopatra	*All's Well That Ends Well*	*Henry IV, Part 1*
Coriolanus	*As You Like It*	*Henry IV, Part 2*
Hamlet	*Cardenio--A lost play.*	*Henry V*
Julius Caesar	*The Comedy of Errors*	*Henry VI, Part 1*
King Lear	*Cymbeline*	*Henry VI, Part 2*
Macbeth	*Love's Labor's Lost*	*Henry VI, Part 3*
Othello	*Love's Labor's Won--A lost play*	*Henry VIII*
Romeo and Juliet	*Measure for Measure*	*King John*
Timon of Athens	*The Merchant of Venice*	*Richard II*
Titus Andronicus	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*	*Richard III*
	A Midsummer Night's Dream	
	Much Ado About Nothing	
	Pericles	
	The Taming of the Shrew	
	The Tempest	
	Troilus and Cressida	
	Twelfth Night	
	The Two Gentlemen of Verona	
	The Two Noble Kinsmen	
	The Winter's Tale	

The moment one talks of Shakespeare, the four main tragedies, *Hamlet, King Lear, Othello*, and *Macbeth,* appear to our mind. *Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra,* and *Coriolanus;* were also included in this category of tragedy. Some other plays are also called tragedies because of the tragic elements in those plays. These tragedies have some elements of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy. As Aristotle mentions in his *Poetics,* "A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having

magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" (12). Shakespeare's tragedies have a tragic hero who suffers from a tragic flaw or *hamartia*, supernatural elements, greed, fate/fortune, revenge, etc.

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

Some scholars of Shakespeare did not find this categorization adequate thus, they further divided these plays into; problem plays, tragicomedy plays, romance plays, lost plays, etc. The romance plays of Shakespeare first seems to appear in the work of Edward Dowden (*Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* 1875), wherein; he used the term "romances" in Shakespeare's works such as *Princes, Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest.* These plays also include; tragic and comic elements, along with; courtly and pastoral scenes. Some scholars try to distinguish between; "romance plays" and "tragicomedy plays" by highlighting only tragic and comedy elements – the plays which are neither tragedy nor comedy, such as *Princes, Prince of Tyre. Cymbeline,* and *The Winter's Tale*.

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

Shakespeare's history plays, as discussed above, borrowed material from Plutarch's *Lives* and Holinshed's *Chronicles.* The role of a female character in his plays; is also performed by the male characters. His plays are coloured with Elizabethan masculinity and patriarchal dominance. In her *Gender on Shakespeare's Stage: A Brief History,* Lucas Garcia observes that:

> The tradition of men portraying women on public stages dates back to the theatre of the Ancient Greeks, and is present in several other theatrical traditions from around the world. The reasons for the development of these traditions, which were to endure to various degrees for thousands of years, are intricately connected to how concepts of gender and sex were understood, and specifically the role of women in society. Ancient Greek women, like many women of Shakespeare's England, did not have the right to vote or own property, and were expected to remain at home and rear children. (n.p.)

5.2.6 Poems and Sonnets of William Shakespeare:

Shakespeare was best known for his dramas, but in the early 1600s, with the bubonic plague breaking out in England, many theatres were closed to avoid public gatherings including, the London's Globe Theatre, which was for a long time associated with William Shakespeare. In the wake of this outbreak, the demand for Shakespeare's Sonnets, including his other poems increased, especially *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece,* and *A Lover's Complaint*. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, a short poem. A sonnet is a classical form of English poetry, consisting of fourteen lines, written in an iambic pentameter, mostly with the theme of love. It is like the Urdu *ghazal* form of a poem. It is derived from the Italian word; "sonetto" meaning; 'a little song'. Shakespeare wrote the finest sonnets, which also set an ideal pattern for this form of English poetry.

5.2.7 Types of Sonnets:

- Petrarchan
- Shakespearean

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

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

> The poetic persona who speaks through the sequence is not Shakespeare himself. While many readers of the poems have traced a love triangle between the 'poet' and two figures often called the 'Young Man' and the 'Dark Lady', the Sonnets themselves resist straightforward narrative. The poems seem to play with the reader in this regard, tempting us with hints of the kind of love story that underpinned other popular poetic sequences of the time, or the plot of a Shakespearean comedy. At the same time, the poems constantly frustrate our attempts to trace the exact moment at which the poet loses – or gains – the affection of his lovers, or to map the precise relationship between the two enigmatic figures that so preoccupy his attention. It is also significant that one of the lovers is male; Shakespeare's Sonnets do not give us a predictably heterosexual romance but rather a complex and intricate exploration of gender and sexuality that encourages ambiguity rather than resolution[1]. [n.p.]

Here are two sonnets of Shakespeare for your reference:

Sonnet 144

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colored ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil,
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.

Sonnet 116

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments, love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

1

And whether that my angel be turned fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell:
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out".

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved".

4.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the life and works of one of the best English playwrights and poets (sonneteer); William Shakespeare. You should have also gained insight into the historical background of the political, cultural and literary life of 16th Century England and the emergence of Shakespeare and his writing. Further, you should have become familiar with his writing style, poetry, sonnets, and plays.

4.4 Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Shakespeare's Roman plays are based on _____.
2. Sonnet is a poetic form which derives its meaning from the Italian word ____ which means; "little song".
3. Shakespeare's English history plays borrowed its ingredients from _____*?*.
4. Which of the following great dramatist is not a university wit?
    (a) Christopher Marlowe
    (b) William Shakespeare
    (c) Thomas Kyd
    (d) Robert Green.
5. How many sonnets did Shakespeare write?
6. Whom did Shakespeare address his sonnets?
7. Which of Aristotle's works defines the theory of tragedy?
8. What is the rhyme scheme of Petrarch's sonnets?

9. When was *The First Folio* published?

10. Which of his contemporary dramatists criticized Shakespeare?

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

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

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

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

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Carter, Ronald and John Mcrae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (Third Edition). Routledge. 2017.
2. Craig W. *William Shakespeare - Complete Works*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.1966.
3. Roston, Murray. *Sixteenth Century English Literature* Macmillan History Of Literature, Macmillan. 1982.
4. Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* Oxford. Clarendon.
5. Smith, Emma. *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
6. Vickers, Brian *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage* Volume 1. Routledge, 1996.

Unit - 5: Characteristic Features of Shakespearean Romantic Comedy

Structure

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Objectives
5.2 Characteristic Features of Shakespearean Romantic Comedy
- **5.2.1** Mistaken Identity/Misconceptions
- **5.2.2** Logic against Emotion
- **5.2.3** Elements of Fantasy
- **5.2.4** Utopian Setting
- **5.2.5** Broken heart and Reconciliation
- **5.2.6** Happy Endings
- **5.2.7** Categories
- **5.2.8** Samuel Johnson's Critique William Shakespeare's Violation of Unities

5.3 Learning Outcomes
5.4 Glossary
5.5 Sample Questions
5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

5.0 Introduction

In the beginning, William Shakespeare's comedies; followed the classical theme, but after a certain period turned out to be filled with emotion, humour, and fancy. *The Merchant of Venice;* can be categorized into this category. On the one hand, its theme has the maturity of Classical comedies; on the other, it lingers towards the theme of humour and wit, hence romantic. The play belongs to the middle period of Shakespeare's genius. It is assumed; that Shakespeare has used every ounce of wisdom to create a genius play like, *The Merchant of Venice*. This play blends Shakespeare's experience as a philosophical poet and writer with his acute sense of making his work appealing to the young audience. Thereby, there is a balance between an elevation of thought and expression.

Romance as a concept belonged to an old tradition, and romance ideas were quite popular; around that time. There are indeed many differences between classical comedies and

Romantic comedies. The classical tradition remained strict when presenting characters with powerful force and the presentations were realistic, lot spiritual, and highly critical. Contrary to that in Romantic comedies, Shakespeare added plenty of wit with a significant appeal to emotion rather than entirely relying on the intellect. As Meredith quoted, Shakespearean plays are; “thunders of laughter clearing the air and heart.” Thereby, Shakespearean comedies rely on emotions to win the audience's sympathy with the characters' sorrows and happiness.

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

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

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

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

5.2 Characteristic Features of Shakespearean Romantic Comedy

The common features of a Shakespearean Romantic Comedy are as follows:

5.2.1 Mistaken Identity/Misconceptions:

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

5.2.2 Logic against Emotion:

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

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

5.2.3 Elements of Fantasy:

Shakespearean comedies show the pettiness of humankind in the hands of the supernatural, the great game. Puck and Oberon, these two characters, decide the fate of the rest

of the characters in the play called *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* through magic and mischief. No matter what, Shakespeare is still famous today because he shows the pettiness of human lives under the great game of fate. Humans are insecure, unsure of the improbabilities of life, and there is specific knowledge, that is, beyond human comprehension. Thereby, Shakespearean works excel at convincing the magical elements; as a necessary tool to emphasize humankind's fragility before fate. There is a popular way of having a happy ending in comedies. If one observes minutely, the audience will find the magic's role in making this happiness permanent at the end of his wits.

5.2.4 Utopian Setting:

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

5.2.5 Broken heart and Reconciliation:

Love is the central theme of a Shakespearean play. He deliberately puts scenes of separation to make the background of reconciliation more interesting. Although there are uncertainties and a series of misunderstandings and mishaps, with the touch of magic or cross-dressing everything gets settled at the end of each play. For example, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick and Beatrice hate each other; to a level that a union between them seems almost impossible. Both the characters initially remain disillusioned with broken hearts from their previous courtships and are unwilling to initiate a new relationship. However, in the end, they not only fall in love but end up getting married. Benedick and Beatrice’s complicated relationship results from Shakespeare’s genius in depicting human nature from an insightful perspective, and he succeeds in doing so.

5.2.6 Happy Endings:

Last but not least important part of a Shakespearean comedy is a happy ending. Unlike his tragedies, there is, of course, a transformation of a bad fortune to a good one, as the characters start living happily ever after, and the marriage plays a crucial part in bringing this

happiness. Audiences nowadays; might find this attribute unconvincing; to consider a wedding as the harbinger of happiness. However, Shakespearean audiences back in his time hailed this attribute to go back home with happy faces. Ultimately, it also helped the playwright; to finish his play on a happy note. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare's romantic comedies feature *deus ex machina* to bring happiness at the end. It is popularly known as 'god in the machine,' a device that emphasizes God's role in ushering events and gives the final happy touch to the play. Shakespeare uses this technique to resolve misunderstandings and apparent problems that are barring the reunion between two lovers. Technically, it's better to call it a comic denouement.

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

Check your Progress

1. Do you think a happy ending is a necessary feature of Romantic Comedy?

   _____

   _____

2. How does logic play against emotion in Shakespearean plays?

   _____

   _____

3. How does a Shakespearean comedy show the pettiness of humankind in the hands of the supernatural?

   _____

   _____

5.2.7 Categories:

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

- Assimilation of romance and reality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

first to last, that “the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players” (77).

Check your Progress

1. What are the three classical unities?

   _____

2. Which unity was violated by Shakespeare?

   _____

5.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the Unit, students should be able to:

- define Shakespearean romantic comedy
- understand the importance of love at first sight in a Shakespearean comedy
- recognize the various type of incongruities relevant in Shakespearean plays
- know the differences between main-plot and sub-plot
- identify the strong female characters in the Elizabethan age

5.4 Glossary

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

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

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

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

Disguise: Give (someone or oneself) a distinctive impression to conceal one's identity.

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

Utopian: An unrealistic and idealistic state of perfection

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

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

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which play is mentioned as belonging to Shakespeare's middle period?
    (a) Hamlet
    (b) Macbeth
    (c) The Merchant of Venice
    (d) Othello
2. According to Helen Gardner, what is the great emblem of pure comedy?
    (a) Tragedy
    (b) War
    (c) Revenge
    (d) Marriage
3. Which feature plays a pivotal role in Shakespearean comedy?
    (a) Heroic battles
    (b) Mistaken identity and disguise
    (c) Historical events
    (d) Political satire
4. In As You Like It, Rosalind disguises herself as:
    (a) A queen
    (b) A servant
    (c) A man
    (d) A fairy
5. Which characters use magic and mischief to influence events in A Midsummer Night's Dream?

(a) Hamlet and Horatio

(b) Romeo and Mercutio

(c) Benedick and Claudio

(d) Puck and Oberon

6. What is the central theme of Shakespearean romantic comedy?

(a) Revenge

(b)B. Power

(c) Love

(d) Ambition

7. Which pair of characters from Much Ado About Nothing eventually fall in love and marry?

(a) Romeo and Juliet

(b) Orlando and Rosalind

(c) Benedick and Beatrice

(d) Lysander and Hermia

8. What literary device is popularly known as "god in the machine"?

(a) Soliloquy

(b) Irony

(c) Foreshadowing

(d) Deus ex machina

9. Which contemporary of Shakespeare said, “He was not for an age but for all time”?

(a) Samuel Johnson

(b) John Milton

(c) Geoffrey Chaucer

(d) Ben Jonson

10. According to Samuel Johnson, Shakespeare had little regard for which classical unities?

(a) Unity of action only

(b) Unity of time and place

(c) Unity of character

(d) Unity of language

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

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

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

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

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams, M H, and Geoffrey G Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston, Mass: Thomson Wadsworth, 1999. Print.
2. Alexander Leggatt, *English Stage Comedy 1490–1990.* London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
3. *Baldick, Chris, and Chris Baldick. The Oxford Dictionary of Literary terms. Oxford: OUP, 2008. Print.*
4. Bradbury, Malcolm, and David Palmer (eds.), *Shakespearean Comedy*. London: Edward Arnold, 1972.Print.
5. Charney, Maurice (ed.), *Shakespearean Comedy*. New York: New Literary Forum, 1980. Print.

Unit – 6: *The Merchant of Venice*: Plot Construction, Themes and Major Characters

Structure

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Objectives
6.2 Plot Construction, Themes, and Major Characters
  6.2.1 Plot Construction
  6.2.2 Themes
  6.2.3 Major Characters
6.3 Learning Outcomes
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6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

6.0 Introduction

The play *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare was printed first time in 1600. The play centers around intolerance, revenge, prejudice, money, mercy, law, greed, friendship, and marriage. The play belongs to the genre termed; comedy, but it is often referred to; as problem comedy or tragicomedy. This is because in this play comedy is mixed with some dark aspects of human life and nature. A pound of flesh, a ring, and the game of casket has symbolic significance in the play. The tone of the play is comic, romantic as well as tragic. Law, cross-dressing, and mercy, in the end, have been implied as motifs in the play. The foreshadowing technique is very much evident in the opening scene as Shakespeare is aware of the wretched fate of his characters - the loss of Antonio's ships and the attitude of Shylock.

The setting of the play is the 16th century and is set in Venice and Belmont. Although the tone and mood of the play are light, there are a few dark scenes, for instance, the scene where Shylock demands a pound of flesh. Clever dialogues and witty remarks among characters are the key features of the play. Deception and disguise also play an important role in the development of the plot. These have also acted as a source of humour as well as a source of the survivor as far as the life and stake of Antonio in the play are concerned. Either Antonio or Bassanio could be

considered the protagonist of the play. The role of Antonio is relatively passive. However, the way Bassanio saves Antonio and wins Portia in the fame of the casket, he is most likely the protagonist of the play.

Religious hostility between Jews and Christians is also a key feature as far as the development of the theme is concerned. Shylock is furious mainly because of the attitude of Christians towards Jews and how he is wronged by two Christians- Antonio, who fails to return his money in time, and Lorenzo, who elopes with his daughter, Jessica, along with his money. The reversal of fate occurs when Antonio forgoes his money on the condition that Shylock converts to Christianity and upon his death, he must bequeath all his property to his daughter Jessica and Lorenzo. The play asserts that friendship and love have more power than hatred and revenge. Antonio helps his friend Bassanio even at the risk of his life. It is paid back by Bassano and his wife, Portia when he was in deep trouble.

Friends and family play a vital role in the play. Bassano is able to win the love of Portia and marry her after Antonio helps him by gambling his own life in the hands of Shylock. Though their marriage is initially disturbed by the episode created by Shylock, it settles down amiably later on. Meanwhile, Jessica elopes with Lorenzo along with a handsome amount of money. Bassano and Antonio reunite after Antonio is saved. He is able to become a rich merchant again because his ships safely arrive at the port.

The main conflict in the play is when Antonio takes a loan for Bassanio from Shylock on a bond of a pound of his flesh. The rising action is when it is made known that the ships of Antonio are lost. The climax takes place when Portia disguises herself as a lawyer, and falling action is when Shylock converts to Christianity and the way he lends half of his fortune to Jessica and her husband, Lorenzo.

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- give the background to the play
- understand the plot construction
- comprehend the theme

- examine the characters

6.2 Plot Construction, Themes, and Major Characters

6.2.1 Plot Construction:

The Merchant of Venice was written keeping in view the historical context, the exile of Jews, and the restriction on their rights in Europe. Apart from utilizing a historical context in writing this play, Shakespeare has also utilized the literary context and background in writing *The Merchant of Venice*. The main plot deals with the story of Bassanio being in love with Portia and his wealthy friend Antonio. Antonio helps Bassanio secure a loan from Shylock, a wealthy but stingy Jewish moneylender. Shylock had a long-standing grudge against Antonio agrees to lend Bassanio the required three thousand ducats for three months on the surety of Antonio. He puts the condition that if money is not returned on the fixed day, he will cut one pound of flesh from the body of Antonio. In a subplot of the play, Lorenzo, a close friend of both Antonio and Bassanio, falls in love with Shylock's daughter, Jessica. Lorenzo and Jessica elope along with her father's money. This incident enrages Shylock, and he decides to take revenge.

Against this background, the plot construction revolves round a structured five-act play as follows:

(a) Exposition

The beginning of the play introduces us to the problems of various characters. Antonio is sad as he gets to know that he is going to lose his friend Bassanio to Portia. Portia is also unhappy as her father; while dying had left her fate to a game of caskets. She is unable to choose a husband of her choice as she can marry only the suitor who wins the game. To win the game, suitors should choose the casket containing a portrait from the three caskets made of gold, silver and lead. So far, none of the suitors could choose the right casket to win her. The other reason for her unhappiness is that she does not like any of them.

(b) Conflict/Rising Action

The conflict is a key element in the play. Everyone in the play has one or the other conflict. Antonio's conflict is that he is going to lose his friend, yet he is willing to pay anything for him. It is due to this fact that he is ready to sign a bond with Shylock on unfavourable conditions merely because of Bassanio. As Shylock has old hatred and religious grudge against

Antonio. Bassanio also has conflicts. The first conflict is that he is poor. He has not paid his previous loan to Antonio, and he is again in need of money. His second conflict is the conditions imposed by Shylock as he thinks it unfair to risk the life of his best friend, but Antonio relaxes him that everything will be alright. His third conflict is the game of casket, as he has to choose one, and it can turn either way. He can have Portia as a wife in case he chooses the right casket but, in case it is otherwise, he will lose her forever. Out of impatient, Bassanio decides to play the game without any delay. Shylock also has conflict, as his daughter has eloped with Lorenzo with lots of money. He wants to take revenge for it. His second conflict is the hatred and religious grudge against Antonio.

After choosing the right casket, Bassanio is allowed to obtain his love, and it seems that his conflicts are resolved as he will have lots of money to repay his loan. But soon, a letter is handed over to him, which describes the sad fate his, friend, Antonio is going to have. His ships have been lost, and he is unable to repay the loan to Shylock. Shylock, due to his old hatred against him and because of the elopement of his daughter with a Christian, wants to take revenge on Antonio and demands one pound of flesh from his body. It is also narrated in the letter that finding no-way-out Antonio has resigned to his fate. He only says that he wants to see his friend Bassanio before meeting his fate. Bassanio, finding no alternative, has to leave his young, newly beautiful bride; to go to Venice to see his friend. Portia lends him the required money to pay off to spare Antonio. In addition, she sends her people in disguise to see the proceeding of the court and to see what can be done on their part to save the life of Antonio.

(c) Climax

The trial is held in the court and is presided over by the Duke of Venice. As per the contract, Shylock demands one pound of flesh and refuses Bassanio's offer to pay double the money. Finding no alternative, Antonio resigns to his fate and is shirtless to meet his fate as Shylock wants to take one pound of his flesh. This scene is the climax of the story.

(d) Resolution/ Falling Action

When Shylock is not ready to take the money and insists on taking the flesh, a learned lawyer and a clerk are introduced to the court to defend the case of Antonio. Portia, disguised as a lawyer, offers Shylock triple the amount to spare Antonio, but he is still unmoved. At this, a twist in the tale takes place when she agrees that Shylock is entitled to take a pound of flesh as it

is his legal right but not to spill a single drop of Antonio's blood in the process; otherwise, he will forfeit all his property. At this, Shylock hastily agrees to take the triple amount, but the lawyer refuses to pay him the amount. He even agrees to take just the initial amount, but she refuses. The Duke spares Shylock; on the condition that he pays half of his wealth to Antonio. Antonio says that he will not take the money if Shylock becomes a Christian and agrees to bequeath all his property to his daughter Jessica and Lorenzo. Shylock, in his helplessness, agrees to all the conditions. Bassanio, overjoyed by this unexpected turn of events, is ready to pay the lawyer whatever he wishes. The lawyer (Portia in disguise) refuses payment and expresses his desire to have the ring Bassanio was wearing. After much hesitation, Bassanio parts with the ring, which was given to him by his wife, Portia. Similarly, the clerk (Nerissa in disguise) acquires the ring from Gratiano. Then they return to Belmont.

(e) Denouement

The play culminates when Antonio is released. The misunderstanding regarding the rings; is also resolved. Meanwhile, Portia comes with the news to Antonio that his ships have safely arrived at the port. Antonio is rich again. Thus, everything gets resolved, and the play ends on a happy note.

6.2.2 Themes:

Revenge:

Revenge is one of the prominent themes in the play. Shylock's need to take revenge on Antonio is heightened by his dislike for the entire Christian community. He is also angry at the fact that his daughter has eloped with Lorenzo, a Christian, with his money. Shylock is so full of revenge that he justifies his act of hurting Antonio and the entire Christian community in these words, "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" (Act 3, Scene 1)

Prejudice:

Shylock is prejudiced against all Christians and refuses to trust them. When he first appears in the play, he remarks about Antonio, "I hate him for he is a Christian" (Act 1, Scene 3). Later, he asks his daughter to close the house because he does not trust Christians. It is the result of his strong hatred towards Christians that his daughter Jessica runs away with Lorenzo. She knows that her father will not be ready for her wedding to Lorenzo.

Friendship:

Friendship is another recurrent theme in the play. Antonio's friendship is so strong that despite Bassanio not repaying his previous loan, Antonio still arranges another loan for him at the risk of his own life. Even though Antonio dislikes Shylock, he still takes a loan from him for the sake of his friend Bassanio. Bassanio asks Antonio not to accept the harsh conditions of the loan, but Antonio states that he is more than happy to die for him. This willingness to help his friend at any cost is testimony to their deep friendship.

Money & Wealth:

Some of the important characters in the play are wealthy, such as Antonio, Shylock and Portia. Wealth, however, does not guarantee happiness or contentment. Though Antonio is a rich merchant, yet his wealth couldn't guarantee the safe return of his ships. Though Portia is a rich heiress, she is unhappy due to the conditions her father puts on her marriage. Shylock is wealthy yet unhappy and discontent. Money is shown as a source of greed, as well as a test for friendship in the play.

Love and Marriage:

The theme of marriage is closely associated with the theme of love. Firstly, Bassanio's marriage takes place with Portia at Belmont; secondly, the elopement of Jessica, the daughter of Shylock, and her marriage with Lorenzo, a close and intimate friend of both Antonio and Bassanio. In both marriages, there is a liking and love that is deeply linked with the attainment of marriage.

Self-interest vs. Humanity:

Antonio and Shylock are both wealthy. Unlike Antonio, Shylock is cruel and inhuman and is unmoved by others' plight, Antonio values friendship and is willing to do anything for it, but Shylock fails to ensure his daughter's happiness. This depiction of Shylock in the play reinforces the notion that the Jews are greedy and selfish. While Antonio, Bassanio and Portia represent Christian values of humanity and loyalty.

6.2.3 Major Characters:

William Shakespeare is a master of the human psyche. He is always appreciated for the portrayal of psychological, moral and emotional turmoil of his central characters. His understanding of human nature has made him a universal craftsman and his characters can be

easily adapted by people across the globe for their spatial, cultural, and political necessity. His mastery in portrayal of women characters is beyond comparison. It compelled critics to wonder if Shakespeare was a woman disguised as a man because in those times writing was not considered as the domain of women. It is also debated that Shakespeare was not a single person because it was not possible for a single person to create such a huge galaxy of characters with subtle uniqueness without repetition. As readers of his plays and students of English Language and literature, one has to admit that William Shakespeare has influenced the art of playwriting and character-building through his plays.

The Merchant of Venice is divided into five acts. First act introduces the most of the major characters i.e. Bassanio, Antonio, Shylock and Portia. Shakespeare portrays these characters in a subtle way and every scene reveals different shades and layers of these characters. Now let us analyse these major characters one by one.

Shylock:

Shylock is the titular character in the play. He is the Merchant of Venice. Shakespeare has given different dimensions to Shylock's character which are difficult to understand on surface level. He is a greedy, miserly, cunning, selfish character. Though *The Merchant of Venice* seems to be a love story, it brings out the hypocrisy of followers of Christianity, their sense of morality, as well as anti-Semitic views. Portia's universal appeal for mercy and eloquent speech must be seen from Jewish point of view also whether the mercy is shown to contemporary Jewish society by the Christian rulers. Shylock is not born a monster or vicious character.

Portia:

Portia is portrayed as fair minded, wise and witty. However, she is portrayed as prejudiced when she disdains the color of the Moroccan prince. When he fails to identify the correct Casket, she heaves a sigh of relief and says, "Let all of his complexion choose me so" (Act II Scene vii). In reality, she does not want anybody who looks like him or has his skin tone to win her in marriage. It clearly hints at her racist nature.

