

MAEN201DST

English Essay

for

**MA English
(Second Semester)**

**Directorate of Distance Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India**

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M.A. English

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Programme Coordinator

Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb

Professor of English, DDE, MANUU

Content Writers

Unit No.

- | | | |
|--|--|---------|
| ● Dr. Shah Alam | Guest Faculty (English), DDE, MANUU, Hyd. | 1 |
| ● Dr. Sachin Laxmikant Patki | Head and Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Adarsh College, Hingoli, Maharashtra. | 2 |
| ● Dr. Raeesabegam Usmani | Assistant Professor, SOL, NMIMS, University, Hyderabad. | 3 & 11 |
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| ● Dr. Sameena Tabassum | Assistant Professor, Department of English, MANUU, Hyderabad. | 5 & 10 |
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| ● Miss Sheetal Lalotra | Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English, University of Jammu. | 14 |

Proofreaders:

First : Mr. Waseem Nabi & Dr. Mohaiminul Islam
Second : Dr. Mohaiminul Islam & Mr. Waseem Nabi
Final : Dr. Shah Alam & Dr. Mudasir Ahmad Gori

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Vice Chancellor
Director
Coordinator

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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

You all are well aware that Maulana Azad National Urdu University began to function from 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and Translation Division. Regular mode of education commenced from 2004 and various departments were established which were followed by the appointments of