Portia is portrayed as generous and stout-hearted. When she comes to know that Antonio is in trouble due to the bond he has signed to help Bassanio, she admires their friendship. She is impressed by Antonio's gesture towards Bassanio. She is ready to give her wealth to satisfy the

greed of Shylock and to rescue Antonio from his legal trap. Portia thus is portrayed as a woman with a rare combination of brain and beauty. Her wisdom outwits all the men in the play.

Antonio:

Antonio is one of the central characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. He is an influential and rich aristocrat of Venice. He is a merchant by profession. His ships are on the sea and his financial future is attached with his shipments. He is melancholic. His love for Bassanio is one of the reasons for his melancholy. When he comes to know about Bassanio's love interest and his desire to win her, Antonio feels insecure at the loss of his love. He attempts to show that his love for Bassanio is greater than any woman can love Bassanio. His jealousy and possessive nature causes him desperation to hold on to his friend.

Bassanio:

Bassanio is another nobleman of Venice. He is extravagant in his effort to showcase status. He is bankrupt and is in search of fortunes for luxurious and cozy life. He decides to marry Portia for her wealth. Bassanio and Antonio are portrayed as great friends. Bassanio turns to Antonio when he needs money to impress Portia. Antonio readily gives him lots of money without a second thought. He borrows money from Shylock by signing a bond offering a pound of flesh if he fails to repay the debt. It shows that Antonio's friendship is superior to any other relationship. He deeply loves his friend. He is ready to undergo any trial to fulfill the desires of his friend and his happiness.

William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* portrays the characters in the light of contemporary belief and assumptions. Portia had to disguise as a man to present herself as a lawyer to save Antonio. All important offices were held by men in Elizabethan times. Antonio's ships on the sea suggest the import, export and colonial expansion during the period. Bassanio too is portrayed in the light of contemporary understanding of masculinity and courtship. Shylock's depiction as a villain shows the prevalent anti-Semitism. However, Shakespeare leaves it to the readers to interpret these characters as per their understanding. All the characters have their unique roles to play. Shakespeare thus proves that he is a master of character portrayal.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the plot construction, themes and major characters in the play.

6.4 Glossary

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

Climax: The point at which the highest level of interest and emotional response is achieved in a play.

Conflict: A clash, dispute or disagreement

Culminate: To end or conclude

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. In which year was *The Merchant of Venice* published?

    (a) 1616

    (b) 1590

    (c) 1600

    (d) 1690

2. Who is the protagonist of the play?

    (a) Antonio

    (b) Bassanio

    (c) Shylock

    (d) Portia

3. Who disguises as a lawyer in *The Merchant of Venice*?

    (a) Nerissa

    (b) Lorenzo

    (c) Portia

    (d) None of these

4. Why do Shylock and Antonio despise each other?

(a) Religious differences

(b) Commercial differences

(c) Social differences

(d) All the above

5. Who is the merchant of Venice in the play?

(a) Lorenzo

(b) Antonio

(c) Bassanio

(d) Gratiano

8. What is Shylock's profession?

(a) Lawyer

(b) Sailor

(c) Merchant

(d) Money lender

9. If Antonio cannot pay the money back in three months, he must give Shylock:

(a) A piece of land

(b) A pound of his flesh

(c) His ships

(d) None of these

10. Why does Bassanio want to marry Portia?

(a) She has money

(b) He loves her

(c) He is lonely

(d) She is beautiful

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss any two characters in the play.
2. Why was Shylock adamant about taking a pound of Antonio's flesh?
3. Examine any two themes in the play.
4. Write a short note on the subplot in the play.

5. Discuss the ending of *The Merchant of Venice*.

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Is Shylock a victim, a villain, or a combination of both? Discuss.
2. Discuss in detail the plot construction in *The Merchant of Venice*.
3. Examine the themes and characters in *The Merchant of Venice*.

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Supernova Publishers. New Delhi, 2010.
2. Kaplan, M. Lindsay, ed. *William Shakespeare. The Merchant of Venice: Text and Context*. New York: Bedford, 2002.
3. Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Fingerprint Publishing. New Delhi, 2018.

Unit – 7: Relevance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World

Structure

7.0 Introduction
7.1 Objectives
7.2 Relevance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World
- **7.2.1** Shakespearean Comedy
- **7.2.2** Summary of the Play
- **7.2.3** Contemporary Social Relevance
- **7.2.4** Contemporary Political Relevance
- **7.2.5** Contemporary Cultural Relevance
- **7.2.6** Let Us Sum up

7.3 Learning Outcomes
7.4 Glossary
7.5 Sample Questions
7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

7.0 Introduction

William John Shakespeare is recognized as the milestone of English Drama as well as a bright star of English literature. He has written Tragedies, comedies, Tragi-comedies, historical plays, romances and 154 sonnets. He has credited 37 plays with distinguished quality and critical perceptions. The comprehension of William Shakespeare of human world, its nature, its transformation, conflict, class conflict, psychological conflict and dilemma of human mind efficiently explored through his plays. A question often arises about him that why is he still read and appreciated? The simple and logical answer to it that the intense touch of humanity and comprehension of the human world exists in him is rarely visible to any other writer. Almost every great writer of the world couldn't resist writing about William Shakespeare that defines the greatness of a stalwart of the English dramatic world. The personification of human life though it was Elizabethan has been presented in a fine manner that still the words of him are applicable in identical manner. He is the rarest genius of the world with an acute understanding of society,

culture, history, anthropology, economy and many more. His plays are not only plays, they are prophecies about the coming world. The dialogues of his characters compel the audience to think it over and over and create a feeling of reflection.

The socio-cultural, political and economical spheres of the world have drastically changed in course of time. The life pattern of the Elizabethan period is not similar today yet the clash of human beings for human values such as good, kindness, truth and sincerity is still going on. The present play of the study *Merchant of Venice* was written in 1597 but the words composed in the play are applicable to the present world in intensive ways. The problems of trade, Semitism, Justice, Class and racial conflict discussed in the present play still exist with the same or less socio-cultural background. Today's world is a composition of materialistic objects where every action of life is under the control of scientific equipment but the clash for peace, harmony and equity is visible in every corner of the world in which class, caste, creed, religion and race play a crucial part. When we talk about the relevance of the present play in contemporary time it is also important to note that not only the present play but most of his plays are applicable with the same intensity. The visionary composition and legendary passion for theatre made the theatrical contribution of Shakespeare dignified. William Shakespeare was a dramatic genius who handled the concepts of gender, culture, politics and race through comedy. The high intensity topics of the society were highlighted in comic mode through the plays of Shakespeare. The genre utilized for the present play is comedy (dark) but it manifests several serious issues of contemporary Elizabethan time. The form of comedy in the words of M.H. Abrams is rightly applicable to the present play as:

> *"Comedy is a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us: the characters and their discomfitures engage our pleasurable attention rather than our profound concern ,we are made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur, and usually the action turns out happily for the chief characters." (2009, P.48)*

A good reader or a student can ask a question that if the play was written in 1597 then why after five hundred years it is being studied and analyzed. This is a very valid question but let

me tell you William Shakespeare wrote plays not for an age but for ages. The concepts of power, Justice, discrimination and business had been fundamentally analyzed through his plays. His plays like *The Merchant of Venice* provoke the audience to think over it again and again. The procrastination or indecisiveness of Hamlet is universal as every person is confused by relation, responsibility and social discourse. The over ambition of Macbeth is also universally applicable where the rat race symbolizes the unnecessary dilemma of humankind. The jealousy of Othello is visible in extensive ways in every part of the society. Thus, the characterization, understanding of human nature, exploration of inner dilemma and presentation of tragic flaws of human character on stage made William Shakespeare a dignified voice of English drama. Moreover, he is successful in compelling audience to reflect their own self with the character on the stage that is the significant skill of William Shakespeare made him a universal speaker of the world. Let us get it clear that psychological conflict, social conflict, class conflict and racial conflict are universal as the world remains the conflict will arise and as it arises William Shakespeare is fittingly applicable. The social discourse of the Elizabethan period has presented in such a way in the plays of Shakespeare that his plays not only presents them but creates a feeling of realization that is similarly witnessed in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Check your Progress:

1. In which year was the play *The Merchant of Venice* written?

   _____

2. Which is the tragic flaw of Hamlet?

   _____

3. Which human aspect is central in William Shakespeare's writing?

   _____

7.1 Objectives

This unit has the following major objectives for students.

- To acquaint with the versatile genius of William Shakespeare.
- To know the significance of the play in current realms.
- To comprehend the historical, cultural, political and social relevance of the play.

- To understand the similarity of conflicts between Elizabethan age and contemporary age.
- To comprehend the dramatic genius of William Shakespeare in exploring the human issues in an efficient way.

7.2 Relevance of *The Merchant of Venice* to the Contemporary World

7.2.1 Shakespearean Comedies:

Usually, the plays of Shakespeare are categorized as comedy, tragedy, history and Roman plays. Over the years the comedy plays of Shakespeare are identified as plays of fun, irony, and wordplay. They also abound in disguise and mistaken identity with very convoluted plots that are difficult to follow with contrived endings. Any attempt at describing Shakespeare's comedy plays as a cohesive group can't go beyond superficial outline. The highly contrived endings of most Shakespeare's comedies are the clue to what these plays are all about. For example the play *The Merchant of Venice* deals with the theme of love and relationship alike any traditional story of two couples. A young women disguises as a man throughout the play like a usual Shakespearean comedy plot but the other way a Jewess seduced away from her father by a shallow, rather dull Christian. The play ends with lover's unification, celebrating their love and all things turned out good. The resolution arrived by completely destroying a man's life. Another play comedy play of Shakespeare *Twelfth Night* is about the humiliation of a man doesn't like in group. Not a single comedy of Shakespeare but all of them are full of life, love, and laughter and fun. All his comedies are without the darkness of the heart. The popular comedies of Shakespeare are *All's Well That Ends Well, As You Like It, Cymbeline, Love's Labor's Lost, Measure for Measure and Two Gentleman of Verona* etc.

7.2.2 Summary of the Play:

The actions of the play are set in Venice Italy. As Venice was a popular, commercial city and many Christians were living, Antonio was also one of them with kind hearted nature. Antonio used to help anybody who seeks his help and a greedy Shylock made a good fortune by lending money to people. He took high interest from people. The moneylender Shylock had hatred for Antonio despite his masque of respect, honesty and kindness. Whenever the two meet Antonio criticizes Shylock for his deeds and high rate interest of money eventually Shylock

developed a feeling of revenge but unable to receive the right opportunity to teach a lesson to Antonio and at the same time Antonio was admired by all his friends including Bassanio for honesty and generosity. Bassanio was a close friend of Antonio and admired for his good character though he was poor. Bassanio was in love with a young, rich and beautiful lady Portia, the lady of Belmont. To win her heart and her ancestral fortune Bassanio needed three thousands ducats to appear as an appropriate partner.

Eventually, Bassanio approached Antonio as he did in the past too for money borrowing but Antonio told him that all his fortune is tied up in merchant sheep at sea. Hence, Antonio decided to borrow money from a greedy Jewish Shylock who was eagerly waiting to teach Antonio a lesson. Shylock wrapped his hatred in kindness offering a three thousands- month loan at no interest, but not repaid. Shylock hated Christians as his daughter eloped with a Christian. Antonio and shylock made a contract in the presence of Lawyer and Antonio hoping to arrive at his ships at decided place. Bassanio reached Belmont, a city near Venice as soon as he got money.

The happy progress of plot eventually decipher when Bassanio heard a very shocking and sad news from Antonio that he had lost all his ships at the sea and would not be able to pay his loan to Shylock. Hence, he decided to cut a part from his body as agreed upon. His final wish is to see Bassanio before death. The repentant Bassanio confessed to her lover Portia that he owed his friend Antonio three thousand ducats as he took them from Jewish moneylender Shylock. Portia was impressed by the pathetic circumstances of Antonio and advised Bassanio to visit Venice and get married as soon as possible. Before Bassanio and Portia reach Venice to get marry Antonio was already imprisoned. Bassanio tried utmost efforts to make Shylock takes money but he insisted on having the flesh, especially that payment had expired according to what they agreed on in the contract. Antonio was in prison, Bassanio was in anxiety but smart lady Portia decided to visit Venice and defend the case of Antonio. She even wrote to her lawyer, explained everything about the contract and sought suggestions. She received the details of her query from her lawyer.

Portia along with her honest servant Nerrisa visited Venice, disguises herself as a lawyer for Antonio. She saw in the court that Antonio, Shylock and her husband Bassanio but nobody recognizes her as she disguises herself as a male lawyer. She directed her words to Shylock to be

more compassionate and recede his condition of taking a flesh from Antonio especially that he has ability to pay the three thousands ducats now. The shocked Shylock asked court for mercy but court order to surrender half of his property to Venice to authority and second half to Antonio who was going to die for deadly contract. Antonio knows that Shylock deprived his daughter for her elopement with a Christian hence he restored the will of shylock. The episode ends with happy moment where everyone thank lawyer and Bassanio offered the fees but the lawyer refused money and asked for ring in his finger. When Antonio, Bassanio and servant returned to Belmont, Portia and other women had shown sorrow. Antonio told Portia that please forgive Bassanio because of him he has given the ring as a compensation to lawyer. Portia promised to give it back and this moment make realized everyone that she is the same lawyer fought for them court. All things ended up well.

Check your Progress:

1. Who was Portia in the play?

_____

2. Who was a Jewish moneylender in the play?

_____

3. What was the name of Portia's loyal servant?

_____

7.2.3 Contemporary Social Relevance:

In this section we are going to understand the contemporary social relevance of the play. A society is always an embodiment of various things such as people, relations, customs, culture, class, power, politics and innumerable. The social structure of every society formed in hegemonic order that creates poor, rich, upper caste, lower caste, black, white and no persona allows to break the social discourse and when attempts have been made to do so conflict arises and it operates in class conflict, caste conflict, racial conflict psychological conflict. Along with conflict, power in the form of money, muscle, mind, mob, and aggression try to seduce the powerless objects of society. Power defines the direction of social discourse because the manipulation of objects can make the survival difficult of laymen. The place of centre and margin never allow in discourse to substitute rather the displacement brings conflict. It plays an

important role in the social formation of any society along with that power frames the social circumstances as defined by Michel Foucault are appropriate for the play *Merchant of Venice* as:

> *"The vehicle by which power circulates is a never-ending proliferation of exchange. The exchange of material goods through such practices as buying and selling, bartering, gambling, taxation, charity and various forms for theft. The exchange of people through such institution as marriage, adoption, kidnapping and slavery and the exchange of ideas through the various discourses a culture produce" (Tyson, 2006, P. 284)*

The play *Merchant of Venice* is very much relevant to contemporary social scenarios of the world as if it talks about ages. The racial discrimination of the contemporary world is defined efficiently in the present play. Shylock was the Jew, Antonio was the Christian, and they both had a constant struggle. The struggle was mainly based on their business competition but inside the business story race played a crucial role in deconstructing the relationship of both. Today, we witness a lot of cases where racial discrimination takes the life of innocents. The intensity of racial discrimination in the 16th century is still present in the 21st century. Further in the play Bassanio is torn between his love for Portia and his friendship with selfless Antonio, who has placed himself in danger for the sake of him. The message of this is very clear that even today people are innocent and honest like Antonio who can sacrifice anything for the sake of friendship. The true companionship existed in Elizabethan age still witnessed.

The play at the surface level expresses the social theme of self love versus self interest. The character of Shylock represents Jewish features. The Christian character Antonio lends money free of interest and puts themselves at risk for those they love. Whereas, Shylock agonized over the loss of his money and reported to run through streets crying "O my ducats! O, my daughter!"(Act II) with these words, he apparently values his money as his daughter. On the other side though Bassanio seeks love from Portia because he is deeply in debt and needs money desperately. Bassanio takes money on loan from his friend Antonio that was actually taken from Shylock to appear as a dignified member of the society in front of Portia. In other words Bassanio is anxious to view his relationship with Antonio as a matter of business rather than true love. Finally Shylock eloquently argues that Jews are human beings just as Christian such as

Antonio hates Jews because they are Jews. The next social aspect discussed in the play is hatred that is dominant in every societal clan of the world. The hatred is based on religion, caste, color, creed and class. Throughout the play Shylock claims that he is simply applying the lessons taught to him by his Christian neighbors. This phenomenon becomes the crucial aspect of his character in society and in his arguments in court. Shylock conspires to harm Antonio but his entire plan seems to be born of the insults and injuries Antonio has inflicted upon him in the past. Not all of Shylock's action can be blamed on poor teachings and one could argue that Antonio understands his own culpability in his near execution.

The next social relevance of the play reflects on the aspect of friendship. Human relations such as mother-father, brother-sister, husband-wife and friend-friend are integral parts of any age. We cannot decipher human relations from the spectrum of society. The theme of friendship drives most of the play, Bassanio needs money eventually turns to Antonio who has already offered him substantial financial support in the past. Antonio unquestionably does whatever he can do for Bassanio. Antonio even declares that he can die for his friendship. The play depicts friendship as one of the most intense and important emotional bonds of humanity. The true bonding of human also reflects through the relationship of Portia and Nerrisa. Gratiano and Nerissa show great loyalty to entrust in their friendship and even fall in love with each other after being brought together by their friends. The next social relevance of the play is about money; undoubtedly this is the fundamental aspect of any society universally. The problem of wealth and its relevance has efficiently described in the play. The play *Merchant of Venice* explores the complexities of wealth and treats this theme with ambivalence. Several wealthy characters are depicted as unhappy despite their vast fortunes. At the beginning of the play Antonio is shown a prosperous man on the verge of more financial success but he suffers from a sense of melancholy. Today, we can see a lot of wealthy persons with innumerable fortunes but from inside they are lonely. The inner peace is scarcely visible in them at the same time true love, friendship, companion, and trusty partners invisible in their life. The uneven distribution of wealth also causes problems to the characters; Bassanio seems to be a noble person but he suffers from a lack of money. Money is depicted as a source of greed and dissatisfaction and the play also asserts that wealth gives individual freedom and power.

Check your Progress:

1. The Jew Shylock represents which social discrimination?

_____

2. Antonio in the play can die for whose friendship?

_____

7.2.4 Contemporary Political Relevance:

In this section we will be able to understand the contemporary political relevance of the play *The Merchant of Venice.* Politics is a seminal aspect of every age around which every spectrum of society centred. The term politics is not only relevant to administration and government, rather it is a very broader term inclined to subjects from birth to death of every individual of the world. As soon as our birth we are coiled in the discourse of politics where our every growing concern is a plan of decided policy in hegemonic order. Through the play *The Merchant of Venice* William Shakespeare created a microcosmic model of Elizabethan society through which he explores not only the readily evident theme of anti-Semitism but also the changing economic faces of Europe of contemporary Europe. The present play efficiently explores the political aspects such as merchantary, usury and villainy. The ideal form of political welfare has transformed into a despotic political inclination in which power, hegemony and discourse plays a crucial role in an extensive way. In Elizabethan period the form of government was kinship but today almost every county of the world is democratic but yet the obsession of power among political leaders is visible with the same intensity.

The play centered in Venice, a city of prosperity, trade and word communication center. The play explains the shift of feudalism to capitalism, in broader anthropological terms, a movement from a ritual system of social organization to a market system. The play defines power shifts from the ritualized center of the public scene of representation to market exchange along with the periphery. Shylock represents capitalism and Antonio signifies the common consumer. The enmity between these two is embedded in the factor of racial discrimination. The play further acutely explains the politics of gender like the contemporary world where every social clan offers an insignificant position to women and women are not allowed to break the traditional discourse. In the present play, Portia is a gentle lady and not allowed full freedom to choose her own soul mate. Even Jessica too was not allowed to choose her life partner

epitomizes the contemporary relevance of gender politics Portia, Merissa and Jessica all had to remain in men's apparel in order to safeguard them from various Jeopardize of society. Thus, the play explores the polities of gender, race, commerce, state as well as efficiently narrates the Judiciary system. Hence, these political instincts are similar in every society of the world. The words of David Ian Rabey are appropriate in regard to William Shakespeare defined in the book *British and Irish Political Drama in 20th Century:*

> *"The successful political dramatist will ensure that his drama retains an engaging vitality from the debate of conflicting viewpoints, taking care that his personal viewpoints is not mitigated to the point of ineffectuality, nor allowed unopposed victory at the expense of dramatic tension. By these means, effective political drama can manoeuvre its audience into a critical position towards the social status quo, provided the drama moves on premises that are sufficiently imaginatively convincing." (07)*

The above words are suitable to William Shakespeare though he is not a political dramatist but the political instincts explored through his plays differentiate him from other playwrights. The coil of political aspects such as revenge, competition, time, conspiracy, and despotism efficiently explored through his plays.

Check your Progress:

1. Does the play talk about anti-Semitism?

_____

2. Is gender politics efficiently explored through the play?

_____

7.2.5 Contemporary Cultural Relevance:

In this section we will discuss the contemporary cultural relevance of the present play. It is always better to know the cultural context of any text for a whole understanding. It is more when the text is distanced in terms of space and time. To understand the play Merchant of Venice and its relevance in contemporary time we need to understand the Elizabethan pattern of culture. Culture is the fabric of any society in which aspects from food, shelter, cloth, ideology, modus operandi etc includes. Culture is the most phenomenal and complex term unable to define exactly but in brief it includes the life pattern of contemporary society. Culture is dynamic and it

changes with time likewise since Elizabethan age a lot of time has passed but some prominent features of culture are still identical. The play explains the large cultural difference between Shylock and Antonio because these two belonged to different cultural clans. The racial despotism of Shylock was absent in Antonio. The biggest reason behind it was religion. The cultural differences of Jew and Christian community were explored through these two men. If we relate this theory today we can realize that every religion embodies different features and followers of them explain through their actions and appearances. The moralistic belief of them expresses the cultural differences.

The money lending business was the easiest way in Elizabethan age to become rich and earn more fortune. Today, people do the same; they charge high interest rate and even reach to any level to fulfill their decided target. Antonio paid a huge amount of money lending. The culture of human bonding and intimacy also explained through the play. The generous nature Antonio has lot of friends where avaricious Shylock left with few friends in life. However, this does not affect his personality as he was blindly obsessed with money. This feature is very common today; we can see people with money mind have few friends but a lot of fortune.

Like today's world and cultural practices in Elizabethan period too dowry was a common practice ritualized among people. This aspect relates with contemporary practice, In Elizabethan period women were expected to bring a dowry to the marriage. A dowry was an amount of money, goods and property that the bride would bring. After marriage women were expected to deliver children as per the choice of male partner hence men were offered full freedom to exploit women from every perspective. Even the law gave full rights to men. In the play Portia was aware of the customary laws and took her decision in accordance. This episode highlights the contemporary cultural taboos of various societies of the world where women are considered secondary and male persona offered the position of centre, intellect, wisdom and power.

The next important and visible similarity of Elizabethan and contemporary world culture is the existence of patriarchy. In Elizabethan period men were the powerful figure in family and society which is why Queen Elizabeth is so unusual. We see many examples of the restrictions in the play, when Portia and Nerissa leave the city they have to dress up as men. Portia is restricted by her father's will when she marries all her land goes to Bassanio. Jessica is restricted by

Shylock. Similarly, Jessica has to dress up as a man to break free from Shylock but in doing so she simply puts herself in the control of other man.

No culture remains static and stable, only those cultures which change according to the need of time remains to survival. Bassanio took money to impress Portia, to appear as gentleman. Now a day's people have the same feeling to appear as gentle and generous. The inclination of people to fashion is a common cultural tract in every age. The hypocrisy of life is also a common seminal feature in *Merchant of Venice* and contemporary world. Discrimination, parity and conflict are equivalent in Elizabethan and contemporary world. Due to our upbringings as human and experiences make us unique and indifferent yet no matter how divergent, humans will always share their instinctive urges. Humans at one point or another will all act the same instinctively when threatened.

Check your Progress:

1. Does the play describe cultural differences?

_____

2. Was the cultural hybridity similar in Elizabethan and contemporary world?

_____

3. Does culture transmit from one generation to another generation?

_____

7.2.6 Let Us Sum Up:

The plays of Shakespeare stain the trait of modernity. The greedy temperament and opportunistic approach grasped every bend of the world. The modern cities like Dubai, New York, and Landon, Singapore reflect the identical cultural transmission of Venice. Growing social, religious and legal conflicts are widespread in our globalised world. The principle philosophy explained through the play *The Merchant of Venice* is we are all members of the world upside down and we must strive to go back to our essence, to live relations fully and to enjoy the pleasure of art and theory. The time has changed the exterior face of the world but inside the dual between evil and good, truth and untruth, accepts and rejects disable the harmony of the world. Theatre being the form of expression has been utilized by most of the great playwrights to voice the mute. The issues of human life such as political, social, cultural and

psychological have been forcibly presented through theatre. No doubt William Shakespeare is the master in catching the true essence of humanity.

7.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know the dramatic genius of William Shakespeare
- comprehend the contemporary social relevance of the play
- compare, evaluate, and analyze the changes of society and influence of modernity

7.4 Glossary

Relevance: Close affinity
Static: Stopping at moment
Instinct: Innate desires
Ducats: Currency of contemporary time
Deprived: Isolated
Usury: High interest
Ritualized: A dignified society
Elizabethan: Refers to reign to Queen Elizabeth

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions:

State whether the following questions are true or false.

1. The present play does not have any relevance to the present. _____
2. The play explores the ideas of Semitism. _____
3. The play is a tragedy. _____
4. Portia is the beloved of Antonio. _____
5. William Shakespeare wrote 150 sonnets. _____
6. Ring and Gold symbols used in the play. _____

7. The play does not correlate racial discrimination. _____
8. The name of the servant is Nerrisa. _____
9. The play does not have any historical relevance. _____
10. Bassanio took three thousand ducat from Shylock. _____

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the predominant theme of the play?
2. What is the name of cultural capital in the play?
3. Who is the true friend of Graciano?
4. Which relevant aspects of the play are predominant in the world?
5. What major themes are discussed in the play?

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Illustrate the relevance of Venice city with present cultural capital cities of the world.
2. Discuss the social relevance of the play in present time.
3. Explain the major ideas of the play.

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cenagage Learning India, 2015.
2. Jose, J.K. *The Merchant of Venice*. Inter University Press.2019.
3. Night, Wilson J. *The Wheel of Fire*. Routledge, 2001.
4. Rabey. D. *British and Irish Political Drama in 20th Century: Implicating the Audience.* Macmillan, 1986
5. Tillyard, EMW. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. Vinatge, 1959.

Unit - 8: Introduction to the British Novel

Structure

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Objectives
8.2 Introduction to the British Novel
- **8.2.1** Novel in the 18th century
- **8.2.2** Factors Responsible for the Rise of Novel
- **8.2.3** The Social Environment of the 18th century
- **8.2.4** The Democratic Movement
- **8.2.5** The Rise of Realism
- **8.2.6** Decline of the Drama
- **8.2.7** Freedom of a Writer
- **8.2.8** Novels that emerged in the 18th century

8.3 Learning Outcomes
8.4 Glossary
8.5 Sample Questions
8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

8.0 Introduction

Dear readers, this unit will give you an overview of the British novel in general. We will try to locate the historical background of the British novel and identify some features that helped novel to emerge and develop as a genre. Although some critics have attempted to locate the novel in ancient Egyptian texts and middle-eastern Japanese writings, it is essentially a western fabrication. The truth is that the novel began in England in the 18th century**.** After the death of Shakespeare in the 16th century in England, there was a common slogan that 'it is not the death of Shakespeare but the death of drama'. The writers tried their hand on other genres for example, in the Jacobean era 'masques' were written, in Caroline and Neo-Classical periods, poetry was written. The novel came into vogue after the decline of drama with the complete closure of theatres in 1642. After the rise of the industrial revolution in England, the writers switched towards novel writing generally because of two factors. Firstly, the common masses were no longer free and ideal to spend time watching dramas. Secondly, with the establishment of the

printing press newspapers, journals and bulletins became readily available in the market and as such gave birth to new readership. Thirdly, female writers were not much acknowledged therefore, they started to write novels to prove their worth. In the beginning they would use pseudo names to write the novels but once their work was acknowledged, they revealed their real names. For example, Marry Ann Evans used to write under the pen name of George Eliot, Bronte/ Stormy sisters viz. Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, and Anne Bronte used to write under the pseudo name of Currer Bell, Elis Bell, and Acton Bell respectively. The novel in England flourished in the Victorian era prominently with a quartet known as “Four Wheels of English Novel” viz. Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Tobias Smollett, and Lawrence Sterne. It was Sir Walter Scott who called Henry Fielding the Father of English Novels.

The 'novel' as a genre is difficult to define due to its open yet complex structure. Not only novel but other genres of literature viz. drama, short story, poetry, and other literary terms are challenging to define. A novel is a kind of lengthy narrative fiction written in prose style, exhibiting a story of characters in a specific setting. A novel is a complex narration as it includes a plot, setting, multiple themes, and many versatile characters. The story is crafted in such a way that it keeps the readers engaged from beginning to end. A novel is written on any or almost every theme, be it political, social, economic, scientific, psychological, etc. It can either be fictional or realistic as it may cover the burning issues, truths, or facts of a particular time or period. The novelist as a narrator or by being one of the characters in the novel narrates the story in such a way that it makes the readers connect with the overall plot, thereby invoking different responses in them.

E. M Forster in his famous magnum opus *Aspects of the Novel* published in 1928 stated that a novel should have maximum wording of 50,000 words. Anything less than it would be considered a novella or a short story. Loorie Moore, one of the famous critics, beautifully differentiated the novel and short story by saying that “A short story is a love affair, a novel is a marriage. A short story is a photograph, a novel is a film.” This definition, on the other hand, is only a broad definition of the term 'novel,' and it may not apply to every sort of novel.

8.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Unit are to:

- provide an overview of the British novel
- identify some prominent British novels
- recognize the contribution of some important novelists
- highlight the factors responsible for the rise of the novel
- know about the social realism of the 18th century

8.2 Introduction to the British Novel

The word novel is derived from the Italian word *novella,* and is a late variant of *novellas* that means "new." It was an enlarged anecdote that was found in the early 14th century Italian classics like Boccacio's *Decameron* which exemplifies etymology. However, it must be noted that despite some great novelists like Henery James, Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf, and others, the term in some quarters carried little overtones and triviality. In most of the fictional works, the medium is prose and the description of events is unheroic. Streets and taverns are generally a part of the setting. It is believed that it was more out of the need in the Roman period to find a literary piece that could be anti-epic both in substance and language. The genre achieved its first flowering in Spain at the beginning of the 17th century in an antique chivalric masterpiece called *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. It contains many elements of prosaic fiction as compared to the *Satyricon* or *The Golden Ass.* Novels have heroes, however, not in the classical sense or even in the medieval sense. The British poet W.H Auden says:

"For, to achieve his lightest wish
Become the whole of boredom, subject to

Vulgar complaints like love, among the Just

Be just, among the Filthy filthy too,

And in his own weak person, if he can,

Must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man."(The Novelist)

A novel tries to project those troubles of life that do not get a place in the epic poem and to look at them as unheroic, unredeemed, incomplete, and to some extent absurd. Probably that is one of the reasons that there is scope for fictional writers like a contemporary detective or sentimental melodrama of Micky Spiliane and Mrs. Henry Wood respectively.

A novel is a piece of prose of a reasonable length. However, not all novels are written in prose. Some novels are written in verses too like *The Golden Gate* by Vikram Seth. We are not sure what length should be considered suitable to consider a short story as a novel. Interestingly, *The Immoralist* by Andre Gide is treated as a novel while *The Duel* by Antony Chekov is treated as a novella. However, both of these works are of the same length. Hence, it may be said that a novel is invented with a prose of a considerable length having a plot and definite end. It must have some complexity that imaginatively deals with human experience through a series of events by involving several people in a particular setting. As we know that the novel is one of the genres of fiction. Fiction may be defined as the art of representation of human life through written words. It is a genre that has been a medium of entertainment, information, or a blend of both. In the light of these things, any art piece that is long enough to be adapted as a book can be said to have achieved "novelhood." However, it also admits to quantitative categories, therefore, a relatively brief novel may be called a novella. Similarly, a very long novel may overflow and become a *roman fleuve* which means it can be in a series or volumes like the *Harry Potter*. Hence, length is an important dimension of the novel

Considering its broader framework, the novel has developed into an extensive range of types like picaresque, romantic, gothic, epistolary, historical, realist, campus novel, and many more. You will study more about the types of novel in Unit 17 of Block V of this course.

Check your progress

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

_____

2. Name any two novelists that you have read.

_____

8.2.1 Novel in the 18th Century:

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

As we know that English novel is an essential part of English literature, therefore, it has evolved in varied forms and with modifications over the period of time. This period witnessed

many revolutions that impacted the structure of the then society to a great extent. The trend of enlightenment thinking was at the fore of these revolutions. It was experienced in the French and American revolutions.

8.2.2 Factors Responsible for the Rise of Novel:

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

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

It must be admitted that the novel rose in 1740 from lower forms to a substantial genre while no other genre did. The brilliant works of Richardson and Fielding were followed by two other major novelists, namely Smollet and Sterne. Immediately thereafter the entire English literary air was thick and there was a huge production of novels. Let's consider now some of the important factors responsible for the rise of the novel in the 18th century.

8.2.3 The Social Environment of the 18th Century:

According to David Daiches, the novel "was in a large degree the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behaviour from agreed public attitudes". Oliver Elton opines, "It came to express, far better than the poetry could do, the temper of the age and race." It is to be kept in mind that the eighteenth century is also known for the rise of the middle classes. There was an increase in trade and commerce and most of the people were becoming wealthy while many poor people found themselves in the respectable ranks of burgesses. The literary works before the eighteenth century were meant for reading by the higher strata of society. The upcoming middle classes of

the century demanded some sort of literature that would conform to their temperament and was designed to voice their aspirations to meet their needs. England was turning into a country of big and small traders and shopkeepers, these traders, and shopkeepers were rich in common sense. It is believed that these people took less interest in the exaggerated romances of heroes and heroines, they had no liking for villainy which interested the upper class of England, therefore, some new type of literature was demanded. Something which could express the ideal of the eighteen century, the importance of individual life, to tell a man not about kings and crowns but themselves, their life, their struggle, their motives, etc. This was the main concern of the first novelists. They were read widely, and their works got published in many countries which shows how powerfully this discovery appealed to readers. Novel was not only a product of the emphasis on the common man, but was also in rapport with the psyche of the middle classes.

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

8.2.4 The Democratic Movement:

The eighteenth century served as a warning for old English feudalism. It also broke many hurdles that were prevalent among many social classes. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 led to the dominance of parliament and the forging of the democratic spirit. This democratization reached its height in the eighteenth century, the era of coffee houses which were encouraged by free and frank discussions and deliberations. Bonamay Dombre in his *The Literature of Early Eighteenth Century* states, there emerged two different classes of readers, the rich or sophisticated or the common masses. The motive of the democratic movement was to stress the importance of life and activities of the common masses. There was an urgency of a literary form that would act like a mirror to the society and unlike tragedy and romance would depict a realistic picture about the various aspects of the society. There was a need for a literary form that would deal with the problems and guide the common masses to live a better life. No doubt the new form was novel, which was kind of a democratic epic. Writers like Richardson, Fielding, Sterne and Smollett and their followers advocate the theme of commoners. The protagonist of the novel *Pamela* (Pamela as the main character) is the name of a female maidservant. If it was

not the first novel of English literature, it was certainly the first nevertheless to associate the feelings and emotions of the middle class. Hence, we may say that the eighteenth century was a period of great transition. It must be admitted that in the eighteenth-century drama, the democratic spirit was also present.

Check your Progress

1. Mention any two factors responsible for the rise of the novel in the18th century.

_____

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

_____

8.2.5 The Rise of Realism:

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

8.2.6 Decline of the Drama:

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

8.2.7 Freedom of a Writer:

The emergence of the novel was also because the novel offered more freedom to the writer than drama. It must be admitted that there were many limitations while writing a drama;

the writer had to stay in the background and then complete the entire thing in a limited time like two or three hours. This was not the case with the novelist, he could remain omniscient and could intrude as and when required or as per the demand of the script. Moreover, in drama there was a limitation in terms of length, therefore, the novel offered a better choice of freedom than drama. Interestingly, the novel did not remain confined to Britain, unlike drama. Hence, novel was considered a welcome substitute for drama.

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

8.2.8 Novels that emerged in the 18th century:

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

The period between 1840 to 1900 witnessed the emergence of many writers. More than a hundred novels were written during this phase. However, the true pioneers of the novel were Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. There were others too, but they were not as popular as these four novelists. Oliver Elton maintains: "The work of the four masters stands high, but the foothills are low." The case was different in, say, the mid-nineteenth century when so many equally great novelists were at work. Fielding was the greatest of the foursome. Sir Edmund Gosse calls Richardson "the first great English novelist" and Fielding, "the greatest of English novelists." Fielding may not be the greatest of all, but he was certainly one of the greatest

English novelists and the greatest novelist of the eighteenth century. They were called "Four Wheels of Novel".

In the succeeding units of this block, you will study about the historical survey of the British novel and 'Four Wheels of English Novel' in a detailed manner.

8.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know the background of the British novel
- understand the definition of the novel
- identify the factors responsible for the rise of the novel in the 18th century
- understand the social environment of the 18th century
- know about the democratic movement of the 18th century
- appreciate the emergence of realism
- appreciate the contribution of writers known as "Four Wheels of Novel"

8.4 Glossary

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

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

Protagonist: The main leading character of the story.

Genre: A category of art or literature.

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

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

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

Plot: The series of events that make up the story, traditionally, conflict, climax, denouement, and conclusion.

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

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

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

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

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

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not an essential element of a novel?

(a) Plot

(b) Character

(c) **Argument**

(d) Theme

2. What is the leading character of a novel called?

(a) **Protagonist**

(b) Antagonist

(c) Confidant

(d) None

3. Which of the following novelists used the pseudonym 'George Eliot'?

(a) Jane Austen

(b) Virginia Woolf

(c) Elaine Showalter

(d) **None**

4. Who among the following wrote *Gulliver's Travel?*

(a) Vikram Seth

(b) Thomas Hardy

(c) Mathew Arnold

(d) **Jonathan Swift**

5. Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?

(a) Jane Austen

(b) Emily Bronte

(c) **Charlotte Bronte**

(d) George Eliot

6. The novel *Pamela* is written by

(a) Virginia Woolf

(b) Jane Austen

(c) Emily Bronte

(d) **Richardson**

7. *Aspects of Novel* is work by

(a) **E. M. Forester**

(b) W.H Auden

(c) T.S Eliot

(d) None

8. The word 'Novel' has been derived from

(a) **Italy**

(b) France

(c) Greece

(d) None

9. What does the word *Novella* mean?

(a) **New**

(b)Young

(c) Old

(d) None

10. If the novel is told from a 'third person point of view', then the writer uses

(a) I /us

(b) We /you

(c) **They /he/she**

(d) Us /me

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short on the social environment of the 18th century.
2. Name any five novelists that you have studied from this unit.

3. Comment on the emergence of realism in the 18th century.

4. Discuss any two reasons for the decline of Drama.

5. Throw some light on the democratic movement of the 18th century

8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss in detail factors responsible for the emergence of the novel in the 18th century.

2. Novel as a genre presented a true picture of the 18th century. Discuss.

3. Write a detailed note on Democratic Movement during Victorian period

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Terry Eagleton. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Atlantic Publisher, 2004.

2. Georg Lukacs. *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock.Cambridge, 1990.

3. Raymond Williams. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence.Chatto and Windus. 1970.*

https://www.eng-literature.com/2016/01/different-types-of-novel.htmlhttps://

Unit-9: A Brief History of the Novel and Types of Novels

Structure

9.0 Introduction
9.1 Objectives
9.2 A Brief History of the Novel and Types of Novels
  9.2.1 A Brief History of the Novel
  9.2.2 Types of Novels
9.3 Learning Outcomes
9.4 Sample Questions
9.5 Glossary
9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

9.0 Introduction

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

9.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study the rise of the English novel
- explain the four wheels of the English novel
- introduce the women novel writers
- discuss the types of novels

9.2 A Brief History of the Novel and Types of Novels

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

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

The eighteenth-century novels centred around real-life issues that lead to complex plot structures, realistic settings, represented people from different sections of the society i.e., from different professions. Unlike earlier prose writings, which mainly focussed on the aristocratic

class, individual experiences were celebrated and recognised through novel writings that common people could easily relate to by looking into strengths and weaknesses of the characters. As people began to question the established societal norms through their writings, a probe into novel writing depicts logic, rational thoughts and facts that rejected idealism prevalent in earlier centuries. As Drama began to decline, the novel became a source of entertainment, information, enlightenment for the general public as they could see themselves transported to the real world represented in the novels.

9.2.1 A Brief History of the Novel:

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

The Printing Press: The Printing Press made newspapers, periodicals, bulletins, journals readily available in the market. Books became commercialized as the publication became easy due to the affordable price of ink, paper, bookbinding, etc. Literacy rates started surging, as a result, many writers started contributing through their writings. The opening of more publication houses to cater to new readership resulted in the rise of novels in the eighteenth century.

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

The rise of the middle class: The rise of the middle class in the 18th century had a significant effect on the rise of novels. Many merchants, travellers, and manufacturers amassed great wealth due to the growth of industrialization in England. The rise of the novel was quite natural with the growth of the middle class who were ambitious and rational at the same time.

Literacy: Due to the easy availability of printed books and newspapers, there was a surge in the number of people getting an education. Many middle-class and lower-class people wanted to explore the world of knowledge through books and newspapers which used to be a privilege of the high-class people. A large number of the population could read and write by the 18th century, thus there was a rise in readership.

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

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

Check your Progress

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

Four Wheels of Novel:

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

1. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761): Samuel Richardson made a debut with the publication of the novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* in 1740. It is considered the first modern novel to be written in English. It is an epistolary novel i.e., written in the form of letters. The plot is simple and well written. The characters and situations are developed through the exchange of letters by the characters. It talks about the life of the heroine belonging to the commoners background. She goes through trials and **tribulations** in the novel and finally settles in a happy marriage. Richardson presented the morality of common people through this novel. Hudson in his book

writes about Lord Morley's remark on *Pamela* stating that it is "landmark of a great social, no less than a great literary transition when all England went mad with enthusiasm over the trials, the virtues, the triumphs, of a rustic lady's maid" (146). Another novel that is attributed to Richardson is *Clarissa or The History of A Lady in eight volumes* (1748). It is regarded as one of the greatest novels of the eighteenth century. It provided Richardson with a good audience to read in the whole of Europe and established him as a novelist. It is a realist novel with psychological insights which led to the introduction of sentimentality into English novels. His works contain stories about common people told from psychological insights that are true to human nature. According to Ricket, by portraying females as protagonists he encouraged many female writers to write their stories in the form of novels. He paved the way for *Tristram Shandy* and *Joseph Andrews*.

2. Henry Fielding (1707-54): Henry Fielding is known as the father of English Novels. He is the greatest novelist of the 18th century. He wrote his first novel *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr Abraham Adams* in 1742, it's a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. It is a picaresque novel that represents his deep understanding of human nature that he imbibed through his understanding of life and experiences he has had, for example, his understanding of criminality. It is a burlesque that narrates the adventure of Joseph Andrews and his friend Parson Adams. He completely rejects epistolary form and moralizing by Richardson in his novel *Pamela*. He introduced vivacious humour in his novel and genial insights into human nature. Fielding also wrote *The Life and Death of the Late Jonathan Wild, the Great (1743)* in which he presented glimpses of the ruffian mentality. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749) is regarded as Fielding's masterpiece where he has canvassed numerous characters. It is a significant work as it represents a rich, vivid, realistic picture of the contemporary society of eighteenth-century England. His novels *JosephAndrews* and *TomJones* are regarded as the comic epic in prose and it is more than a picaresque novel. Another text by Fielding is *Amelia* (1751) where the protagonist is a good and faithful wife irrespective of temptations. The theory of novel writing in the preface is credited to Henry Fielding who formulated a definite shape and form for the novel, he wrote for his novels, *JosephAndrews* and *TomJones*. Richard Church writes that Fielding brought forth a rapidly growing literary form. He is a realist, a founder of modern realistic novels and novels of manners who presents common life with freedom and imagination.

He presented to us a close-knit organic plot that reflects his craftsmanship through his novels. He broke away from the artificial style of writing and infused vitality and comic elements in the novels through the characters like Adams, Partridge, Mrs. Slipslop, to cite a few. In his novels, he uses irony as a weapon of satire. He replaced Richardson's morbid morality presented in *Pamela* and other novels with a commonsense morality that is not overarching.

3. Tobias Smollett (1721-71): The most famous contributions of Smollett to this genre are *The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748)*, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751),* and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (1771),* etc. His novels are narratives about adventures in life with a loose plot structure. Smollett wrote episodic novels where he presented the harsh realities of life. Smollett expressed evils of life with the realism of the ship scenes in *The Roderick Random* that led to improving conditions in the naval service. Thus, most of his novels are novels with a purpose. Dickens was much inspired by Smollett for presenting lively characters.

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

Thus, these four novelists perfected this genre with sentimentality as seen in Richardson's work, humour in Fielding's writings, Smollett added liveliness and Sterne reflected

impressionism in his works. The above-mentioned novelists laid down the pavement for the most popular writing form which is evolving ever since the eighteenth century.

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

Henry Mackenzie was a Scottish novelist who moved to London in 1765. He is also called Addison of the north. He was caught in the spirit of the time and used the concept of sentimentality established by Sterne in his works. Mackenzie shows the influence of Sterne in his quasi-ironic sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771). The novel is about the naive protagonist Harley's life in scrappy episodes and non-existent chapters. The novel highlights the tribulations of Harley, who lost his parents as a young boy, under the custody of numerous guardians who moved to London to improve his financial state. This work through its sentimentality influenced the work of Charles Dickens in the following years. *The Man of World* (1773) is the second novel by Mackenzie where he shows a real picture of the world through a shady character. *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) is an epistolary novel written by Mackenzie.

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

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

Women Novel Writers:

Frances Burney (1752-1842) is regarded as the first women novelist in English. Virginia Woolf called her "Mother of English Fiction". In her works, one can find the influence of the four wheels of the novel. Her major work includes *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) written in an epistolary style inspired by Richardson, depicts the life of Evelina who is raised in a rural setup until she turns seventeen years of age. However, she explores the complexity of eighteenth-century England during her visits to London and Bristol. The novel is a sentimental novel mingled with the humour of Fielding and Smollett.

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

9.2.2 Types of Novels:

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

Miguel de Cervantes was a Spanish writer who is regarded as the pioneer of the picaresque novels with his famous work *Don Quixote* (1605). Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594) is seen as an example of the picaresque novel in the spirit in English before Defoe. This form gains its popularity in the eighteenth century as it was extensively used by Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett. Defoe is credited to write the first picaresque novel with the publication of *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722). It is a picaresque novel about a female protagonist who is an orphan and is thrown into a wicked world. The picaresque heroine makes her fortunes on her numerous amorous experiences till her old age. She is twelve years a whore, five times a wife, twelve years a thief, eight years a convict in Virginia, at last, she grows rich, lives an honest life, and dies. Other noteworthy picaresque novels of the period are Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *The Life and Death of*

Jonathan Wild, the Great (1743), and *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749). The genre became popular with the works of Smollett which included *Roderick Random, Humphrey Clinker, Ferdinand Count Fathom,* and *Peregrine Pickle*. This novel type is realistic in manner, episodic in structure and satirical in aim.

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

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

Gothic Novel: The term 'Gothic' originally referred to 'Goths' which means a Germanic tribe. It was referred to as Gothic romances or Novels of terror. It was an outcome of a revival of interest in the medieval ages. The gothic romances first made their appearance in the poems of the late eighteenth century. The shift towards romantic tendencies from realistic lines played a significant

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

Realistic Novel:

The realistic novel is an English literary genre that includes fiction based on true events or events that could have occurred in real life. The realistic novel aspires to portray society as it stands. There are no filters, fantasies, metaphysical elements, or unnatural elements in it. The events depicted in the novel are "actual" in the sense that they may occur in real life. A realistic novel is a great blend of fiction and an accurate depiction of real-life events or circumstances. This type of novel is also called the 'novel of manner.' It is a humble attempt to present the realistic effect of something. It is characterized by complex characters with multiple motives. These characters are rooted in the social setting and act accordingly within the highly established social setup. The characters generally exchange dialogue with other characters and undergo many plausible and everyday experiences. Examples of the realistic novel can be *Looking for Alaska* by John Green and *Thirteen Reason Why* by Jay Asher.

Historical Novel:

This literary genre is about historical occurrences. The novel may depict real historical figures or a mixture of historical and fictitious characters. It has an adventurous nature to it. It gives off a historical vibe. The historical context when presented in the form of a novel may be named as a historical novel. A historical novel generally refers to a novel that has been set before the time it was written. Some of the examples of Historical novels can be *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, *Vanity Fair* by Thackeray.

***Bildungsroman*:**

The words "Bildungs" and "Roman" denote "education" and "novel" respectively. As a result, the word essentially refers to a novel about education, sometimes known as a novel about formation. It was first proposed by Karl Morgenstern in the early nineteenth century, but Wilhelm Dilthey popularized it in the early twentieth century. The fundamental aim of this genre is character improvement and moral development. In other words, a Bildungsroman is a coming-of-age novel that emphasizes not only the physical but also the moral and psychological evolution of a young character. It is a fictional autobiography that deals with the progress or development of the protagonist's mind and spirit and characters normally from boyhood to childhood. *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield* are examples of Bildungsroman's novel.

Check your Progress

What do you mean by *Bildungsroman*?

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Give one example of each Epistolary novel and a Picaresque novel.

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Autobiographical Novel:

An autobiographical novel is based on the life of the author. It has personal elements in it. The story narrated is the story of the author in a real sense. *David Copperfield* by Dickens is an autobiographical novel. An autobiographical novel is a type of novel in which the author uses auto-fiction techniques. Any work of fiction that is based on the author's real-life conditions, events, or experiences can be classified as this literary genre.

Satirical Novel:

A satire by definition is the act of ridiculing the follies of a particular thing or person, it is used or intended to provoke readers to change their opinion about it. So, satirical novels identify the issues about certain things. A satirist novelist aims to highlight the lacunas by offering a reasonable solution. Satire is a literary attack on a person or a group. This is an intellectual attack against a community or a single person by a writer. Although satirical novels are typically hilarious, their main objective is generally constructive social criticism, employing wit to draw attention to both specific and broader social issues. Simply said, it refers to a literary genre that

ridicules and mocks human misbehaviour and ridicules their follies, stupidities, and vices. An example of this genre is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Allegorical Novel:

Usually, any allegorical novel has two levels of meaning, one is surface, the other is connotative or symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning can be historical, cultural, political, or religious. *Lord of the Flies, Pilgrimage's Progress*, *Faire Queen*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* are some excellent examples of allegorical novels. Allegorical novels feature several degrees of meaning, such as surface meaning, which can be seen simply by looking at the work, and buried or in-depth meaning, which can be deciphered by reading the text intensively. These books aim to instill moral values in the reader.

Detective Novel:

It is a form of literary work in which a crime is first committed, then investigated, and finally, the perpetrator is revealed. This story follows a clever detective as he attempts to solve a crime. Finally, the culprit is apprehended or put to death. These books are full of intrigue and mystery. The story depicts a society in its most realistic form. This style of work frequently has a complex plot. For example Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue.* It is extracted as a sub-genre from crime fiction or a mystery novel. In such novels, a detective generally investigates a crime or a murder. Examples of detective novels can be *A Study in Scarlett* (Sherlock Homes) *Sonar Kalla* by Satyajit Roy.

Psychological Novel or Stream of Consciousness:

When a novel deals with an internal conflict of the protagonist, then the novel may be treated as a psychological novel. The term stream of consciousness was coined by William Joyce in his book *Principles of Psychology.* The psychological novel is a story in which the author delves into the characters' emotional, spiritual, and mental life. To create the plot of the novel, the novel concentrates on the reasons for the character's behaviour. The psychological novel shows the character's inner self and motivations. The psychological novel and stream of consciousness are inextricably intertwined. The term "stream of consciousness" refers to the unbroken flow of thoughts. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf are examples of Psychological novel.

Utopian Novel:

A Utopia is an imaginative place or society where everything is perfect. This type of theme is presented generally in speculative fiction or science fiction. The setting of utopian fiction is described as lovely and idealistic, with ideal attributes. It represents a society free of chaos, sorrow, anguish, trauma, and other negative elements. Plato's *Republic*, Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Francis Bacon's *Atlantis* are examples of Utopian novels.

Dystopian Novel:

A dystopian fiction, unlike a utopian story, depicts a gloomy and nightmarish world marked by corruption, injustice, and poverty. Everything is dispersed in this style of narrative, and nothing is ideal. In every way, society is suffering greatly. Society is dominated by dilemmas, sufferings, anguish, and desperation. It is a typically disorganized society as opposed to a Utopian society. This sort of literature is exemplified by George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.

Check your Progress

1. What do you understand by historical novel? Mention one example of a romantic novel.

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2. What is a dystopian novel? Give examples.

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Campus Novel:

This genre of fiction takes place on a university campus. As a result, it's also known as an "academic novel." The story is told either from the perspective of students or from the perspective of instructors. Any novel, which is set or located around the university, such novels are called a campus novel. They are also called academic novels. For example, Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

Apocalyptic Novel:

It is a literary genre that foreshadows the supernaturally horrific events that will occur when the world ends. It is a prophetic literature genre. They are the oldest Jewish and Christian

documents known to man. The apocalypse of Abraham, the apocalypse of Peter, and the shepherd of Hermas are just a few examples of this type of novel.

Magic Realism:

It's a form of literature that realistically depicts the current world while still incorporating mystical elements. It combines the real and the magical to create a surreal but convincing plot. *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are two examples of this style of fiction.

Metafiction:

Metafiction simply is fiction about fiction. It employs a narrative approach in which the piece explicitly states that it is a work of fiction. Directly addressed to the reader, story within a story, commenting on the story while delivering it, and a story about someone reading or writing a book are all examples of metafiction approaches. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* are examples of this type of novel.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to gain an understanding of the history of the novel and the different types of novels.

9.4 Glossary

Gothic novel: A pseudo-medieval fiction, a prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terror

Picaresque novel: A fictional work that depicts adventures of a roguish but appealing hero from low social class

Sentimental novel: A novel that exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to a disproportionate degree

Campus novel: Academic novel; the main action is set in and around the campus of a university

Bildungsroman novel: A novel that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood

Realism: A literary movement that stresses the faithful representation of reality in works of art and literature

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions:

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

(c) John Milton

(d) John Keats

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

(a) Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*

(b) Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*

(c) Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random*

(d) Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*

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

(a) Daniel Defoe

(b) Thomas Nash

(c) **Samuel Richardson**

(d) Tobias Smollett

8. Pamela or Virtue Rewarded is also called:

(a) **Epistolary Novel**

(b) Science Fiction

(c) Travelogue

(d) Picaresque Novel

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

(a) Samuel Richardson

(b) **FR Leavis**

(c) Edward Gibbon

(d) Tobias Smollett

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

(a) Dr. Johnson

(b) Daniel Defoe

(c) Henry Fielding

(d) FR Leavis

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write about the four wheels of novel writing.
2. Discuss in brief a picareque novel.
3. What are the different factors responsible for the rise of novels in England?
4. What is an epistolary novel?
5. Discuss the major themes of the majority of novels written in the eighteenth century.

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the different types of novels? Discuss in detail.
2. Trace the history of the novel.
3. How has novel writing emerged as major writing in contemporary times? How are novels written during the eighteenth century different from contemporary novels?

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams M.H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning, 2011.
2. Albert, Edward. *The History of English Literature*, Fifth Edition.Oxford University Press. 2004.
3. Allen, Walter. *The English Novel: A Short Critical Novel*. Books Ways. 2015.
4. Andrew, Sanders. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999.
5. Eagleton, Terry. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2012.
6. Ian, Watt. *The Rise of the Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Unit - 10: Aspects of the Novel

Structure

10.0 Introduction
10.1 Objectives
10.2 Aspects of the Novel
    10.2.1 Plot
    10.2.2 Character
    10.2.3 Setting
    10.2.4 Point of View
    10.2.5 Style
    10.2.6 Theme
10.3 Learning Outcomes
10.4 Glossary
10.5 Sample Questions
10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

10.0 Introduction

Dear Readers, literature has many genres like Prose, Poetry, Drama, Novel etc. Each genre has some special features, elements and types. For prose we have fictional prose and non-fictional prose; for poetry, we have an ode, lyric, sonnet, epic, mock-epic, elegy etc. The drama also has to be staged, making it a little more practical than the rest of the genres. We have different types of dramas like tragedy, comedy, romantic tragedy, etc. Similarly, the novel too has many elements like plot, setting, characters, theme, etc. The unit will therefore focus on elements of the novel and their characteristics.

10.1 Objectives

The unit has the following objectives for the readers:

- To understand the various elements of the novel.
- To know the types of plots.
- To recognize various perspectives of narratives.

- To understand the complexity of characters.
- To identify the importance of setting.
- To appreciate the significance of the style.

10.2 Aspects of the Novel

When we talk about the Aspects of the Novel, we are referring to the study of a novel through specific attributes. It is vital to examine every aspect of the story from several angles. To comprehend the novel, we must examine and evaluate it thoroughly. If you are going to read a novel, you must first learn about its various components before you can fully comprehend it. We cannot understand a novel until we are familiar with its various aspects. Plot, story, characterization, style, topic, narrative mode, the notion of space and time, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, rhythm, and so on are all elements of the novel. Let's take a look at each one separately.

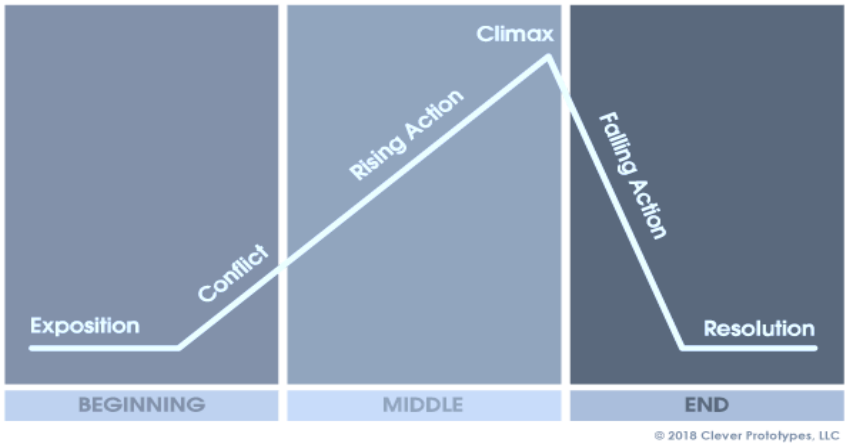
10.2.1 Plot:

A plot is a set of events that provide the story with conflict. The storyline is sometimes referred to as the 'spine of a story.' The term plot was originally mentioned in the 4th century BC by Greek philosopher Aristotle in his popular work *The Poetics*. According to Aristotle, a plot is "a combination of incidents, events, situations, and actions in a story." On the other hand, Aristotle saw the story as a necessary component of tragedy as a theatrical form. He called the plot "the soul of the tragedy". His definition, however, is equally applicable to other genres as well such as novels and short stories. According to Henry Hudson, plot, characters, language, time, and location of the action, style, and so on are the main aspects of a novel. Aristotle never distinguished between 'story' and 'plot.' But there is a lot of difference between a plot and a story. In his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Edward Morgan Forster, a well-known critic, and writer drew a contrast between story and plot. According to E.M. Forster, A story is a "narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence." He goes on to define a plot as "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality." The term 'causality' is highlighted in this definition. This can be best illustrated with the help of the following example. "The King died, and the Queen died" is a story. Another picture for a story goes like this: "The King died, and the Queen died because of the grief of King." It is simple to understand the distinction between plot and story with the help

of this example as "Causality" is the keyword to keep in mind here. In a nutshell, the plot is structured to logically convey events and information. The plot structure determines the structure of a novel.

A novel is generally boosted by a storyline or a plot. In other words, it may be considered as the nucleus of the work of art, a jotting on an old envelope: for example, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (1813) as "a young couple destined to be married have to first overcome the barriers of pride and prejudice," or Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment (1866) as "a young man commits a crime and is slowly pursued in the direction of his punishment." Developing a detailed nuclear idea requires much creativity, since each novel's plot is expected to differ from one another, and there are few basic human situations for the novelist to draw upon. Dramatists can use plots taken directly from fiction or biography--a form of theft sanctioned by Shakespeare--but novelists must produce what appears to be original.

One can recall Shakespeare's sense of producing creative plots. A plot does not require any extraordinary effort other than a string or thread of devices to create excitement or concern among the readers. A reader's interest may be born at the very outset by the mysteries, by the conflicts, frustration and maybe finally be happy when all matters are resolved in the end. A plot follows a sequence; there is a beginning, middle and end. In other words, a plot has the following steps: Exposition, Conflict, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Resolution. (See fig. 1)



(Source: https://www.storyboardthat.com *fig: 1)*

Dear Students, we shall discuss all these terms one by one.

Exposition: It refers to the introduction of the story; here, important characters are revealed, besides setting, mood and time are also introduced to the readers.

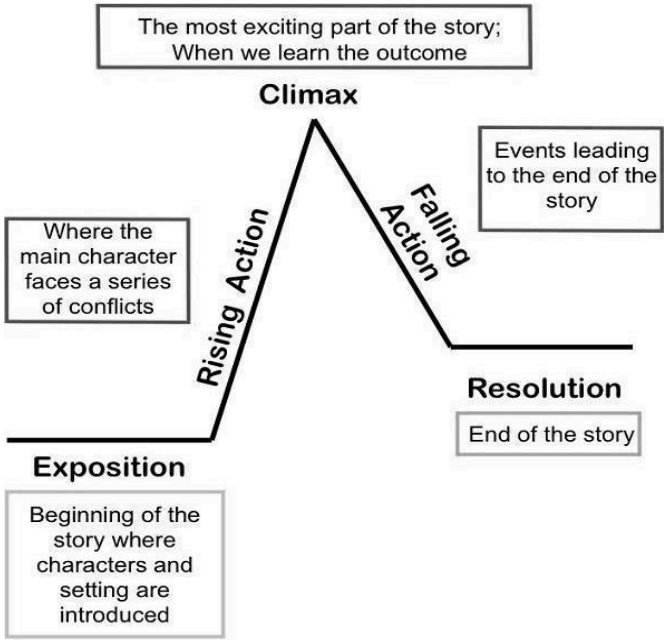
Conflict: It is one of the primary parts of the novel or the goal. Conflict simply is a problem that drives the plot of a story. The ultimate aim of the protagonist is to overcome this problem or to win over it.

Rising Action: It simply means that all the leading events of the story eventually lead to a climax, whether it is character development or events that create suspense.

Climax: It is the turning point of the story. It is here that a shift of the events takes place on either side. This is the height or intermission stage of the plot.

Falling Action: This takes place only because of the climax, wrapping of all plot points, questions answered and the development of the plot.

Resolution: It is the end of the plot in a story. It may leave readers sad, depressed, or happy depending upon the type of the work whether it is a romantic comedy or tragedy. (See fig. 2)



(Source: http://diagramscharts.com/tag/plot-diagram/fig: 2)

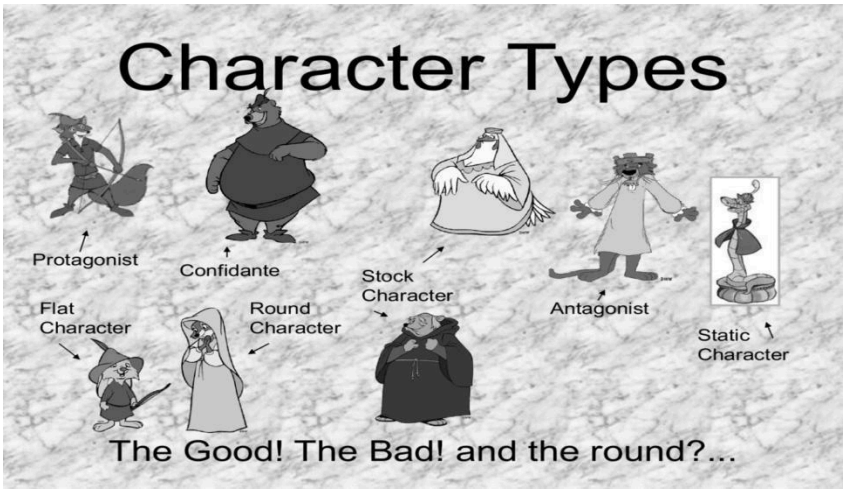
Check your Progress

1. What is the end of the story called?

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10.2.2 Character:

This is the second important element in a novel. It was once believed and agreed that there can be a novel without a plot but not without characters. It is essential to bring characters to life. The details of characters can be thumbnail sketches to deep, or wordy, highly detailed biographies of a character. It is important to note that different genres require different characters. Characters are important for any plot of a story. However, it is the main character that has the greatest effect on the plot or storyline. Some of the common types of characters found are **Protagonist, Confidante, Anti-hero, Antagonist, Flat, Round, Static,** and **Dynamic. (***See fig:3)*



*(Source:*https://studylib.net/ *fig: 3)*

Protagonist:

Dear readers, we shall begin with the protagonist; a protagonist is considered as the main character around whom the entire story revolves. We always see a protagonist fight against all odds and make the decision that helps the plot of the story to move forward. Generally, protagonists are all of heroic nature. They solve every issue and fight till the final resolution of any problem. If you're writing in the first person and choosing to tell your story through a narrator that will typically become your protagonist. However, that's not a hard and fast rule.

Consider *The Great Gatsby*, in this novel, F. Scott Fitzgerald made Nick the narrator, even though Gatsby was the protagonist.

Antihero:

The antihero should not be confused as a villain, rather it is similar to a protagonist, it is just that he lacks some conventional traits of a hero or heroic attributes. If you remember JK Rowling in her book *Harry Potter* created the character of Severeus Snape, he is the polar opposite to Harry Potter, he is a classic hero in every sense of the word. Jake Sparrow from Pirates of the Caribbean can also be considered an antihero. Although he wouldn't be considered a first-rate citizen. Anti- heroes can be exciting characters; there is a lot of depth in them.

Confidante:

He is generally regarded as the best friend of the main character. The protagonist confides himself in a confidante. It is he who offers advice or suggestion to the main character when he is struggling or fighting any problem. A confidante reveals the intention, plans and personality traits of a protagonist. It must be admitted it is not a hard and fast rule that a confidante has to be necessarily a human being it can be an animal as well.

Antagonist:

It is the character who may be called a villain of the story. He stands in the ways of the protagonist to halt his process of achieving his desired goals. They do whatever they can to block the path of the hero. They are the source of many dramatic and thrilling scenes. If you remember *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby wanted Daisy, however, he could not have her because she was married to Tom. This made Tom detestable for Gatsby because he had to face off Tom. He was unlikeable because he was cheating on Daisy and would not let her be with the love of her life.

Dynamic:

As the term suggests, a dynamic character is someone who changes over a period of time. This term is often associated with the main character or protagonist for all the transformations that he undergoes while resolving various issues. Let's remain with *The Great Gatsby*. "As mentioned, F. Scott Fitzgerald did something interesting with his creation of the narrator, Nick Carraway. Nick's evolution throughout the novel was extreme. He was a nice, hard-working boy who just wanted to secure a role on Wall Street. Then, he met Gatsby and everything changed.

By the end of the novel, Nick was disillusioned, sick of everything Wall Street stood for, and disgusted by his rich friends".

Static:

This character is opposed to the dynamic character, someone who does not change. Generally, the father, mother of the protagonist falls into this category of characters. They are wise and enlightening. The term is used for peripheral characters. Daisy's friend Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby* could be considered a static character. She didn't change much throughout the novel.

Round:

Many people or characters have difficult spouses or mothers, you are not in a position to decide whether they love or hate them. If you find this "difficult person" it can be referred to as a round character and a type of complex character. They do not follow a smooth arch and are inconsistent in their approach and acts. To a great extent, they neither are cruel nor kind. They are mostly conflicted and to the readers and protagonist, they are contradictory.

Flat:

A flat character is the opposite of a round one. They may be overtly kind or inanely cruel, and it shows. When you think of a flat character, you will immediately recognize their main characteristic. As opposed to the complex nuance of a round character, the flat character is simple and obvious. Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, is an example of a flat character. She's opinionless and, worse, clueless. Most of the characters, especially Claudius and Polonius, use her as a pawn and she is completely unaware of what is happening.

Foil Character:

A foil character is a character that contrasts with another character and has opposing tendencies. Its main purpose is to distinguish and emphasize the protagonist's or other characters' characteristics. Helen is the foil to Jane in the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte. In *The Tale of Two Cities* Sydney Carton is the foil to Charles Darnay. In the name of honour, Charles Darnay rejects his family. He explains how to do the right thing for everyone, including Lucie and Dr. Manette. His soft goodness and compassionate demeanour steal Lucie's heart. Sydney Carton, on the other hand, is attractive and brilliant, but he feels as though he has accomplished

nothing meaningful in his life. He believes Lucie could be the solution to his troubles, but she is in love with Charles.

10.2.3 Setting:

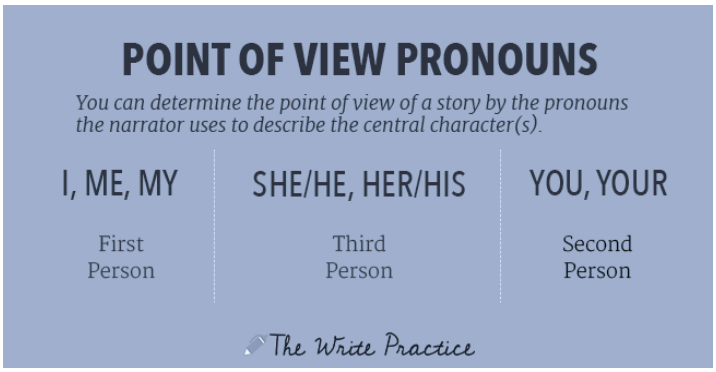
It is one of the important elements of the novel. It refers to the scene or scenes where the action takes place. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the story's first setting is the Dursleys' house. Thereafter, the action is moved to another place Hogwarts, similarly, we see Harry fascinate along with friends when they discover the castle and its grounds. It would be safe to claim that Hogwarts is such a well-designed setting that it almost becomes a character on its own.(*See fig: 4)*



(Source: Internet, fig:4)

10.2.4 Point of View:

Dear students, you should always keep this thing in mind that all novels are told from a certain perspective. The narrative can be first-person, second-person narrative or third-person narrative. Sometimes we have a third-person narrator who is not a part of the story otherwise. Let us continue with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone,* in this story we have a third-person narrator who is not part of the story, yet, the narrator speaks mostly from Harry's perspective, delving into his thoughts and feelings rather than those of other characters. There are some instances where an omniscient third person narrates the plot from multiple perspectives. Still, there is also a first-person narrator who generally narrates or speaks for himself or herself. See *fig.(5)*



(Source:Internet fig:5)

10.2.5 Style:

Another important feature of a novel is its style. The way a writer writes and presents his thoughts and ideas is referred to as style. It is a literary style by which a novelist expresses his ideas using a variety of literary approaches, sentence structure, rhythm, and other literary components. Style can also be defined as the "voice" that a reader hears when reading an author's work. It varies from one author to the next. Every writer has a distinct style in which he or she expresses his or her thoughts or ideas. Tone, word choice, syntax, diction, grammar, language, and descriptive method are all used to create an author's style. It's a novelist's unusual accent. The reader learns about a particular novelist's creative talent through the use of style. Furthermore, style may be defined as the way novelist or writer employs various literary devices to organize her or his thoughts or message. As a result, style is the peculiar factor that distinguishes an author from other novels. How text is constructed is referred to as style. It's a literary term that's difficult to define. A single text or work of literature might contain a variety of styles.

Any author can make use of a particular language in a novel. He or she can make use of the syntax, word choice and other necessary linguistic elements. J. K Rowling has made use of a fairly simple language in *Harry Potter*. However, one can see the use of imagery and symbolism is frequent in the book. Similarly, different authors have used different styles in their works. The style of Dickens is different from that of Hardy or the style Richardson is different from that of Virginia Woolf.

10.2.6 Theme:

Finally, novels explore various themes that readers are able to grasp and absorb the meaning of the story or message. *Harry Potter* likewise revolves around various themes, thirst for power, love, friendship belonging and many more. Generally, all novels revolve around a certain theme or some sub-themes, like identity, women emancipation, power, poverty, education, war, love, friendship. These are some of the common themes that authors generally write about.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- Elements of the novel like Plot, Character, Setting, Point of view, Theme, Style.
- Types of plots like simple and complex,
- Exposition, Climax and Falling action in a plot.
- Types of characters like flat, round, static, protagonist, antagonist etc.
- Point of view in a novel,
- Importance of setting and style of the novel

10.4 Glossary

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

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

Plot: The series of events that make up the story, traditionally, conflict, climax, denouement, and conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

Static: That cannot alter or never changing

Anarchy: Absence of law and order

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

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

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not an essential element of the novel?

(a) Plot

(b) Character

(c) Lecture

(d) Theme

2. What is the leading character of a novel called?

(a) Protagonist

(b) Antagonist

(c) Confidant

(d) None

3. Exposition is a part of _____.

(a) Plot

(b) Theme

(c) Character

(d) None

4. *Harry Potter is a* _____.

(a) Campus novel

(b) Detective novel

(c) Horror novel

(d) None

5. Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?

(a) Jane Austen

(b) Emily Bronte

(c) Charlotte Bronte

(d) George Eliot

6. Conflict is a part of _____.

(a) Plot

(b) Setting

(c) Style

(d) None

7. When a character changes frequently in a novel what do you call him _____.

(a) Dynamic

(b) Round

(c) Flat

(d) None

8. The climax in a plot means _____.

(a) Turning point

(b) Defensive

(c) Aggressive

(d) None

9. What does Resolution in a plot mean?

(a) End

(b)Young

(c) Old

(d) None

10. If the novel is told from a 'third-person point of view', then the writer uses _____.

(a) I /us

(b) We /you

(c) they /he/she

(d) us /me

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is meant by the plot of a story?
2. What do you mean by “Rising Action” and “Falling Action”?
3. Differentiate between a “round character” and a “flat character”?
4. Differentiate between the protagonist and the antagonist of a novel.
5. Discuss the significance of setting in a work of literature.

10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What is meant by ‘point of view’ in a novel?
2. Discuss the importance of ‘Plot’ and ‘Character’ in a novel.
3. Illustrate various stages of Plot construction.

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

3. Terry Eagleton. The English Novel: An Introduction. Atlantic Publisher, 2004.
4. Georg Lukacs. Theory of the Novel, trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge, 1990.
5. Raymond Williams. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. Chatto and Windus. 1970.*

Unit - 11: Life and Works of Charles Dickens

Structure

11.0 Introduction
11.1 Objectives
11.2 Life of Charles Dickens
- **11.2.1** Dickens as a Reformer
- **11.2.2** Some Important Works of Dickens
- **11.2.3** *Pickwick Pars*
- **11.2.4** *Oliver Twist*
- **11.2.5** *Great Expectations*
- **11.2.6** *David Copperfield*
- **11.2.7** *Hard Times*

11.3 Learning Outcomes
11.4 Glossary
11.5 Sample Questions
11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

11.0 Introduction

Charles Dickens was one of the greatest novelists of British Literature. Besides, being a novelist, he was an illustrator and a social commentator. Dickens has given the world of literature some classical works, among his notable works are, *David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, A Tale of Two Cities, Christmas Carol* and many more. He has been praised and acknowledged as one of the few writers who influenced English writing in the 19th century. He was appreciated for bringing a stark and real portrait of the Victorian era underclass only to produce a social change. This unit will therefore discuss some of the important works of Dickens which established his reputation not only as one of the remarkable novelists of Victorian period but also that of English literature.

11.1 Objectives

The following objectives will be focused in this unit:

- To make students aware about the life of Charles Dickens.
- To familiarize students with the literary works of Charles Dickens.
- To present Charles Dickens as a great novelist of the Victorian Period.
- To appreciate his efforts of social reformation

11.2 Life of Charles Dickens

Dear readers, it is important in the first place to throw some light on the life of Charles Dickens for our understanding. Charles Dickens was born on 7th Feb.1812 in Landport Portsmouth. His real name was Charles John Huffam Dickens and Charles Dickens became a short version of his name. They were eight siblings, and he was the second child of his father, who was a clerk in the Navy office. John Dickens along with his wife Elizabeth Dickens decided to move to London around 1814 and after spending two years in London they again moved to Chatham, Kent. It was here that Charles Dickens spent the childhood years of his life. However, they moved back to London because of financial difficulty and settled in Camden town. Dickens was only 12 when he had to experience a defining moment of his life, because of the humble financial condition, his father was imprisoned, he had drowned in debt therefore, Dickens had to face difficulty in managing his finance.

Charles was withdrawn from school only because his father could not pay the fee and had to work in a warehouse where he would polish the shoe to support his family. It had a strong psychological and sociological implication on Charles. It is perhaps because of this experience that he understood poverty from a broader perspective. It can be said that because of his firsthand experience with poverty he became one of the influential and vigorous voices of the working class in the Victorian period.

Charles went to school soon after his father was released from prison. His formal education came to an end as he got the job of office boy at an attorney's office. Though he left his formal education, he would study shorthand at night. He did serve as a shorthand reporter in the courts and newspaper reporter later as a parliamentary.

Dickens started to write and contribute his short stories and essays in magazines. His first published story was *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, this short story featured in a magazine called

Monthly Magazine. It was published in the year 1833. He chose to write under the pseudonym **Boz** despite still being a newspaper reporter. His first book, a collection of stories titled *Sketches by Boz* was published in 1836. It was in the same year he got married to Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of *Evening Chronicle.* They had ten children together before they finally parted ways in 1858.

We all know Dickens as a novelist; however, he continued his pursuit of journalism till the end of his life by editing *The Daily News, Household Words,* and *All the Year Around.* His acquaintance with all these newspapers and journals helped him to cater the opportunity to publish his fiction at the beginning of his career.

The Posthumous Papers of Pickwick Club was published in parts from April 1836 to Nov.1837. It was one of the popular works of that time. It was after the *Pickwick Papers* that Dickens started to establish himself as a novelist. From there onwards, Dickens produced works regularly like *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge* as part of the *Master Humphrey's Clock* series, all of these were published in monthly installments before being finally published in the form of books.

In 1842 he wrote controversial *American Notes* which also provides some basis for *Martin Chuzzlevit*. Soon, five Christmas books of Dickens followed, *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846), and *The Haunted Man* (1848). Dickens continued his success after living in Italy and Switzerland with books like *Dombey and Son* (1848) and the autobiographical work *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Dickens began his paid reading series in 1858 which earned a lot of fame. In all, Dickens performed more than 400 times. In the same year, it was apprehended that Dickens separated from his wife. Dickens was rumored to have been involved in an affair with a young actress at that time named Ellen Tarnen. However, the exact relationship is not clear, but it was central to Dickens's professional and personal life. During his readings in 1869, he collapsed, showing symptoms of a mild stroke. He retreated to Gad's Hill and began to work on Edwin Drood, which was never completed.

Dickens mostly focused on fictional characters like lawyers, clerks, bankers instead of Industrial manufacturers. It is because Dicken's London was a commercial rather than an industrial metropolis. The only work which exposes Dickens of his arrogance for Industrialism is *Hard Times*, we never even got to know what is produced in Bounderby's Factories, and the city of Coketown is portrayed vaguely in impressionistic terms as if he was watching it from a train. This is an external view of supposedly external civilization. He aimed to present himself as an aspiring writer and wished to project himself as a man of the town. Dickens cannot be called an urban novelist merely because he writes about the city, but it is more so because he writes about it in an urban way. We can easily see the prose tactics and style filled with live energies of his surroundings, full of hyperbole, extravagant gestures, melodramatic exclamations, the abrupt shift of the tone, etc. The characters in Dickens's works are the way we find in George Eliot's, George Eliot says in *Middlemarch* Character is 'a process and an unfolding'. Needless to say, this view may be more rural than urban. Therefore, in any small close-knit rural community of the kind that Austen and Eliot depict, our familiarity with others then would mean that we can see our way around them.

Check your Progress

1. Write a brief note on the life of Charles Dickens

_____

_____

_____

11.2.1 Dickens as a Reformer:

Dickens enjoyed the reputation of being a social reformer during his lifetime. He is often credited for the reforms in education, public health, and criminal laws that helped Britain to be a hassle-free country. Dickens also was a serious critic of the structure of his times, therefore, all the officials whether politicians or bureaucrats or any other officeholders were strictly criticized by Dickens if he found them inappropriate. There were others too who claimed to be the social reformers of their society, they perhaps examined and diagnosed the ills of Britain and had solutions for the same better than Dickens. However, Dickens stood on shifting and uncomfortable ground among such writers; therefore, it is unfair to say he did not deserve the title by any chance.

Dickens lived in an era when Britain was undergoing several changes. Dickens was mature in the age of the railway, the telegraph, and the steam vessel. The Economic historians are often cautious now describing what was happening in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century as the 'industrial revolution.' There were dramatic changes in towns, especially in cotton towns of the industrial north of Britain. It grew from one million inhabitants at the time of his birth to three million inhabitants at the time of his death.

It is important to present an overview of the three great thinkers who had the privilege to be remembered, even after they died, for their understanding and contribution to such changes. These three members were: Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, and Jeremy Bentham. Adam Smith's masterpiece *Wealth of Nations* (1776), had become a revelation for those who believed the government should not interfere with the economy in any case. If everyone would work for his own sake and advantage, Smith's famous 'invisible hand' would ensure that it was for the good of the public. There are many things that the government should do as they cannot be left in the hands of the individuals like the system of law-making, enforcement, and many other things and maybe relieving the country from poverty; however, any interference in the economy would be harmful.

Thomas Malthus earned fame and recognition from his argument by stating that Population growth had a natural tendency to exceed food supply. There was a tremendous growth of population; this was referred to by Malthus as a 'presaged disaster'. Malthus offered the solution as self-control on the part of the parents, otherwise, we may face starvation. He was often referred to as a killjoy person. Dickens, however, set himself against such established doctrines. In *Hard Times*, Thomas Gradgrind's younger child was called Adam Smith. Gradgrind himself was a preacher of utilitarianism associated with Jeremy Bentham. Dickens cooperated with Utilitarians on the grounds of health reforms, but it must be noted that he was instinctively against the philosophies associated with the three influential powers Adam Smith, Malthus, and Jeremy Bentham, about the government during his days. Dickens neither acknowledged their power nor did he offer any critique of their understanding of society.

Dickens was working on *Morning Chronicle* during his reforms on poor law. The issue of the poor law in *Oliver Twist* was not an attack on a new piece of legislation. Dickens considered himself to be with those who were the victims of the law. Around the 1850s Dickens published

many articles in *Household Words* on industrial accidents, blaming mill owners and magistrates. Dickens was certainly conscious of the issues of his times and the issues posed by child labour in the working situation during the industrial revolution. However, it is interesting to know that none of his child heroes or victims has been shown directly associated or involved in such work. Dickens was more serious about the lack of education of the children rather than the work they had to do. He was particularly concerned with two things of his time, education of children and health.

At the beginning of the 19th century, there was a voice whether the mass of the working class deserved to be educated or not. It was believed that they were supposed to work and education would make them restless. Dickens by that time had varied experience of schooling and it was resolved that every child must have some kind of schooling. Thereafter, even if someone wanted to work in a factory, he was allowed some schooling too. Two important factors promoted a new level of energy to engage with some of the social issues, the first was cholera which hit Brittan around 1832, and the second was the politics of public health. Dickens published several articles on health issues in *Household Words* and the journal entitled *All the Year Around.* Dickens did all that was possible to make Brittan Cholera free and reformed the health sector to a great extent.

Check your Progress

1. Discuss two important aspects of Dickens as a social reformer

_____

_____

11.2.2 Some Important Works of Dickens:

Dickens has written a great number of works. He was a great novelist of the Victorian period. Some of his works are, *Nicholas Nickleby (1839), A Christmas Carol (1843), Oliver Twist (1838), Great Expectations (1861), David Copperfield (1850), Bleak House (1852), Hard Times (1854), The Little Dorrit (1857), The Old Curiosity Shop (1868)*, and many more. Here we will discuss a few of the important works of Charles Dickens for our understanding.

11.2.3 *Pickwick Papers*:

This work of Dickens was published in the year 1836. The novel has 57 chapters. The novel is set in southern England between the years 1831-1837. It has given an enduring literary

expression of "coaching days" of English life. While Dickens was writing his novel, the Britain of his times was overtaken by railroads, macadam roads. The same is reflected in this book in too many instances.

The novel is about a Pickwick club which is presided by Samuel Pickwick who plans to establish a travelling society in which four members will travel to England and make a report on their travelling. The four members who will travel are Mr. Pickwick, a retired businessman; Tracy Tupman; Augustus Snodgrass, though a poet but never wrote a poem; and Nathaniel Winkle a sportsman.

On their first journey, they are scolded by a cabman who apprehends them as informers. He manages to gather a crowd to confirm his suspicion. However, they are rescued by Alferd Jingle who travels to Rochester. Jingle being an adventurer is attracted to wealthy women. At Catham, they witness army drills and meet Mr. Wardle who invites them. Pickwick visits him along with his friends in the evening and enjoys card games, flirting, storytelling, etc. Meanwhile, Tupman develops an affair with Mr. Wardle's spinster sister Racheal while Mr. Snodgraas falls in love with Mr. Wardle's daughter. However, Tupman is deceived by Jingle, who elopes with the spinster sister of Mr. Wardle. Then Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick chase Jingle and are able to catch him with the help of his lawyer, Mr. Perker. They buy off Jingle, hence; prevent Racheal from entering into an unhappy marriage. The novel is filled with elements of comedy and sentiments. Some of the important characters in the novel are Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Wardle, Jingle, Sam Weller, Tony Weller, Bob Sawyer, etc.

11.2.4 *Oliver Twist*:

This novel was published in the year 1838**.** Oliver is born in 1830 in England, his mother whose name hardly anybody knew died soon after giving birth to Oliver. He had to spend his first nine years of life in an orphan house. Oliver later is transferred to an adult workhouse. Here he was bullied many times by other young boys to ask for more food at the end of every meal. Therefore, Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle decides to offer five pounds to someone who will take the boy away from the workhouse. Oliver was lucky not to be apprenticed to a cruel Chimney Sweeper but was apprenticed to a local undertaker Mr. Sowerberry. Here too Oliver is involved in a fight after one of the apprentices makes some disparaging comments on Oliver's mother.

Oliver in response attacks him and therefore he has to tolerate the anger of Mr. Sowerberry. Oliver in a state of desperation runs for London.

Exhausted Oliver meets Jack who offers him shelter in London in the house of Fagin. Interestingly, Fagin is a career criminal who trains orphans in pickpocketing. After some days of training, Oliver along with two others is sent for pickpocketing. The other two try their hands on an elderly man and try to steal his handkerchief, Oliver is terrified, and he escapes narrowly. He almost ends up being caught for the theft. Mr. Brownlow whose handkerchief was stolen takes Oliver to his home; since Oliver was starving, therefore, he looked weak. Mr. Brownlow serves and nurses him back to his health. Mr. Brownlow is surprised to see a photo hanging on the walls of his room resembling Oliver.

Oliver was doing well at his home until the two other partners arrived and took him back to Fagin. Fagin sends Oliver and another person, Sikes, to commit another burglary. Throughout the episode, Oliver is apprehended by the house staff, but Sikes gets to flee. Mrs. Maylie, who lives there with her adopted niece, welcomes Oliver into the house. They become attached to Oliver, and he spends a lovely summer in the countryside with them. Fagin and a mystery man named Monks, on the other hand, are hell-bent on recapturing Oliver. Meanwhile, it is revealed that when Oliver's mother died, she left behind a gold locket. The locket is obtained and destroyed by monks. When the Maylies arrive in London, Nancy meets Rose in private and warns her of Fagin's plans, but the meeting is overheard by a member of Fagin's gang. When Sikes learns of Nancy's confession, he violently murders her and escapes London. He hangs himself accidently while fleeing an angry mob and his terrible conscience.

Maylie united Oliver with Mr. Brownlow; she confronts Monks and enquires the truth about Oliver’s parentage. We are told that Monk is Oliver’s half-brother. Their father Mr. Leeford, who was married to a wealthy woman was not happy with the marriage and therefore had an affair with Oliver’s mother Agnes Fleming. Monks tried his best that Oliver did not get his share of the property. Mr. Brownlow made Monk sign on the petition to ensure that Oliver gets his share of the property. In the meantime, it is also discovered that Rose is the younger sister of Agnes Fleming, hence, she is the aunt of Oliver. Fagin receives punishment for his crime and Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver finally to live a peaceful life.

11.2.5 *Great Expectations*:

This novel was published in the year 1861. A young boy named Pip lives with his sister and her husband in the marshes of Kent. One evening he sits in a cemetery looking at the tombstones of his parents and all of a sudden runaway convict appears behind the tombstone of a grave. He grabs Pip and orders to fetch him some food. Pip accepts the order and gets him the desired food; soon the runaway convict is captured, but he saves Pip and claims he himself stole the items.

One fine day Uncle Pumblechook takes Pip to play at Satis House, this is the house of a wealthy lady called Miss Havisham, she is an eccentric lady who wears an old dress always wherever she goes and when she leaves the house, she stops all her clocks in the home. Pip during his visit meets a beautiful lady named Estella, she is very indifferent to him. However, Pip can't help himself from falling in love with her. He dreams of becoming rich only to be worthy of Estela. He also apprehends that Miss Havisham is training him to become a gentleman only to get him married to Estella. However, he is disappointed after he understands the intention of Miss Havisham to make him regular and common labour to assist the family business.

Pip then collaborates with Joe, his brother-in-law, under Miss Havisham's supervision. Pip works reluctantly, but with the help of the plain, compassionate Biddy, he seeks to further his studies and meets Joe's spiteful day labourer, Orlick. Mrs. Joe, Pip's sister, is violently attacked one night following an altercation with Orlick, and becomes a mute invalid. Pip believes Orlick was behind the attack based on her indications.

Meanwhile, a lawyer named Jaggers brings the news to Pip that one of his well-wishers had left a large fortune for him. Pip is delighted that his dream of marrying Estella was coming true. He apprehends that Miss. Havisham had left the large fortune to ensure that Estella likes the match for her. He believes that the secret benefactor was none but Miss Havisham. In all of this, Mrs. Joe dies and Pip is deeply grief-struck by her departure. He is appalled at the loss of Mrs. Joe. After several years a known figure enters his room and informs him, it is the same convict, Magwitch, who had ordered Pip to get him some food. He tells Pip it is he, who has left the large fortune for him and not Miss Havisham. He was deeply moved by the kindness of Pip that he decided to devote his life to making him a gentleman.

Pip is surprised but he is morally bound to help Magwitch because he is pursued by police and Compeyson, his partner in the crime. Pip becomes complicated after knowing that Compeyson is the man who abandoned Miss Havisham and Estella is the daughter of Magwitch. Miss Havisham raised Estella only to break the hearts of men to seek revenge for her pain, however, Pip was too young to experiment for all of this. Miss Havisham is delighted to see Estella playing with the emotions of Pip, although she pleaded with Pip to forgive her for all her misdeeds and Pip forgives her. She, while sitting near the fireplace, catches fire and she gets engulfed in flames, because of which she becomes invalid. She repented all that she did; meanwhile, Estella is married to an upper-class clout Bentley Drummble. The end of the novel takes a dramatic shift when Magwitch dies and Pip loses his fortune. He wanted to marry Biddy but on his return home, he finds that she had married Joe already. He decides to work with his friend Herbert. After many years when he visits home, he finds Estella lost, her husband had treated her badly, though he is dead now. Pip feels that Estella‘s indifference is replaced with a sad kindness, the two of them then, hand in hand roam together only to believe they would never depart again.

11.2.6 *David Copperfield*:

This novel was published in the year 1850. It is an autobiographical novel. David narrates his story of the youth when he happily lived with his mother and the nurse Peggotty. His father died even before the birth of David. While David was still a child, his mother married another man Mr. Murdstone. He is not a well-behaved husband; he treats David cruelly. He also brings his sister, Miss Murdstone into the house, therefore, doubling the troubles of David. Hence Murdstones sends him away to school. David attends the school at Salem House which is owned by Mr. Creakle. Peggotty takes for a visit to her home where she meets her brother Mr. Peggotty and his two adopted children Ham and Emly.

In the meantime, while David was on a visit, he received the news about the death of his mother. He is neglected by Murdstones, he works in a wine bottling company of Murdstone with Mr. Micawber who mismanages his accounts. While Mr. Micawber tries to run to London to escape from his debt, David tries to look for the sister of his father Miss Besty Trotwood. He travels a long distance to reach out to her. She takes him in on the advice of his friend Mr. Dick.

David is sent to a school operated by Doctor Strong by Miss Besty Trotwood. Here, David forms a connection with Agnes, Mr. Wickfield's daughter. Uriah Heep, another astute fellow, resides at Mr. Wickfield's boarding.He interferes in people's affairs unduly, aggravating their problems. Miss Betsey travels to London to tell David that her financial security has been exposed as a result of Mr. Wickfield's collaboration with Uriah Heep.

David, who has grown increasingly enamoured with Dora, promises to do everything he can to make their future together a reality. However, Mr. Spenlow bans Dora from marrying David. That night, Mr. Spenlow is killed in a carriage accident, and Dora is sent to live with her two aunts. Meanwhile, Uriah Heep warns Doctor Strong that he accuses Annie Strong, Doctor Strong's wife, of having an affair with Jack Maldon, her young cousin.

David marries Dora, who proves to be an inept wife due to her lack of knowledge of home responsibilities. However, this in no way diminishes David's feelings for her. Miss Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth's ward, summons David and informs him that Steerforth has left Little Em'ly, and Mr. Dick arranges the reconciliation between Doctor Strong and Annie. Miss Dartle also mentions Steerforth's servant Littimer proposing to her and Little Em'ly fleeing. Little Em'ly's childhood friend Martha helps David and Mr. Peggotty locate Little Em'ly and deliver Mr. Peggotty to her. Little Em'ly and Mr. Peggotty, as well as the Micawbers, decide to relocate to Australia, saving the day for Agnes and Miss Betsey by exposing Uriah Heep's deception against Mr. Wickfield.

There is a strong storm that hits the Yarmouth and Ham is killed in the process of saving a wrecked ship sailor. The sailor is none but Steerforth, in the meantime Dora falls ill and dies. David leaves the country to travel abroad and when he returns his long-lasting secret love for Agnes grows. They get happily married with several children.

11.2.7 *Hard Times*:

This novel was published in the year 1854.Thomas Gradgrind is a wealthy man living in England. He is devoted to rational philosophy. He guides his oldest children Louisa and Tom according to the principles of this philosophy and prohibits them from plunging into any fanciful or imaginative pursuit**.** As the children grew older, they both struggle with themselves, Tom turns self-interested, becomes self-indulgent and a hedonist. Similarly, Louisa also struggles with her inner confusion. She feels incomplete in her life as if something very important in her life was

missing. Finally, she marries Josiah Bounderby, a friend of Gradgrind and was more than twice her age. He was also a wealthy man. He speaks about his success as self-made because he was abandoned by his mother when he was an infant.

Meanwhile, another impoverished “Hand” (a name that Dickens uses for the poor labours of the town) named Stephen Blackpool struggles with his love for Rachael. He cannot marry her because he is already married to a woman who drinks and remains absent from home for months and even years at times. Stephen enquires from Bounderby about the divorce he wants to take from his wife but learns that it is only for the rich.

From London, James Harthouse arrives to begin his political career. He aspires to be a Gradgrind disciple. He develops feelings for Louisa and attempts to seduce her. Mr. Sparist, who is having difficulty persuading Louisa, tries to persuade her. Mrs. Sparsit sees Harthouse declare his love for Louisa, and Louisa agrees to see him later that night in Coketown. Louisa, on the other hand, goes to her father's house, where she bemoans her upbringing, confessing to Gradgrind that her upbringing had left her married to a man she didn't love, emotionally distant, painfully unhappy, and probably in love with Harthouse. Gradgrind is rendered speechless with self-reproach as she collapses to the floor, and he begins to see the flaws in his logical self-interest ideology.

Sissy, who adores Louisa, pays a visit to Harthouse and encourages him to leave town for good. This enrages Bounderby, who intensifies his search for Stephen. Stephen falls into the Old Hell Shaft mining pit while returning home to clear up his concerns and fears. Despite the fact that he is discovered by Rachael and Louisa, he dies soon after giving Rachael an emotional farewell.Gradgrind and Louisa suspect Tom of robbing the bank, and they devise a plan to smuggle him out of England with the help of the circus performers with whom Sissy had grown up. They come close to succeeding, but are stopped by Bitzer, a young man who attended Gradgrind's school and represents all of the qualities of detached rationality that Gradgrind previously advocated, but who now recognises its limitations. The lisping circus owner arranges for Tom to escape Bitzer's clutches, and the young burglar manages to flee England in the end.

Finally, Mrs. Sparsit, eager to assist Bounderby in his search for the robbers, pulls Mrs. Pegler in to meet Bounderby, believing Mrs. Pegler is a potential witness. Mrs. Pegler is revealed to be Bounderby's beloved mother, whom he has barred from visiting him: after all, Bounderby is

not a self-made man. Mrs. Sparsit is fired and sent to her unfriendly relatives by Bounderby, who is furious. He dies alone in the streets of Coketown five years later. Gradgrind abandons his fact-based ideology in favour of using his political influence to aid the underprivileged. Tom recognises his mistake, but he dies before seeing his family again. Unlike Sissy, who marries and raises a huge and loving family, Louisa never marries or has children. Despite this, Louisa is adored by Sissy's family and eventually learns to sympathise with her fellow humans.

From the above discussion it may be said that the above discussed novels are considered important works of Dickens. It was important to present an overview of these novels so that you can motivate yourself to read them. In the following two units, you will study Dickens in detail along with his important work *Oliver Twist.*

Check your Progress

1. Comment on the theme of the novel *Great Expectations.*

_____

_____

11.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- identify Charles Dickens as an established novelist of English Literature.
- know about the life of Charles Dickens
- recognize Dickens as a social reformer
- acquaint yourselves with some important works of Dickens
- understand the political and social conditions of the Victorian Period.

11.4 Glossary

Illustration: Providing examples with detail

Autobiographical: Dealing with one’s own life

Numerous: Many, a lot of anything

Hyperbole: A figure of speech, exaggeration, overstatement

Extravagant: Prodigal, lacking restraint in spending money

Melodramatic: Overemotional

Tyrannical: Autocratic, oppressive

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Charles Dickens was born in_____.
2. The full name of Charles Dickens was _____.
3. Charles Dickens wrote novels during _____ period.
4. Oliver is an important character in the novel of Dickens titled _____.
5. Estella is an important character in which novel of Dickens _____.
6. Which novel of Dickens is autobiographical? _____.
7. *David Copperfield* was published in the year_____.
8. The *Pickwick Papers* was published in the year_____.
9. Pip appears as a character in which work of Dickens _____.
10. *Great Expectations* was published in the year_____.

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Mention some of the important works written by Dickens.
2. Discuss Dickens as a social reformer.
3. Write a short note on the life of Charles Dickens.
4. What are the autobiographical elements prevalent in *David Copperfield*?
5. Discuss the theme of the novel *Pickwick Papers.*

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1**.** Discuss Charles Dickens as Novelist.

2. What are the various themes employed by Dickens in his works. Discuss in detail.

3. Write a detailed note on Victorian Period.

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bloom, Harold. *Charles Dickens.* New York: Infobase Learning, ed. 2013.
2. Cox, Oliver C. *Caste, Class and Race*. New York: Double Day, 1948.
3. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Volume II revised ed, Great Britain: 1994.
4. Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, 9th ed., Great Britain: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1994.
5. Gradesaver on Oliver. Retrieved on January 25, 2021, romhttp:www.gradesaver.com/lit/oliver/summary.html
6. Mathias, P. *The First Industrial Nation*, 2nd ed. England Ltd. 1983.

Unit - 12: *Oliver Twist*- Introduction

Structure

12.0 Introduction
12.1 Objectives
12.2 Overview of the Period
- **12.2.1** Victorian Literature
- **12.2.2** Realism in the Victorian Period
- **12.2.3** Charles Dickens and his writings
- **12.2.4** Background of Oliver Twist
- **12.2.5** Publication of the Novel
- **12.2.6** Synopsis of the Novel
- **12.2.7** Contrary Characters in *Oliver Twist*
- **12.2.8** Social Issues in the Novel
- **12.2.9** Moral Values in the Novel
- **12.2.10** Critical Response

12.3 Learning Outcomes
12.4 Glossary
12.5 Sample Questions
12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

12. 0 Introduction

Human beings are bound to live together with the people around them. People differ according to their perception, feeling, temperament and thinking. This leads to the gap between the communities in a society. As witnessed during the **reign** of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), this period reflects some major developments in English writing. It was the era of transformation of rural England to an urban one. People of this period realized their lives were changing. It was a period of economic expansion and rapid change and the population of England had increased to 6.5 million. England became one of the largest industrial centres. The industrial revolution brought new technologies like the railway, steaming printing press etc. However, the industrial revolution was merely the beginning of the era of cruelty for the poor people who were forced to work in mills and factories for their livelihood. They were underpaid and ill-treated; especially

the women and the children. There developed a strong division between the working and the opulent class. It was due to the Industrial revolution England became the first to encounter social problems despite being the first richest country in the world. This period is known for refined and conservative moral values. Their religious faith was breaking into Christian and atheist beliefs. New genres were getting established. Amid the changes of this great age, two things stand out clearly – democracy and education. People started protesting for the right to vote especially the women and the working class as they realized it is the common people who bear the burden of sorrows whereas the privileged gain the most political and monetary benefit. At the same time, the growth of education had a great influence on the lives of people. As it was the age of newspapers and books, literary art began to flourish. People began to read more and more with the growth of libraries and an increase in the publication of books.

12.1 Objectives

Our primary objectives in this unit are:

- To give the students an overview of the history of the Victorian period
- To acquaint the students with the emergence of the English novel
- To provide the students' knowledge about the Victorian literature
- To familiarise the students with Charles Dickens and his writings
- To introduce students with *Oliver Twist* written by Charles Dickens
- To familiarise the students with the various issues which Dickens raised in the novel

12.2 Overview of the Period

The 19th century was the age of English novels. It flourished more due to the development of the printing press during this period. Writers and philosophers brought about myriad reforms in Victorian society including the abolition of slavery and child labour. It was a high point in the history of English Literature when novels as a genre expanded. England became the centre of novel-readers as various transformations in the English society were expressed by the writers of the age. The novel became a tool to present the picture of life prevailing at that time especially in middle-class people as they rose in power and importance. The middle class

contributed to a rapid rise in the popularity of the novels. Novelists tried their best to portray what the middle-class readers were interested to read. The novel in this era holds the great importance which the drama held in the Elizabeth age and never before, the novel has appeared in any age with such growth and perfection. Realism was the main focus of Victorian literature making it different from romantic literature. The purpose was to portray realistic circumstances of people living at that time. It was the **amalgam** of **optimism** and **pessimism**. Optimism in a sense changes in the standard of living by progress in technology and the Industrial revolution while the pessimism is related to poverty, hunger and miserable condition of the working class. Therefore, it was the age of conflict with many social problems prevailing at that time, from science to moral breakdown.

12.2.1 Victorian Literature:

Literature of the 19th century seems to diverge from artistic criteria. This age produced many writers who deserve to rank among the greatest of writers. The main motive of the writers was to project the basic problems of human experience through the presentation of great characters in their work. As we see, the novel of William Makepeace Thackeray *Vanity Fair* shows the world is a dark and unfair place, it satirizes middle-class society. Through the character of Becky Sharp, he shows his criticism towards the society. Thomas Hardy in his novels used to question religious and social structures through his characters. His novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Far from the Madding Crowd, Jude the Obscure*, and *The Mayor of Caster Bridge* analyse the social confinement on the lives of people living in England and criticises beliefs relating to marriage, education and religion that caused trouble in the lives of people. Bronte Sisters (Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte and Anne Bronte) created remarkable works like *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte to analyse myth, class and gender. *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte used gothic elements and showed **deception** and **bigamy** prevailing at that time. Another novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) by Anne Bronte was based on realism and is known as one of the first feminist novels. Similarly, George Eliot was one of the famous female writers with an unbelievable intellect as she portrays thoughts, anxieties and inner feelings of characters as in her work *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) where she shows the growth of various marriages in a small town. There were some great prose writers too whose works are of artistic merit. Their main focus was the conflicting issues related to

democracy, education, religion and politics. Poetry also plays an important role in the Victorian era. It was different from romantic poetry. The main centre of Victorian poetry was the realistic view of people's lives revolving around the Victorian conflict prevailing at that time. Two new forms were introduced at that time i.e. Narrative Poetry and Dramatic Monologue. Narrative poetry was written in the form of stories like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862) while in Dramatic monologue speaker narrates the main part of the poem to an audience in the poem itself. Examples of Dramatic monologues are Robert Browning's *MyLast Duchess* (1842) and Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Ulysses* (1842).

12.2.2 Realism in the Victorian Period:

Realism started as a literary movement as a reaction and departure from the idealism of the Romantic period. The word realism refers to the faithful perception of the world in literature. Realism appeared in literature in the second half of the 19th century, mostly in novels. It was a mediation between the actual and the ideal, particular and general, individual and species. The main motive of Realism was to recreate reality as it was. As a result, the plot was no longer the central focus of the author, but creating interesting characters was a high priority. It also laid stress on describing the substantial details of life, as opposed to the natural world portrayed by the Romantic period. It was the way to explore the interior lives of characters and to show transparency regarding the problem of representation of people. The writers of the 19th century rejected the artificiality of both the Classicism and Romanticism institutions. They believed that artificiality misrepresented the harsh realities of life. They tried to represent the lives, appearances, customs, and the problems of the middle and lower classes, of the undistinguished, the ordinary, the lowly and the unadorned. They scrupulously set themselves to reproduce all the so far ignored aspects of contemporary life and society-its mental attitudes, physical settings and material conditions. Despite rising prosperity, a huge gap was witnessed between the rich and the poor. The novelists of the period represent the modesty of true realism like George Eliot in her first novel *Adam Bede* (1859), consider the 'truthfulness' for the quality of many Dutch paintings, which idealistic people contemn. The other novel *Bleak House* (1852) by Dickens encounters the depths of hardship, disease and loss suffered by the poor. Another novel *North and South* (1854)byElizabeth Gaskell compares the rural south with the unpleasant conditions of the industrial north. Some other novels dealing with realism were Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil*

(1845). The novel is a social commentary on the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The novelists of this age tried to represent this inequality that lay hidden under the outward affluence.

12.2.3 Charles Dickens and his Writing:

Charles John Huffam Dickens, born on 7th February 1812, Portsmouth in Hampshire England belonged to a poor family whose father along with the entire family except for Dickens was sent to Marshalsea prison for not paying his debt. Dickens was nine years old and was taken out of school to work in the factory at the age of eleven. He was supporting his poor family by pasting labels on bottles, wandering like a homeless to survive. His life was transformed when he entered journalism and his first work *The Pickwick Papers* got published in 1836 at the age of 25. It was published serially in 1836-1837, it was full of liveliness and merriment. It was an overnight success, he was acknowledged with fame around the Victorian society, huge audiences would gather over his arrival in England. Dickens, the first famous author of that period, was known as the hero of realism as he made the stories out of incidents that he faced and the people who were facing the same. He was a brilliant enthusiastic observer with an active imaginary power which lead him to be a famous novelist. Dickens used to produce the writings that the public wanted, everything that Dickens attempted was full of liveliness and intensity. At the age of 15, he acquired knowledge of inns, stables and horsey persons which is seen in his novels. Dickens began drawing sketches for various magazines and newspapers under the pseudonym 'Boz'. At the age of 21, he made his first sketch by the name of "Mr. Minns and his cousin" and it was seen in his first book, *Sketches by Boz*, in 1835.

Dicken's works reflect the dullness of life to which people could relate themselves, as they lived in the same condition. He gained knowledge of human life, by understanding and analysing the victims of the society. He began to give a dramatic outlook to his works by exaggerating the situations, voices and gestures of characters that pleased the audience. His empathetic soul gave courage to the weak, hope to the weary and fought against injustice. The novels of Dickens are full of symbolic images and situations of desperate alienation of the individual which is reflected in the characters of his novels. In other words, we can say he was the victim of his own book. He edited a weekly journal for 20 years, wrote 15 novels and hundreds of short stories. He was an unflagging letter writer and agitated smartly for children's rights and other social reforms. His work *The Pickwick Papers* was followed by *Oliver Twist,*

Nicholas Nickleby, Old Curiosity Shop with many other works which indicate the limitless invention of his literary art. He also travelled to America where he was a popular novelist. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was his last work before he died. It was left incomplete. Themes, such as arranged marriages, child cruelty, betrayal, deceit and relations between people from different classes have been fully explored in his famous works.

12.2.4 Background of *Oliver Twist*:

Oliver Twist or The Parish Boy's Progress is known as one of the best novels of Dickens. The subtitle "*The Parish Boy's Progress*" was taken from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.* It was well-loved by the people of England as Dickens had already achieved success from his first work *Pickwick Papers*. The reason behind writing Oliver Twist was to **palliate** the evils under which the poor were suffering. *Oliver Twist* is a remarkable critique of poverty, the industrial revolution, child labour and the treatment of orphans. In the novel, he shows the life of an orphan living in the streets. The protagonist of the novel is a poor child, the miserable victim of society. He exaggerated the sorrowful condition of the poor child and showed the sentiments related to him.

Charles Dickens's novels like *Oliver Twist* represent the immense split in society. His novel *Oliver Twist* was a great success as it is referred as 'Newgate Novel' and was written as a protest against the Poor Law of 1834. The raising of the workhouse was induced by the Poor Law. The Poor Law promoted the poor people to depend on charity rather than utilising themselves in work or looking for employment. The children were forced to work like savages, in other words, child exploitation was happening at that time. The novel revolves around a boy namely Oliver who encounters a city of evils and avoids being corrupted. The plot is about how Oliver's life is changed from the workhouse to becoming an aristocrat. The novel exposes a lot of Victorian irreverence which Dickens had experienced as he was in poverty himself. In *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens shows us many of the social inequities of those historic times. He was disgusted by the way the poor people were treated. He believes that the characterisation of the novel would affect the government to bring a change in society. This novel is known for the **spunky** realism with which Dickens represent the lower-class and the horrifying living circumstances of London slums. Dickens shows the reality of England through his fiction.

12.2.5 Publication of the Novel:

Oliver Twist was a serial publication between 1837 and 1839 in a magazine called *Bentley's Miscellany*, of which Dickens was an editor. This only held the reader's interest and increased the publicity of his novels. Dickens started writing *Oliver Twist* in instalments before his first novel*, The Pickwick Papers*. The novel *Oliver Twist* was implausibly popular for the style i.e "Newgate novel", as this style was best-selling from the 1820s to 1840s. The name was taken from the Newgate Prison, the main prison for crooks (thieves, murderers, pickpockets) in London. While critics often denounce such novels for spreading immorality but the audience usually love them. *Oliver Twist* is the only "Newgate Novel" of Dickens. It has been adapted as a film and Broadway musical and has been believed to have lasting worth since it was published. The novel was not only based on the **seraphic** orphan but the worst environment he was facing, and the mean people on the streets of London. The novel was considered as the exact painting of social reality that Dickens presented in public.

12.2.6 Synopsis of the Novel:

The novel is about the young orphan, Oliver, who is born in a workhouse to a woman not known to anybody. She dies after giving birth to him, and the boy Oliver was sent to an orphanage, where he was mistreated by other orphans. One day the boy asked for more gruel, this led Mr. Bumble to decide to get rid of him. The constant hardships and sufferings forced Oliver to run away to London where he meets a boy namely Jack Dawkins, or the Artful Dodger, who takes him to an apartment where he meets Fagin, a gentleman. He offers Oliver a place to stay and food to eat. Oliver eventually after some time comes to know that Fagin and his boys are pickpockets and thieves until he was wrongly accused of stealing the handkerchief of an old gentleman, Mr. Brownlow. Oliver then was taken to the courtroom where he fainted. Mr. Brownlow feels sympathy for Oliver and takes him to his own place. He takes care of him as a guardian but on the other hand, Fagin was not happy about losing him. He had a fear to get exposed. He then made a conspiracy with his people to get him back. So one day Mr Brownlow sends Oliver to return some books to the bookseller where Nancy, one of Fagin's conspirator, kidnaps Oliver and takes him back to the evil Fagin. Oliver is forced at gunpoint by Fagin to go for robbery where he is shot by one of the servants. The next morning Mrs Maylie and her beautiful niece decide to protect him from the police and nurse him. Meanwhile, Nancy feels pity

for Oliver when she overhears Fagin and Monks' deal. Nancy decides to tell the truth to Rose Maylie that Monks is Oliver's half-brother, who is the big enemy of Oliver and is trying to destroy him. Finally, all crimes committed by Fagin and his conspirators come to an end and they get severe punishment. And in the end, Oliver lives happily with Mr. Brownlow.

12.2.7 Contrary Characters in *Oliver Twist*:

The characters in the novel are depicted as social commentary, criticising the hypocrisy and laws of government and criminal structure. Dickens through his characters points out the suffering imposed by the system and its unfairness. Dickens's purpose was to make the novel the instrument of morality and justice by the exaggeration of the characters. In *Oliver Twist*, he puts across that the attributes of wisdom and humanity can be **irrecoverably** lost if it is exposed to unrestrained corrupting influences. For this reason, Dickens laid great emphasis on the environment in the development of characters in the novel. From the character of Oliver to the character of Monks, the novel depicts the two sides of the same coin. Oliver, the innocent and virtuous exact opposite of his brother Edward Monks, Dickens shows us the dark side of Victorian society as well as his optimism for a brighter future. These two main characters created by Dickens not only tell us about Oliver's courage and Monks' self-interest but also shows us the Victorian society that he lived in as well as the society it could become. Dickens throughout the novel provides numerous examples where Oliver proves himself righteous with no self-interest at all. Dickens through the character of Oliver represents how society should look like, while through the Monks' portrayal Dickens shows the world is filled with greed and hate. Monks desires to destroy the life of Oliver so that he could inherit all his property. Monks' character shows the coldness and detachment of society where the only priority is self-interest. The novel displays the brighter side in terms of Oliver, while on the other side it shows the darker side in terms of Monks. As Oliver and Monks are related by blood they could have loved each other but the society and its influences made Monks view Oliver as his enemy. Dickens expresses his views on Victorian society through these two characters. Oliver and Monks represent the best and the worst of humanity. Through the portrayal of Oliver, he gives the role model to the society. Dickens reflects the horrors that children were put through as a result of **covetousness** that labelled industrial society. Dickens not only shows the reality of people but he also tries to show that change is needed.

12.2.8 Social Issues in the Novel:

Oliver Twist reflects the unfair treatment from society, it exposes the poor condition of people especially the sufferings of children during the Victorian era. Dickens raises the issues of persecution of Poor Law, the evils of London and the exploitation of children. Social issues like **disparity**, discrimination, prejudice were known to a great extent at that time. In *Oliver Twist*, the children were facing hard times, they were tortured every day, the misery was common in their life. There was no justice for them. They were treated as savages and were made to work all day and night. We saw it in the character of Oliver as he had to go through many hard circumstances to survive. During the Industrial Revolution, their condition was same and the children were forced to work from a very young age. They had to struggle for their livelihood. While on the other side, social prejudice was much prevalent at that time just as in the novel, the children were mistreated by the people who had more money. Children who came from lower backgrounds were even not considered worthy of getting affection. Prejudiced beliefs resulted in biased treatment of individuals based on equality. In the novel, Oliver was very flimsy because he did not get anything to eat. Nobody was there to take care of him. At that time there were so many children who were suffering. An orphan was not treated like the other children, they were assumed to be worthless and the lowest in society. In the earlier chapters of the novel, the head of the workhouse appears to be very cruel. He did not baulk to be violent with children if they went against the rules in the workhouse. As in the novel Oliver just because asked for more food, the punishment he got was beyond his imagination. Life in the workhouses was **unenviable**, the ill-treatment of children was widespread, and children would get severely punished if they would do anything wrong. It was common to see children dying in the workhouses. The condition of that time was all depicted through the portrayal of Oliver. The effects of the Industrial Revolution were seen with the characters in the novel, especially children.

12.2.9 Moral Values in the Novel:

Despite the social conflicts in the novel *Oliver Twist,* Charles Dickens represents the moral values through the characters in the novel. As moral values play an important role in shaping human life Dickens uses the novel *Oliver Twist*, as a perfect medium to explore important moral values in the Victorian society. As audience, we notice that society uses various stereotypes against characters in *Oliver Twist* like Mr. Bumble and Mr. Sowerberry.

The moral values that could be seen in the novel concerning the characters were:

(a) Courage: It is the ability to take a stand on the right thing in hard situations. From the novel, we have seen in the character of Oliver, how he stands up for the right from the beginning till the end. At the start of the novel, he asks for more **gruel** from the master without fear. Although he appears to be weak his courage pushes him to do the action. Throughout the novel, we saw him courageously fighting for the right.

(b) Honesty: We witness the character of Nancy, who works for the criminal Fagin. She feels pity when she sees Oliver suffering. She decides to tell the truth to Mrs. Maylie about the wicked plan of his master Fagin with Monks. Monks, half-brother of Oliver, is the biggest threat to Oliver as he wants all his inherited property from his father. He is the only proof, who knows Oliver's family background. However, she knows that her revelation will put her in danger. But instead, she chooses the path of honesty, she is ready to face the consequences without being afraid.

(c) Sympathy: It is sharing the feeling of others (especially feelings of sorrow and anguish) or we can say feeling sorry for others. We see the character of Mr. Brownlow as the victim of pickpocketing. He thinks Oliver was the one who stole his handkerchief till the time he was proven innocent in front of the magistrate. He feels sympathy for Oliver, as he faints in the courtroom. He took Oliver to his own house and decided to take care of him as a guardian.

(d) Staunchness: It means trueness or we can say our attitudes and aims are not changed. In the novel, we have seen the character of Miss Rose Maylie. When she meets Nancy for the first time, she asks Nancy to leave Fagin and his criminal activities. She persuades her to live a better life. Although Nancy refuses, as she didn't want to betray Fagin, Rose did her best to motivate her for a bright future.

(e) Generousness: It is the trait of being kind or the concern of being good or willing to be charitable and pleasant. Meanwhile, in the novel, we have seen the characters of Mrs. Maylie and Rose. They decide to nurse him when he was injured. They try to protect him from the police and save him from a difficult situation. Oliver feels safe, he gets happiness and peace while being with them. Through *Oliver Twist*, Dickens not only shows us the evil side of the society but also gives us the moral messages which are implied in the novel. Therefore, moral values are important to humanity.

12.2.10 Critical Response:

Charles Dickens amicably represents the emotions of Victorian people through his novel, *Oliver Twist.* The author was fully acclaimed for his description of implacable reality. Dickens was admired to find good in all mankind despite the grimy environment of miserable orphans like Oliver. Dicken's representation of evils of the workhouses, starvation of children, factory system and venality done in the name of Poor Laws existent at that time caught the attention of the readers. Despite being socially pertinent, *Oliver Twist* too faced criticism, the novel appeared too mawkish and lacking. The major criticism was raised by the Jewish community against the negative portrayal of Fagin, the Jew. Fagin is considered one of the most monstrous and villainous Jew characters in all of English Literature. In 1854 the Jewish Chronicle demonstrated the criticism of Dickens in public. Despite the portrayal of Fagin, Dickens never openly mistreated any Jew nor did he openly hold any anti-Semitic beliefs. Dickens has been criticised for his selection of backdrop and characters. At times the novel inclined towards the sentimentality that appears more loathsome to readers. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the novel plays a significant role in denouncing the Poor Laws, ill-treatment of children, criminals and other social miscreants who are disregarded by so-called civilised people. Dickens's goal was to show the reality of society and how Oliver lived and survived in the circumstances where society did not need him. The novel illustrates the bright and dark side of human nature. This reason made Charles Dickens one of the best figures of his time.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, you are expected to know brief history of the Victorian era. You should be able to know about Charles Dickens' contribution towards the society despite various problems and issues prevalent at that time.

12.4 Glossary

Reign: Rule

Amalgam: Combination

Optimism: Hope

Pessimism: Despair

Palliate: Lessen

Irreverence: Disrespectful act

Inequity: Injustice

Gruel: Porridge

Disparity: Inequality

Irrecoverably: Impossible to recover

Spunky: Courageous

Implausibly: Unbelievably

Seraphic: Kind personality

Unflagging: Energetic

Prejudice: Bias

Flimsy: Weak

Unenviable: Hard

Unrestrained: Uncontrolled

Implacable: Merciless

Grimy: Dirty

Merriment: Happiness

Venality: Corruption

Sentimentality: Falsely emotional

Mawkish: Insincerely emotional

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The Victorian Era was known due to the Industrial Revolution. [ ]

(a) True

(b) False

2. The novel got popularised in literature in the Victorian Period. [ ]

(a) True

(b) False

3. Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* to protest _____ law.

(a) Death penalty

(b) Poor law of 1834

(c) Law of estates

(d) Restoration Act

4. Oliver was born in_____.

(a) Hospital

(b) Railway Station

(c) Workhouse

(d) Streets

5. The rule Oliver violates in the workhouse was_____.

(a) Asking for more gruel

(b) Pickpocketing his master's ring

(c) Try to run from the workhouse

(d) Asking for new clothes

6. _____ saves Oliver from getting arrested for charges of pickpocketing a handkerchief.

(a) Mr. Brownlow

(b) Nancy

(c) Jack Dawkins

(d) Monks

7. _____ is the magazine in which *Oliver Twist* appeared in 1837.

(a) Blackwood's Magazine

(b) The Spectator

(c) Bentley's Miscellany

(d) Punch

8. _____ adopts Oliver at the end of the novel.

(a) Fagin

(b) Mr. Brownlow

(c) Monks

(d) Mr. Bumble

9. _____is the Artful Dodger's real name in the novel.

(a) Noah Claypole

(b) Charley Bates

(c) Jack Dawkins

(d) Bill Sikes

10. _____is the name of the author whose main theme of the novels is the suffering of children.

(a) William Shakespeare

(b) Charles Dickens

(c) Thomas Hardy

(d) George Eliot

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Give a brief note on the emergence of the novel in the Victorian period.
2. Write a short note on child labour raised by Charles Dickens in his novel *Oliver Twist*.
3. Discuss the critical reception of *Oliver Twist.*
4. Write a brief note on the villains of the novel *Oliver Twist*.
5. Mention any five important works of Charles Dickens.

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What was the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the people of Victorian society?
2. How far did Charles Dickens succeed in showing the problems of Victorian society in his novel *Oliver Twist*? Explain
3. The two main characters Oliver and Monks reflect the two sides of Victorian society – Explain.

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bloom, Harold. *Charles Dickens.* New York: Infobase Learning, ed. 2013.

2. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*, volume II revised ed. Great Britain 1994.

3. Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, 9th ed., Great Britain: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1994.

4. Eliot, George, *Middlemarch*, ed. Ashton, Rosemary, Penguin, 1994.

Unit 13: *Oliver Twist*- Plot Construction, Themes and Major Characters

13.0 Introduction
13.1 Objectives
13.2. *Oliver Twist*: Plot Construction, Themes and Major Characters
    13.2.1 Plot Construction
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13.0 Introduction

Oliver Twist is a novel by the Victorian novelist, Charles Dickens. This unit introduces the readers to the plot of the novel. The unit provides a brief socio-political context to the plot of *Oliver Twist.* Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* in the backdrop of the conditions in workhouses, child-labour, crime and poverty which was widespread in Victorian England, along with the growing wealth and progress of the country.

The Victorian Age roughly refers to the period when Queen Victoria (1837-1901) ruled over Britain. The period saw the emergence of Britain as the world's most powerful economy after winning the Napoleonic wars with France (1793-1815). This status of the great power and becoming the first industrialised urban society helped in the expansion of the British Empire worldwide. The period of Victorian age is considered to be "the modern period of progress and unrest" (Long 452).

Due to several reasons this period is a time of the "Victorian Paradox." It is because of the several contrasts and conflicts that were taking shape at this time. Some of these paradoxes had to do with the contrast between the rich and the poor; science and religion; men and women and the moral basis of authority.

The striking development that affected this period was the Industrial Revolution, because of which the Victorian period in England was a time of great prosperity. England had gained control over large parts of the world due to trade, slave-trade, colonial occupation and slave-based plantations. All these factors brought great wealth to the small island from all parts of the world. However, it was tragic to see that this wealth was not shared by all. In fact, the gap between the rich and poor was so enormous that it appeared as if Great Britain was not one, but two nations: one rich and one poor.

Secondly, there was a conflict between Science and Religion. The authority of the Church had been challenged due to the increasing use of rationality. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was no debate between science and religion. Science was considered to be the result of some divine expression, and not separate from God. It was the development of a scientific temperament that directed intellectual inquiry towards the Bible, especially, the story of the Creation of the World. In 1859, Darwin presented his theory of evolution in his book, *The Origin of Species* in which he argued that man has evolved from the lower species instead of being a production of some divine power. This led to a huge division among the intellectuals of the society, in which some spoke for and others against the theory. This created a "crisis of faith" among the ordinary people, who were traditional and religious. The growth of science challenged the teachings of the Bible. Doubt became the order of the day in Victorian England. The concept of religious sin was replaced with the zeal to participate in the rapid development of the period.

The third major influence in this Age was the emergence of Utilitarianism. This philosophy resulted from the arguments of Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, James Mill, and Thomas Malthus regarding the morality of governance. They advocated a morality that can create happiness and reduce those decisions that can bring discontent. The utilitarian philosophy sought the betterment of society as a whole, and did not consider the idea of suffering of the individual. According to Utilitarians, an action is to be judged as good if it is able to create "the greatest good of the greatest number" of people in any given situation.

The fourth element was the position of women in society. It was a strange fact that despite the ruling monarch of England being a woman, the women in Victorian England were seen as weak, incapable of being independent and were treated as secondary to men at home, as well as in the society. She was considered to be docile, loving and patient, "an angel in the

house," whose loving touch brought harmony to the home, and consequently to the society and to the nation. Women had no right to study beyond a basic level, hold jobs or own property. Marriage was the only way women could get respect in society. The unmarried women were objects of pity and scorn, and subjects of jokes as spinsters. The Victorian poet Tennyson wrote a poem "The Princess: A Medley" addressing the matter of women's higher education. It was widely appreciated and led him to the title of the Poet Laureate of England in the Victorian court. The subject of women's freedom and individuality were in conflict with the existing ideas about the role of women in society.In short, Victorian society believed in the "doctrine of separate spheres" for men and women.

The Victorian English society represents various industrial, cultural, political, scientific and military changes which influenced the literature of the period. The literature produced in this era envisions the challenges of the labour class in the factories and ponders upon the emerging number of child labourers. It also depicts the treatment of women and children and reflects upon the plight of the lower class in the society.

The Romantic Age gave way to the distinctly different Victorian poetry of Alfred Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning' and the novels of Charles Dickens (1812-70), George Eliot (1819-80),Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65), the Bronte sisters, William M. Thackeray (1811-63), Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81). It is believed that, "more than 60,000 works of prose fiction were published in Victorian Britain by as many as 7,000 novelists" (Britannica).

The novel emerged as a new literary genre in this period. It has followed the "three-decker" or three-volume structure initially and it reaches the modern single-volume format only in the 1890s. This period has noticed the flourishing of political, historical, religious, crime and comic novels. The novels also questioned different laws and bills through the literature of the period.

13.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarise you with the novel and the main story
- make you acquainted with the sequence of events that make up the plot of the novel

- help you to understand the plot construction
- enable you to comprehend the themes
- understand the major characters

13.2 *Oliver Twist*: Plot Construction, Themes, and Major Characters

Oliver Twist was published in 1837-38, in London. At first it was published in the form of a series in Bentley's *Miscellany*, a periodical edited by Dickens himself, between February 1837 and April 1839. In its first edition, the book was published in November 1838. The novel is a mixture of a children's story, a detective story and is also a novel of social protest. It tells in vivid detail the darker side of the policies and administration in Victorian England

As discussed above, this was the time of the industrial revolution in Europe, and the new emerging towns were rich in comparison to most rural areas due to various reasons that affect rural economy such as farming and agriculture. Most of these people preferred to work in the towns and cities because of the wealth that these cities promised to anyone who worked hard. This promise turned out to be tragically untrue for a vast majority. Consequently, this migration caused great suffering as the living conditions for these labourers were pathetic and wages were not enough. Moreover, people in small villages also found themselves starving or falling ill due to lack of money. There was a great divide between the rich and the poor.

The care of the poor, those who find themselves in difficulty due to many factors, has been a cause of concern in all societies across time, throughout the world. Mostly it was considered a religious duty to take care of those who were less fortunate. In medieval times in Europe, the Church, through the monasteries, took on the task of looking after those who could not find work or had come upon bad times. But slowly with the declining power of religion and the corruption of the Church, this responsibility was taken over by the political state. So "The Poor Law" was first approved in England in 1601. This law included the incapacitated, blind, old, impotent, and other such in the category of the poor who were unable to perform labour. It demanded that parishes manage these poor people and look after the poor in their own areas. But the advent of the Industrial Revolution changed the situation and living conditions of England and created new problems with families, property and work. The peasants who lived in a rural

community were more secure within their close family circles for many generations. The capitalist relationship between an employer and worker was dependent on the cash-nexus and the persistent rhythm of productivity, which left no room for respite. Moreover, the gap between the employer and the employee was much more.

As a result, new policies brought in Gilbert's Act in 1782. This new law allowed Parishes to work together in bigger groups, in shared poorhouses. Secondly, these poorhouses were to provide shelter to the homeless, jobless and the destitute only till they became self-sufficient. This meant that the poorhouses brought relief for a brief period, helping the poor to work towards improving their lives.

These different aspects of the Poor Laws were criticized strongly. There were a few who were critical of those whom they thought would just be taking advantage of the system, while the others found the system too harsh and supported a more generous system. It was the philosophy of Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, David Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus that went against the poor. Their moral position was that such a system would make them more dependent and idle. Since there was a lot of government money involved, a new law was made.

This was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, or the 'New' Poor Law. It was of great significance because it replaced the poorhouse with the workhouse. Before this amendment, poorhouses and alms-houses were for the benefit of starving families and the homeless. The needy were provided with food, clothing, covers and if required, money. However, with the coming of the 'New' Poor Law, the workhouse became the only place for those who needed support. But this was a very demanding system, as they were designed to discourage rather than support the poor. They looked like prisons and were often located on the outskirts of small rural towns. It was required that these people live at the workhouse to get the benefits, instead of coming and going. Therefore, they were forced to leave their home and belongings behind. Tragically, families, husbands, wives and children used to get separated as the poorhouses which were segregated people on the basis of gender and age. The workhouse demanded intense labour from them in exchange of a negligible amount of food and shelter, and kept them working according to a strict timetable.

Dickens and his family are said to have been in a debtors' prison, due to his father's bankruptcy. Even though the debtors' prison was a confined and dreary place, he appears to find

it better than a workhouse. Most importantly, in the debtors' prison, Dickens and his family could stay together, whereas the workhouse separated families. The inhuman nature of this arrangement for the unfortunate made him take up the issue on behalf of these voiceless victims of the governing laws. Therefore, in *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens uses the novel form to convey to his contemporary readers an understanding of the social situation faced by the lower classes of England, including the helpless men, women and children, that he found intolerable.

Check your Progress

1. What do you understand by workhouses and poorhouses?

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2. What are the aspects of the Victorian period relevant to the novel?

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13.2.1 Plot Construction:

Oliver Twist is the story of an orphan named Oliver Twist from his birth to a time when he is about ten. It tells about his miserable existence in a workhouse and his adventures after he runs away from humiliation. As mentioned earlier, this novel is considered to be a response to the New Poor Laws of 1834.

Oliver's fate appears to be in the hands of Mr. Bumble, who is the beadle of the parish church. It is the beadle who names him, finding his name alphabetically as he has already named infants from A to S. That is why he is named "Twist." Again, it is the beadle who decides that being a baby, he cannot go to the workhouse as yet. So, he is at first given into the care of Mrs. Mann who runs a foster care centre with financial support from the Parish. Later he is sent to the workhouse.

Plot Analysis:

The story is set in the1830s in London and its surrounding countryside which remain unnamed. The plot is narrated by an unknown or anonymous narrator. This narrator is speaking on behalf of the author as well as all the characters. The narrator is sympathetic to the main character and strongly critical and sarcastic with the figures who abuse their positions of responsibility. While dealing with the misfortunes of the gentle souls like Oliver, his mother

Agnes and aunt Rose, and when describing the incidents around Nancy, the tone is mostly sentimental and shows anger against injustice.

The main action in the novel revolves around the conflict between the gentleness of Oliver by birth and the harshness of his social environment. He is raised in a poorhouse, sent to a workhouse and sold to an undertaker. Unable to take more humiliation he runs away to London with the hope of making his fortune but gets involved with a group of pickpockets, thieves and prostitutes. Oliver struggles against his situation, always resisting the immoral or wrong conduct of his associates. The novel creates suspense around his birth, parentage and destiny. But chance plays a very important role in saving him time and again. The plot creates some mystery, conflicts and then twists around so that every misfortune takes Oliver closer to his real identity and finally enables him to rise above the poor and helpless conditions of the lower class. It is notable that Oliver is taken good care of by the lowest of the low in London, who are Fagin's group of petty thieves. Despite his innocent acceptance of Fagin's food, clothing and shelter he is repulsed by their crimes and remains aloof from them. In his many adventures, he is taken in by a well-to-do family of the Maylies but the gang of robbers and the villainous Monks keep searching for him and ultimately trace him down to his new home.

The Fagin gang is also instrumental in uniting him with his family. The first victim of the pickpockets turns out to be Mr. Brownlow, who knows his mother's family. Nancy, the girl who forces him back into the Fagin headquaters, plays an important role in uncovering the plot of his half-brother, Edward Leeford/ Monks to stop Oliver from finding out his real identity. It is Nancy who is able to reveal Monks's plans to Oliver's guardians. Mr. Brownlow gets the full story of Oliver's origins from Monks. But she has to pay with her life for this good deed, which is a kind of penance for her immoral life.

Finally, justice is served and the plot moves swiftly towards handing out the due punishment to Fagin, who is executed and Sikes dies accidentally by hanging himself. Nancy is a specially etched character who has gotten into a sinful way of life, but retains her innate goodness just like Oliver. While Oliver is able to get away to a better future perhaps because he is blameless, Nancy has to die in order to redeem herself. But her death is also the beginning of the end of the gang, as if her sacrifice was necessary. Oliver and his new family live together in

happiness, paying their respects to Oliver's erring mother, and forgiving Agnes Fleming for loving a married man.

The plot uses devices such as disguised or mistaken identities; hidden family relationships; surrogate families; Oliver's innocent face and his resemblance to a portrait. The device of sudden discoveries is used to move the plot towards the end that the author desires: the portrait in Mr. Brownlow's house, the locket that Old Sally had stolen, and Monks's pursuit of Oliver.

Dickens has used his masterly talent for retaining the interest of the readers. It is perhaps one of the few novels with the most elaborate chapter titles. These titles serve as synopses of the chapters. The plot is Episodic as it deals with different people and places. The journey motif is picaresque in the first few chapters when Oliver moves from one house to another and lives with different sets of people. This type of structure helps to introduce several characters and situations. The structure helps in increasing the scope for the representation of a large section of the English society.

The plot is also melodramatic and full of chance incidents and coincidences. He uses twists, suspense, irony, satire, humour and pathos which are key ingredients in Dickensian art of writing. The plot uses contrasting events, situations, characters and ideas to create the impression of the hypocrisy of people in positions of authority and their ruthless pursuit of wealth and power.

Just as Fagin and Sikes are ruthless in their pursuit of money, Mr Fang and Mr Bumble are ruthless in the misuse of their positions of power. The pathos and sentimental tone is very Dickensian. But as always, the large canvas of life that Dickens succeeds in bringing to life, loses a coherence and tightness of plot construction. *Oliver Twist* is remarkable in that the seething sense of injustice felt by the author is woven with great skill in the plotting of the narrative and is transformed into a piece ironic humour. However, there remains a certain amount of rambling, particularly in the constant commentary by the omniscient narrator.

The novel has the Dickensian touch of lively narration. The novel served to focus public attention on the incredibly apathetic and inhuman manner in which paupers and orphans were treated in Dickens' time. The novel is the kind of art that is also based on reality and serves as a document recording some aspects of the social history of Victorian England.

13.2.2 Themes:

Child Abuse and Exploitation:

Dickens tried to relive his lost childhood through different characters in his novels. He had sympathy for children and was concerned about their condition in contemporary society. Through his works, he focused on the responsibility towards children. The situation in the society has a direct influence on its members. In the 19th century, industrialization hurt poor children. It gave rise to many workhouses and mills. The increase in mills and workhouses pushed the children to work. The ratio of children depended on several parents working in the workhouses because the owners pushed parents to bring their children with them for work. *Oliver Twist* can thus be called a book of child abuse. The children in the novel face inequality like prejudice, discrimination and social injustice. There are about twenty to thirty children who worked at the parish workhouse. This novel mainly focuses on the story of the orphans who lived in 19th Century Victorian London which predominantly witnessed the abuse of child labour.

There are different forms of child abuse in the novel - domestic abuse, forced labour and slavery and child trafficking. Oliver faces domestic abuse when he lives in the workhouse where he is asked by one of the authorities to pick Oakum up at six o'clock. He says, "so you'll begin to pick Oakum at six o'clock" (Dickens 15). Oliver has to start his work at 6 o'clock that is why he gets no chance to attend school. This condition does not let Oliver grow better than he could have. Young children who worked for Fagin committed crimes. They stole and gave their profit to Fagin. Dickens's portrayal of these child pickpockets highlights how pitiful the life of these poor and orphan children was. Dickens specifically deals with the terrible effects of poverty on the life of the children which consequently led to child abuse and exploitation. The poor children face discrimination and social inequality in the novel. They are exploited by the people who have money.

Poverty:

Oliver Twist gives a detailed account of horrible fates that poor people face. This novel reflects the lives of poor people who are suffering. Poverty is one of the main themes of the novel. The problem of poverty became one of the serious issues in 19th century England and that is the reason Dickens chose poverty as one of the main themes in the majority of his novels. Poverty gives rise to crime which completely dehumanizes the society. Dickens gives a real

picture of poverty and how poor people are suffering. Poverty has degrading effects and the worst consequences on society. Poverty leads to oppression and makes the condition of the poor terrible and *Oliver Twist* reflects the terrible effects of poverty on the individual's life. It deals with the terrible impact of poverty on Oliver's life and how poverty made his life miserable. Poverty gives rise to crime and violence in the novel. The poor children commit crimes in order to escape from hunger. Poverty corrupts innocent characters like Oliver and Nancy and leads to criminality. Oliver is driven to theft and Nancy to prostitution only due to poverty.

Good versus Evil:

Throughout this novel, there is a battle between good and evil where evil continuously tries to exploit the good but, in the end, good triumphs over evil. There are good characters that represent goodness and corrupt characters that represent evil. Oliver represents good in contrast to his friend Fagin and the group of thieves who represent evil. Fagin and the thieves have some good qualities but most of the time they are seen committing crimes. All the evil characters meet the same fate. Fagin and Skies die due to their crimes. Oliver's half-brother Monks represents evil. Monks wanted to ruin the life of Oliver so that he could keep the fortune that he illegally inherited from their father. Eventually, Oliver came to know the truth and gets his fortune while Monks dies in another country. In contrast to these evil characters, the good characters like Oliver and Rose are represented as pure, virtuous and innocent. Both are kindhearted, affectionate and helpful to those who are in need. Oliver is abused throughout his life and is treated unfairly but he is eventually vindicated.

The characters of Nancy and Charles also represent good versus evil. Nancy hesitates to leave her life of crime but Charles who initially worked as a thief, reforms himself and earns an honest living. All the good characters in the novel especially, Oliver, face many hardships and challenges. However, they remain true to themselves due to which they triumph over darkness. Oliver grows in corrupt surroundings and evil companions, but his purity remains stable. The good characters in the novel earn their rewards but Dickens highlights that the society in which they were living was unjust. *Oliver Twist* is a story about the journey of a good person in a world of darkness, but there is a hope that goodness outcasts the evil and the evil gets punished. In the novel, we see a continuous struggle of good to overpower evil.

Institutional Cruelty:

Dickens critiques the Victorian workhouses which were run according to a regime of prolonged hunger, physical punishment, hypocrisy and humiliation. Although these workhouses were established to give relief to the poor it made their condition horrible. Instead of providing relief to the poor, they abused them and made their life miserable. Dickens's main aim in writing this novel was to draw the attention of people towards the deplorable condition of paupers. Dickens wrote this novel as a protest against the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which represents the cruelty of government against poor and helpless people. This novel presents the dark and grim condition of the institutions in England. Dickens exposes the cruelty of these institutions that have given rise to crimes in England. Due to the criminal laws, the paupers had no other option but to live a life of exploitation in these institutions.

City versus Countryside:

The novel takes place in both locations - city as well as countryside. For Dickens, the countryside is the place for peace and warmth, but the city means crowd and disturbance. In the novel, both city and countryside have symbolic meaning and stand opposite to each other. The city is dirty and corrupt, but the country is pure and clear. Oliver escaped to London to find peace where he is dragged into criminality. Oliver when living in the city is forced into immorality but in the country, he gets peace and happiness and recovers his health. Dickens uses negative language while describing the city, but in the countryside, even the poor are described as clean. Dickens idealizes the countryside. All the injustice and inequality suffered by the poor occurs in cities like London or the city where Oliver is born. The city is the symbol of impurity, and the countryside is the symbol of purity.

Dickens asserts that the people who have spent their entire lives in cities find peace and happiness in the countryside at the end. In the end, Oliver settles with his family in the countryside giving a happy ending to the novel. The countryside provides serenity that is not usually found in the city.

Kinship and Relationship:

Oliver is an orphan who is claimed by two families. Oliver has a different relationship with different people like Mrs. Mann, Mr. Bumble, Mr. Sowerberry, Nancy, Noah, Dodger, Fagin etc. Here we find a man-man relationship, man-woman relationship, master-servant relationship,

boy-girl relationship etc. The relationship between Oliver and Mrs. Mann is important in the novel. She is a greedy woman who has no sympathy for Oliver.

Oliver is not only claimed by two guardians (Brownlow and Rose Maylie) who have the right to claim over him but he is also claimed by a community of thieves. Fagin and his group of thieves' claim for Oliver to increase the number of people in his gang and for personal benefits. Bates and Nancy represent loyalty. Rose Maylie's attachment towards Oliver and the latter's love and concern for her reflects the affection needed by every human being. Mr. Brownlow becomes a fatherly figure for Oliver under whose care Oliver never deviates from the goodness, which is inherent in him. In contrast, Monks who is Oliver's half-brother becomes his enemy and plots against him to destroy him and to become the sole inheritor of Leeford's property.

Criminality:

Crime was common in London streets in the Victorian era when Dickens was writing. Dickens chooses crime as one of the themes for his novels filled with characters of murderers, prostitutes, pickpockets and presents it realistically. Dickens writes about crimes and the techniques used by young pickpockets in the streets to pick wallets. The Industrial Revolution made the rich richer and the poor poorer. Life was horrible for poor people, and it resulted in crimes. Many people chose to be thieves or to work in workhouses. The rise in poverty directly led to increase in crimes. It gave rise to murders, violence and terrible imprisonment. These people committed crimes for their livelihood and to survive. Dickens intends to show that criminals are not born as criminals rather driven into crime.

Dickens highlights how criminals lived. Crime is not limited to lower classes only but the characters like Monks and Mr. and Mrs. Bumble also exceed all levels of criminality. Fagin and his gang take thievery as a delightful game. After some time they become habituated to this crime and cannot think about life without it. Dickens portrays that some criminals are forced into crime rather than born as criminals. These criminals are innocent victims who are driven into the criminal world due to poverty. Fagin is depicted as the devil in the novel and Skies is the villain who enjoys committing a crime. Through the character of Skies, Dickens suggests that there are some dangerous criminals in the world. Skies and Fagin are natural criminals who have crime inherited in them. Nancy and Artful Dodger learn crime. Dodger is a partner in crime not out of choice but out of ignorance. *Oliver Twist* depicts the danger and excitement filled in the criminal

world. Through different characters, the novel explores what kind of people commit crimes and what kinds of crimes are committed.

Mistaken Identities:

The novel deals with the theme of mistaken identities too. Many characters do not know their parentage. A person's name is his basic identity. Oliver's name is imposed upon him by Mr. Bumble. His name is chosen randomly rather than inherited from his father. Mr. Bumble always chooses the names of orphans randomly. Oliver's name is thus a reflection of his status as another boy among orphans. Oliver has different identities in the world. The story of *Oliver Twist* revolves around mistaken identities imposed upon Oliver by other characters of the novel for their own benefit. Mr. Bumble and the workhouse officials portrayed Oliver as an ungrateful and undisciplined pauper. Monks also try his best to hide the real identity of Oliver for his own benefit so that he can claim over the inheritance of Oliver. Nancy pretends to be the sister of Oliver to bring him back to Fagin. The parish world and criminal world of Fagin either deny Oliver's true identity or try to give him the new one.

Dickens has made the use of clothing as a symbol for the identity of a person. When Oliver is enclosed in a blanket his identity is anonymous, but when he put on some ragged clothes, he becomes a parish child and when Mr. Brownlow gives him a suit to wear he receives a new identity. The young thieves who work for Fagin are dressed poorly and described as dirty. Dodger wears a long coat that is too big for the young man but it matches his manners. Fagin is described as "villainous-looking" and wearing greasy clothes when he first met Oliver. When Sikes is first introduced, he is wearing soiled clothes with a handkerchief around his neck. All the members of this gang look like underworld thieves.

Class and Fate:

Dickens highlights that the socio-economic circumstances into which one is born to determine one's fate. When one is born as an orphan or poor, it set a particular environment and options for children in the Victorian England. In the novel, Oliver and Rose suffer because of their identities as orphans. Oliver never gets love and affection from anyone until he meets Mrs. Bedwin who nurses him at Brownlow's house. Society regards poor and orphan children as a burden. Oliver luckily falls into the hands of two loving families who take care of him. However the other poor and orphan children are not fortunate. The lives of children like Jack, Charles and

young prostitutes like Nancy suggest that the poor lead on a dangerous trajectory. Meanwhile, the middle-class people who were neither rich nor poor looked down upon the poor because they wanted to feel superior to someone. Mr. Bumble is an example of such type of a person who abuses and oppresses paupers. On the other hand, Dickens also depicts the rich and prosperous characters who feel pity for Oliver and Rose and welcome them into their families.

13.2.3 Major Characters

Oliver Twist:

Oliver Twist is born in a workhouse and his mother, Agnes Fleming dies giving birth to him. His father was already dead. So, he is an orphan boy left to the cruelty of the world. This novel is written in "Third Person Omniscient Point of View" which means that the story of Oliver is told to us by a narrator who knows everything. An important aspect of Oliver Twist's personality is his face which reflects the beauty and innocence of a child. His face is read by different people differently. While the good people are moved by his innocence the bad people try to exploit him. Associated with his outward appearance is his innate innocence. Unlike the other people in Fagin's gang, he is the same inward out, pure of heart and intentions.

Another aspect of Oliver's character is the sensitivity and softness. His relationship with good people in the novel is of giving and taking. Being a helpless child, he has nothing to offer for the help and care of these people but his good-heartedness and innocence. He is honest, loyal, truthful, and kind. So, when he confronts the gang while he is set out on an errand by Mr. Brownlow to deliver books in the shop, he says do anything to me but do not take the books and money which he has to give. When he is kidnapped and comes back he wants to tell Mr. Brownlow that he had not run away with his books. He was repentant to hurt Mr. Brownlow. Because of his own virtuous nature, he also inspires goodness in other people as well. People around him were compelled to show their generosity to him. He benefits from the good people, particularly women, be it Mrs. Maylie or Rose or even Nancy who loses her life in an attempt of saving him.

Fagin:

Fagin, the master criminal, is not only ugly looking in appearance, but also repulsive. He is the villain, the antagonist in the novel. Through the character of Fagin, Dickens sought to portray a character that showed the complexity of humanity. When angry, the old man may

succumb to anger, but usually, he indulges in the ironic humour that gave him the nickname "the merry old gentleman." Fagin's dominance among the thieves shows his leadership qualities to harness his evil plans. He is smarter and more thoughtful than his companions. He brags about his position to the young members of his group. Fagin understands his role in managing and organizing crimes. He is attentive and vigilant. His analytical power becomes evident when he lectures Oliver and Claypole on the interdependence between outlaws. He has exceptional self-control even under extreme circumstances.

Fagin skillfully drives Sikes and Nancy to a life of crime. He has given enough orders to warn Sikes about excessive violence and is always on the lookout for the danger of inadvertent movement. There is some evidence that Fagin's corrupt nature still has some human emotions left. Several times he has shown evidence of kindness to Oliver. The night he piloted Oliver on the Chertsey expedition, he controls his urge to disturb the sleep of the tracked child. The next day he seriously asks Oliver to pay attention to Sikes unconditionally, for his own safety.

Nancy:

Nancy is another character who becomes a victim of the circumstances. She finds herself near the fringe of criminal society. Her character is marked by conflicting thoughts. She is aware of her situation. She understands the difference between right and wrong. The thought to go on the right path has not been extinguished in her but she is entangled in bad company. Despite her unwillingness, she cannot stop her involvement in crimes. She is aware of her condition and finds herself hopeless. Nancy entered the world of criminals in sheer helplessness but she gets trapped in it.

Nancy is one of the complex, yet unique characters in the novel. She is also a "grey character" in *Oliver Twist* who represents both good and evil. Her definitive decision to accomplish something beneficial at an extraordinary individual expense is a solid contention for the moral soundness of fundamental goodness, regardless of the number of obstructions it might confront. Nancy's love for Sikes shows the ethical complexity of her character. She explains to Rose that for men devotion in love is for solace and it makes them feel proud to some extent but for her such devotion gives her a cause to commit something evil. Her explanation proves to be true when her love for Sikes ultimately leads to her death. There could be various effects and outcomes of the same thing in different circumstances. In the novel as well, virtues like truth,

nobility and morality have clear significance but it is only through the character of Nancy that readers can comprehend that virtues and vices cannot have a clear division in any situation.

Monks:

Even though a minor character, Monks' influences and manipulates many major characters and situations because of his background and connection with the protagonist, Oliver Twist. The nastiness in his character is a result of his childhood experience. His character makes it clear that it is not only poverty that can deprive human beings of humanness but also the lack of love, care, support and protection, especially in childhood. A troublesome childhood can easily disturb the psychology of a person and their inner self. The character of Monks stand as a testimony to this fact. Out of greed and selfishness, he destroys his father's will which had allocated a portion of his share for Oliver. But Monks following the clever plans of his mother destroys the will to eliminate the possibility of dividing his property. In this attempt, he becomes a modus operandi for bringing in all the troubles in his life of Oliver.

Bill Sikes:

Bill Sikes is one of the most skilled burglars brought up in Fagin's gang. Sikes is Nancy's pimp and lover. His treatment of Nancy and his dog Bull's-eye is mixed with ambivalent emotions of love and cruelty. He is reckless and completely loyal to Fagin so much so that he even murders Nancy. He has become a ruthless criminal. He has lost all sensitivity, humanness and tenderness. He shuns any kind of discussion on morality. He is very serious and humourless. He has no concern for any human life, not even for his own. He takes a sound sleep until it is disturbed by the haunting face of his last victim. His fearlessness is more of a sign of stupidity than genuine courage. His bestial nature is a base amalgam of low intelligence and brute strength. Sikes lacks foresight and insights into the consequences of his actions. He is not even worried about the dangers that can occur in his trade. While Fagin hides his hatred for Sikes, Sikes could also not think about the effects of suppressing his contempt for Fagin. In a way, Sikes invites trouble by inciting Fagin.

The only person that Sikes is shown to have some feeling is for Nancy. But even in this relationship, Sikes remains aloof and sort of detached. He fails to realize that his mistreatment of Nancy can cause serious damage not only to their relationship but also to her psyche. Though Fagin understands that there is something wrong with Nancy's behaviour, Sikes is still clueless.

He thinks that the oddity in Nancy's behaviour is because of her sickness. Taking the advantage of the situation, Fagin malevolently stimulates Sikes by revealing Nancy's immorality. Lacking in judgement and prudence Sikes fails to see the trap set by Fagin. He goes to Nancy's home and murders his only friend. He is a type of irrational evil, beyond the light of humanity.

Brownlow:

Mr. Brownlow is one of the grey characters with good and bad traits. He is kind and hard at the same time. The first encounter that takes place between Oliver and Brownlow is in the police station where he testifies that he is not sure if Oliver was the thief. Once they are out of the police station Brownlow sees Oliver falling because of sickness. Seeing the condition of the boy, he takes Oliver to his house where he is given good care. When Oliver recovers, he gives him a new suit, cap and shoes. He also sets Oliver on the task of delivering the books to the shop. Later he is encountered by a man who accuses Oliver of being a thief but Brownlow discards it as a kind of misunderstanding. The visitor predicts that Oliver will not come back and he will side with his gang of criminals. Brownlow waits for Oliver but he never returns as he is kidnapped by Nancy. Oliver also attempts to clear the misunderstanding of Brownlow but he is unable to meet him as Brownlow had gone to West Indies. Nancy reveals everything to Rose. Rose then informs Mr. Brownlow about everything, and he is relieved that Oliver was not involved in the wrongdoings. Later in the novel, Brownlow with the help of Nancy unfolds the secrets about the relationship between Monks, Oliver and Rose. He is the person who is shown with a sense of righteousness. He takes the responsibility of setting everything right in the lives of the people around him. He forces Monks to accept his misdeed and ensures Oliver gets his share of the property. When everything is resolved Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver. He moves to the country along with Oliver and Mrs. Bedwin, where they live near Harry and Rose.

Rose Maylie:

Rose Maylie typifies as an example of ideal Dickensian womanhood. Though she appears as a minor character in the novel she fulfils the role of the missing mother in the life of Oliver Twist. She conforms to the Victorian idea of womanhood represented in the phrase "angel in the house." This phrase was first used by Coventry Patmore in his poem "The Angel in the House" (1854/1862) which he wrote for his wife. Though the phrase got popular later, his idea of womanhood became a dominant one in the Victorian society. This image of a woman came to be

associated with devotion, dedication, passivity, beauty, grace, sacrifice and above all purity. They were the qualities that were believed to be embodied in the angels. Rose Maylie conforms to this image of a woman. In contrast to depraving and corrupting world around her, Rose emerges victorious, pious and pure. She acts as an intermediary between Oliver Twist and the mischievous world around him. Initially, Rose is introduced as a 17 years old girl, sweet and lovely, filled with positive vibes.

Let Us Sum Up:

The society that he wrote about in his novel, *Oliver Twist,* resulted from the law and the cruelty often bestowed by the rich onto the poor for monetary gains. The law required people to get enrolled in workhouses and push to a daily limit of work for minimum wages, which eventually was breaking homes and hardly making ends meet. Dickens realized it was inconsiderate circumstances that led to poverty and the sickening of poor people.

Dickens showcases men and owners of the workhouses who were extremely cruel and operated on the belief that laziness was the cause of poverty. As per the law, only the people working in the government houses would receive assistance, although this turned out to be blatant exploitation. Mr. Bumble, Fagin, and Monks personify absolute greed in the novel. They act on their dispositions while maintaining a high standard of their certified morality. They are driven by greed and they hurt the poor in the process. Fagin used to train children to become pickpockets, although he never participated directly. He corrupts them to earn his living, and the children perish because of his ill work, all because they want bread and a living. Mr. Bumble is the epitome of hypocrisy and folly. He is a minor church official who has a grave misconception of the teachings of Christianity. He quickly devalues the essential virtue of Christ, that is compassion. He makes the paupers suffer so much without a single ounce of mercy under his care. Monks, a wholly immoral and violent man, tries to put down Oliver ruthlessly.

Dickens, through these novels, tried to display the utter disgrace of the society and the offenders of the Christian morality while putting on the robes of Christian philosophy. It is evident in the novel that Dickens researched profusely and did a remarkable job in showing a clear picture of the moral ethics of the society during the 1860s and 1870s. He has subtly, yet strongly, shown the demerits of the Poor Law and built his plot along the daily grind of life of the

needy at the mercy of administrative violence. Art imitates life so that readers must have sympathized at every point and not just after the end of the novel.

Oliver Twist took up the cudgels for the poor and framed a powerful narrative that teaches us that having any power over others needs to be used in the service of the other, not self. Power when compared with empathy does true wonders. Despite the bleakness of the age, there is also an air of optimism with which Dickens creates his world. Points of conflict, climax and revelation are clearly marked in the plot. In fact, the plot unfolds the theme of "home-away-home" commonly used in children's literature along with its resolution in a happy ending. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* stands as one of the classic literary pieces and timeless perfection in print.

13.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to gai some understanding of the plot construction, themes, and characters in the novel.

13.4 Glossary

At the gallows: To wait to be hanged.

Beadle: A minor church official.

Board: Paid accommodation with meals.

Dilapidated: In a very neglected condition

Errand: A task that involves taking or bringing some item for someone.

Juvenile: Young people

Pawn: To exchange an item for money that can be taken back after the repayment of the amount and interest within a certain time.

Parish: A designated area under one priest with its own church, constituting a kind of local government.

Pick oakum: To separate strands of old rope is called "picking," and the new threads are called oakum.

Unpropitious: Not favourable or advantageous.

13.5 Sample Questions

13.5.1 Objective Questions:

A. **Read the sentence and choose an appropriate option:**

1. What does Oliver's mother do before dying?

(a) She tells her story

(b) She cries in pain

(c) She kisses Oliver

(d) She tells her name

2. Who takes care of Oliver after his mother dies?

(a) His father

(b) A foster care centre

(c) The nurse

(d) His aunt

3. What did Agnes Fleming give to Old Sally before dying?

(a) A letter

(b) A shilling

(c) A gold locket and chain

(d) A ring

4. Where do Oliver and Fagin meet for the last time??

(a) At Mr. Fang’s office

(b) In the law courts

(c) In his prison cell

(d) In Jacob’s Island

5. Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* as a criticism of which law?

(a) The Marriage Act

(b)Gilbert’s Act

(c) Death sentence

(d) The Poor Law of 1834

B. Read the following statements. State if they are True or False.

1. Oliver Twist is given his name by his mother.

(a) True

(b) False

2. Sally is the name of the nurse who helped at Oliver's birth.

(a) True

(b) False

3. Nancy is killed by the Artful Dodger

(a) True

(b) False

4. Rose Maylie is Oliver Twist's mother:

(a) True

(b) False

5. The novel ends with remembrance of Agnes Fleming.

(a) True

(b) False

13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write in brief about Oliver's early life?
2. Write a short note on the conditions in the juvenile home where Oliver is first taken.
3. Describe in brief Fagin.
4. Explain in brief the theme of poverty in *Oliver Twist*.
5. What is the role of Nancy?

13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the plot construction in *Oliver Twist*.
2. Elaborate on the themes in Oliver Twist.
3. Write a detailed note on the major characters in *Oliver Twist.*

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Leavis, F.R., and Q.D. Leavis. *Dickens the Novelist*. New York: Pantheon, 1971.

2. Long, William J. *English Literature*. AITBS Publishers, 2016.

3. Reader, WJ. *Victorian England.* 1964

4. Jordan, John O. *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*. CUP Cambridge, 2001.

Unit-14: *Oliver Twist* - Language and Narrative Technique

Structure

14.0 Introduction
14.1 Objectives
14.2 *Oliver Twist* - Language and Narrative Technique
    14.2.1 Language
    14.2.2 Narrative Technique
14.3 Learning Outcomes
14.4 Glossary
14.5 Sample Questions
14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

14.0 Introduction

The reception of a text by the readers or audience is, among other things, dependent upon the way the text appeals to the readers. The appeal of a text, in turn, rests on the way or the style in which the story of the novel progresses. The mode or the technique that the author uses is called the technique of narration. The technique of narration helps a reader to understand the various characters, perceptions, and ideologies which the characters manifest and reflect. The author of a novel is, in essence, a storyteller who throws before us a story page by page. The author seems to be at a vantage point overseeing the movement of the narrative. Moreover, the author can, at times, employ or choose a persona to tell a story from his perspective. That is where we find multiple voices in a narrative.

14.1 Objectives

This unit has the following objectives:

- To introduce to the students with the different techniques of narration in general.
- To expose students to the omniscient narrator as employed by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.

- To make students understand the central importance of narration to the whole plot of the novel.
- To enable students to analyze and critically evaluate the importance of a certain narrative technique and its advantages and disadvantages.

14.2 *Oliver Twist* - Language and Narrative Technique

14.2.1 Language

The language of the novel is seminal to the flow and texture of its story or plot. If we take a worm's eye view of prominent novels written in the English language, we find quite a few of them stand out because of their flowery language. In this context, *Oliver Twist* stands out because of its dramatic element as it easily shuffles between tragedy and comedy and in doing so holds the reader's interest. Dickens's writing style is marked by immensely abundant linguistic creativity. He succeeds in using different language styles for different characters in consonance with their class and position. For example, the paupers speak in typical cockney style and the middle class in the refined British.

Dickens's language had to be a perfect match to the depressing conditions that the poor environs reflected. The author, through the words of the omniscient narrator, gives us a broad picture of the despicable conditions that the poor lived in. The choice of words seems to be perfect to match the degree of deprivation that they convey. The author parades the veneer of false morality and exposes the inhumanity and the regressive conditions in which the poor lived:

> They established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view… (they) issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. They made a great many otherwise and humane regulations, having reference to the ladies, which it is not necessary to repeat; kindly undertook to divorce poor married people… and, instead of compelling a man to support his family, as they had therefore done, took his family from him, and made him a bachelor (Chapter 2).

Dickens was just twenty-five years old when he began writing *Oliver Twist* in 1837. He was then still in the process of completing *The Pickwick Papers*. His first novel, but, before finishing *Oliver Twist* in 1838, he was already in the early stages of his third novel, *Nicholas Nickleby.* Throughout his novels, there are prisons, criminals, exploitation of the people and children who have to play the role of a parent and look after dependents, instead of being looked after by their parents. Oliver, himself, is an isolated and vulnerable child at the mercy of unsympathetic institutions or of explosive criminals for much of the novel. Similarly, Charles Dickens was, at a tender age, alone and exposed to a frightening world. These experiences shaped the language in the novel.

Sylvère Monod while commenting on Dickens' style and way of writing says that he has steadily become "more of a fastidious stylist". He further attributes two adjectives to Dicken's writing- "mannered", and something teeming with "lyricism". Monod juxtaposes these twin qualities with Dickens's early works and remarks that the earlier works of Dickens seem to be lacking in these qualities. Now, let's analyze the speeches of different characters in *Oliver Twist* and mark their respective ways of pronunciation or style. The substandard and vulgar pronunciation of Gamefield in Chapter III is a good example of Cockney:

> That's accauese they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down agin, said Gamfield,that is all smoke, and no blaze, vereas smoke ain't o' no use at all in makin' a boy ,for it only sends him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy, gen'lmen, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down with a run. It's humane too, gen'lmen, acause, even if they've stucvk in the chimbley, roastin' their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves' (chapter 3)

Let's mark the following words in the above paragraph for their cockney pronunciation and see as to how their Cockney pronunciation is far removed from their Standard one, *"Acause is the standard because, afore is before, Chimbley is Chimney and agin is again and sinds is sends, vereas is whereas, vith is with and so on."*

Furthermore, we notice that Barney, a young Jew, has a chronic catarrh which goes to affect his pronunciation of nasals *[n] and [m]*.

In *Oliver Twist,* the criminal characters seem to use slang as a code for moving without detection in a harsh ideology constructed by England's "higher" orders; their flash or *cant* language, however, is also a decoding device for illuminating their plight at the hands of this higher social class. Their decisions and impulses to translate slang create spaces in the narrative in which we see them affirming their social and personal identities. An analysis of criminal slang—particularly in the Artful Dodger's trial scene—argues for a clearer sense of structure than is generally accorded the novel.

Thus, we see that there is a variety in the respective languages of various characters which can be identified with their class vis-a-vis their language and vice versa. Moreover, Dickens does not mince words in addressing a particular character and does not arrogate to him anything beyond his position and status.

Oliver Twist thrives on the special and symbolic use of words to connote certain thought processes which otherwise betrays any simpler description. For instance, 'Have the goodness to look at me,' said Bumble, fixing his eyes upon her. ('If she stands such an eye as that', said Mr Bumble to himself …). The brackets used here are used as if the words couched within them are stage directions typical of a drama.

Moreover, there are some examples of *neologism* as well. The term *neologism* means the coinage of words. G. N. Leech calls it "Lexical Innovation". In this context, in *Oliver Twist* we see Jack Dawkins, on finding Oliver greenish in complexion, tells Charles Bates jestingly that he is from Greenland:

'A new pal', replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

'Where did he come from?'

Greenland. Is Fagin upstairs? (*Oliver Twist*, VIII, 56).

The above use of words Green and Greenland is a typical example of Nonce-Use. There are among other linguistic and lexical innovations, many instances of Functional Conversion, Coinage, Compounding, Malapropism etc.

14.2.2 Narrative Technique

Often classified based on the pronoun used, narratives are first person, second person or the third person. The first-person narrator(s) doesn't often use the direct I or we but can be identified as one of the characters in the plot. The character, as part of the narrative, takes the

plot forward by his introduction of the other characters, his deliberations over their physiognomies, multiple traits, weaknesses, foibles etc. In the second-person narration, the story is told by someone who is addressed as you. The second-person narrator is at times used by the author as a vehicle to carry forward the narrative whereas, in the third person point of view, the narrator is most often outside the confines of the story. He seems to speak or narrate the story from a vantage position. The third-person narrator addresses the characters either by their names or by using gender-specific pronouns like he or she. The third-person omniscient narrator, as the word omniscient connotes, introduces the readers to the physical appearances, mental make-ups and other leanings and feelings of the characters. Hence, the third person omniscient narrator is the general gateway to the plot of the novel.

In *Oliver Twist*, we see the third person omniscient narrative technique. Omniscient means "all-knowing," and hence an omniscient narrator knows every character's life, thoughts and feelings in depth. To begin with, the novel starts in media res. The Omniscient Narrator unfurls before us an assortment of buildings intending to introduce us to the workhouse. It is in the workhouse that we are introduced to our protagonist and his genesis.

The narrative progresses linearly, and the readers see the story unfold layer by layer. The narrator seems to be the all-knowing commentator who drops multiple hints at the beginning of each chapter. The subtitle of each chapter helps the readers put together the story that is to follow. The readers, in anticipation of the further information, read on. For instance, we see chapter 9 is subtitled as *"*Containing further Particulars concerning the pleasant old Gentleman and his hopeful Pupils" The narrator here, like a typical or archetypal storyteller, lends to the narrative some conventional touch.

The third-person omniscient narrator, at places, assumes the role of a moderator. He comments on the way the story progresses. For example, at the beginning of chapter 13, the narrator says:

> *"*Some new Acquaintances are introduced to the intelligent Reader; connected with whom various pleasant matters are related appertaining to this history.*"*

We further see a dialogue-type progression of the narrative:

> *'WHERE'S Oliver? Said the Jew, rising with a menacing look. 'Where's the boy?'*

The young thieves eyed their preceptor as if they were alarmed at his violence, and looked uneasily at each other.' But they made no reply.

'What's become of the boy? Said the Jew, seizing the Dodger tightly by the collar, and threatening him with horrid imprecations. 'Speak out, or I'll throttle you! (Chapter *13, Oliver Twist)*

In *Oliver Twist*, we find, especially to the end, that the narrator chips in to comment on the progression of the story itself.

The Commanding Voice of the Omniscient Narrator:

From the very first word, the narrative form of *Oliver Twist* is the third person narrative form. The third-person narration means that the narrator seems to stand at a vantage point, with a thorough command over the rovings of his characters- from birth, through their movement through the labyrinthine ways of the world. The third-person narrator is a strong voice and presence in the whole narrative structure of a novel or a story. As the name has it, an omniscient narrator is a commanding, all-seeing and all-knowing voice. The omniscient narrator has unbridled access to the consciousness of a few or many different characters. This particular perspective allows the writers to create a typical "godlike" or deliberately "authorial" persona that affords them to distantly comment on the action in multiple and different ways and perspectives.

Oliver Twist is undoubtedly a classic novel that documents the myriad problems faced by the common masses during the industrial revolution in England. In the year, 1837 when Dickens began *Oliver Twist* in its episodic form, it was given a subtitle The Parish Boys Progress making it replicate the much-emulated John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Oliver Twist, the protagonist of the novel, goes through a series of hardships, only to emerge as a changed and different character in the end. The omniscient voice lends the credence to the story by way of assuming a powerful position of command and voice and the reader, at times, finds him as a guide goading from behind.

Dramatic Tinge in the Narrative:

Charles Dickens's narrative style has a characteristic dramatic tinge to it. It shuffles between tragedy and comedy, and so, is able to successfully hold the reader's interest. Dickens's novels were published in episodic form in the periodicals and so each chapter had to come to a

sort of a climax. Notably, the writing style of Charles Dickens possesses remarkable linguistic creativity. Since Dickens' novels, like a typical dramatic cast, teems with a panoply of characters and the characters come from varied classes and stations, Dickens uses a unique language style and vocabulary for his characters to be commensurate with their societal position. For example, the urban middle class speaks in refined British English whereas the paupers and the miscreants speak in the typical cockney style. Also Mr. Bumble, the beadle is shown often confusing the word parochial and pronouncing it as "Parochial". In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens has used the third-person narrative form and he tries to narrate it from the perspective of an individual who belongs to the nineteenth-century London. One can easily mark that the narrative acquires an omniscient narrator's view, where the narrator knows everything and is recording each important event in the life of the protagonist as well as the other characters.

The Examiner, September 1837 Edition (September 10, 1837), a reviewer asserted that this novel was an "exact painting" of the societal reality that Dickens wished to present to the public. Dickens was widely hailed for capturing the emotions upon the death of Nancy and the intrinsic minutiae of Oliver's life as an orphan. The reviewer was surprised to see Dickens making use of the poor Law Debates in the first chapter of the novel, and he understood the social cause for which Dickens wrote. In conclusion of this review, the author states: "We leave him most whatsoever is most loveable, hateful, or laughable, in the character of the everyday life about him" (Dickens, 401).

Oliver Twist appeared month by month in the new magazine Bentley's Miscellany and there is flimsy evidence to indicate that Dickens had any preconceived notion of the whole novel. When he brought Oliver's birth to the notice of the reading public in the first episode that is when he put elements of his story beyond recall by publishing them. Dickens always favoured part-issue publication-not one of his novels appeared for the first time as a single and complete work, but later in his career, he drafted ideas for the overall design of work before any part of it was written and published.

The novel is by its very nature a satire that reveals Dickens's artistic allegiances. Jonathan Swift's 'savage indignation' is heard again in the narrator's exposure of jacks-in-office whose cruelty, shuffling from mere coldness to sadism, is sanctioned, even dignified, by the ordinances of legislation driven by the social vision of Benthamism, the utilitarian ideology

associated primarily with the philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). The high irony of many passages early in *Oliver Twist* is repetitive and strained to sustain a reader's interest for long and this satiric mode was never to be Dickens's forte. His genius drew its inspiration from the satiric art of two other eighteenth-century masters, from the paintings of William Hogarth and the novels of Henry Fielding.

The variety and certain inexplicable strangeness of the characters in *Oliver Twist* are perhaps one of his seminal achievements of Dickens as a novelist. Some characters in Charles Dickens' novels seem to be his only and they seem to be central to the plots in which they breathe and throb. Moreover, it seems that the meanderings of a public-school life must have its Steer forth, any description of the stratagems of criminal life must rest on its Bill and Nancy and any fishing community its Piggott. Dickens parades his characters in a typical dramatic style. His novels even display a 'cast-list' at the beginning. He seems to keep a note ready to describe the physiognomy of his character(s) and every word that the reader comes across vis-à-vis a character seems to expose him steadily to the reader. Dickens' characterization in *Oliver Twist* teems with variety. On one hand, we have Oliver, a poor decrepit orphan, then Fagin, a scheming Jew and on the other hand Mr. Brownlow, a gentleman, so very civilized and philanthropic.

Charles Dickens's writing involves a crafty evocation of landscapes, such as the marshy swathes in *Great Expectations* or Yarmouth beach in David Copperfield and the like. Despite seeming to write for a stage as a dramatist, the stage, in its limited canvas and paucity of space, shall fail to accommodate the numerous changes of scene which occur in Dickens's novels. The 'stage' Dickens appeals to is the stage of the reader's imagination, and his narrative technique plays upon that 'stage' to draw us into his stories. Dickens' myriad "pictures' are an integral part of the fabric of the narrative. It is through conjuring images on the stage of our imagination that he draws us into the story. Dickens remarkably captures London in its very ferment of life and its variety and vastness. Moreover, the 'attraction of repulsion' of revulsion may also perfectly apply to Dicken's creation of settings in the novel.

The omniscient voice seems to wield enormous power and the power of the voice seems all-pervading. This enormous narrative voice unfurls the world before our eyes-the vast and varied world around and in which Oliver treads along. The full title of *Oliver Twist; or, The*

Parish Boy's progress invokes John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the most famous account in the language of how a struggle against temptation and evil wins, at last, a secure reward.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to get a clear idea about the use of language and technique of narration as used by the prolific novelist Charles Dickens in his novel *Oliver Twist*.

14.4 Glossary

Omniscient: Knowing everything

Narrator: The person who tells a story or explains what is happening in a play, film, etc

Authorial: Belonging or relating to the writer of a book, article, or document

Narration: The way that a story is told

Physiognomy: The general appearance, shape and features of a person's face

Benthamism: The philosophical system of utilitarianism proposed by the English philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. _____ type of narrator Dickens used in *Oliver Twist.*

(a) First person

(b) Second person

(c) Third Person

(d) Third person omniscient

2. *Oliver Twist* was written in episodic form with the subtitle "The Parish Boys Progress." On this account, he is believed to resonate with _____ famous novel of John Bunyan.

(a) *The Holy War*

(b) *The Jerusalem*

(c) *The Pilgrim's Progress*

(d) None of these

3. _____ public building, the omniscient narrator gives a fictitious name.

(a) The workhouse

(b) The hospital

(c) The hostel

(d) The storehouse

4. In _____ the notorious Newgate prison in London was demolished.

(a) 1902

(b) 1903

(c) 1900

(d) 1912

5. _____, according to the narrator, takes care of Oliver after his mother dies.

(a) His father

(b) A foster care center

(c) The Nurse

(d) His Aunt

6. _____ among the following is employed by Fagin on a Secret Mission.

(a) Mr Bumble

(b) Mr Bolter

(c) Noah Claypole

(d) Mrs Bumble

7. _____ of the following characters is described as a "lean, long-backed, stiff-necked, middle-sized man, with no great quantity of hair."

(a) Mr Bolter

(b) Noah Claypole

(c) Mr Fang

(d) None of the above

8. _____ the parish is willing to offer to someone to take Oliver off their hands.

(a) 5 pounds

(b) 15 pounds

(c) 10 pounds

(d) 20 pounds

9. The "Point of View" signifies_____.

(a) the way a story is told

(b) the way a story begins

(c) the way a story ends

(d) None of these

10. In _____ point of view' the narrator is supposed to know all and everything about the characters.

(a) Third-Person (omniscient) point of view

(b) First-Person Point of View

(c) Second-Person Point of View

(d) None of the above

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1**.** What is a Narrative Technique?

2. What type of Narrative Technique do we find in *Oliver Twist*?

3. Comment on use of language in brief.

4. Write a short note on Omniscient narrator.

5. Is the language used in *Oliver Twist* realistic?

14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1**.** In what ways does Dickens employ narrative technique

2. Discuss in detail the omniscient narrator point-of-view in Oliver Twist.

3. Examine the use of language in *Oliver Twist.*

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Dunn, Richard J. *Oliver Twist: Whole Heart and Soul*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993.
2. Miller, J. Hillis. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958.
3. Raina, Badri. *Dickens and the Dialectic of Growth. Madison*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
4. Slater, Michael. *Dickens and Women.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983.
5. Swisher, Clarice, ed. *Readings on Charles Dickens*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998.

SYLLABUS

DSC-3
Course Title: *Introduction to British Literature*

Scheme of Examination
Maximum Marks: 100 (Assignments: 30 & End Semester: 70) Exam Duration: 3 hrs
Instruction Mode*:* Counselling Classes (Blended Mode)

Course Objectives: To Familiarize students with the British Literature
Course Outcomes: To introduce students to the works of some canonical British writers so that they develop aesthetics for literature such as drama and novel. Upon the completion of course students are expected to acquire background knowledge of British literature in respect of drama and novel.

Course Title: *Introduction to British Literature* (DSC-3)	
Unit No.	**Unit Title**
1	Introduction to British Drama
2	A Brief Survey of British Drama
3	University Wits
4	Life and works of William Shakespeare
5	Characteristic Features of Shakespearean Romantic Comedy
6	*Merchant of Venice* – Plot construction, Themes and Characters
7	Relevance of *Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World
8	Introduction to the British Novel
9	A Brief History and Types of the Novel
10	Aspects of the Novel
11	Life and Works of Charles Dickens
12	*Oliver Twist* – Introduction
13	*Oliver Twist* – Plot Construction, Themes and Characters
14	*Oliver Twist* – Language and Narrative Technique

Suggested Readings:

- Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature.* 5th ed., Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Prism Books, 1992.

Model Question Paper

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY
Bachelor of Arts
U.G (UGEN301CCT) III SEMESTER EXAMINATION (December 2017)
Paper: ***Introduction to British Literature***
Time: 3 hours Max. Marks 70 marks

Note: This question paper consists of three parts:
Part - A, Part-B and Part-C. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.
Part - A contains **10** compulsory questions of multiple choice/fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all questions. Each question carries **1** mark. **(10 x 1 = 10 marks)**
Part-B contains **08** questions of which students are supposed to answer **05** questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries **06** marks. **(5 x 6 = 30 marks)**
Part - C contains **05** questions of which students are supposed to answer **03** questions. Answer each question in approximately 500 words. Each question carries **10** marks. **(3 x 10 = 30 marks)**

Part-A

Question: 1

(i) What is the sub – title of the novel *Oliver Twist*?
(ii) What is a tragic – comedy?
(iii) What is the year of publication of the novel *Oliver Twist*?
(iv) What is a plot?
(v) What is a round character?
(vi) How many plays did Shakespeare write?
(vii) In which year was the play *The Merchant of Venice* first performed?
(viii) Jessica is a character in which drama?
(ix) Nancy is a character in which novel?
(x) Who is Mr. Giles?

Part-B

2) Write a character sketch of Rose Maylie.
3) Comment on the life of orphans as depicted in *Oliver Twist*.
4) The conflict between purity and correction is central to the novel *Oliver Twist*. Justify.
5) Discuss the narrative technique used in the novel *Oliver Twist*.
6) Examine the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio.
7) Enlist the features of Shakespearean Comedies.
8) Write a character sketch of Nerissa.
9) Examine the plot construction of the play *The Merchant of Venice*.

Part-C

10) Is Shylock a villain or a victim? Substantiate your view with justification.
11) Write a character sketch of Portia.
12) Discuss *The Merchant of Venice* as a romantic comedy.
13) *Oliver Twist* is an unheroic hero. Justify.
14) Enlist the themes in the novel *Oliver Twist*.

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NOTES: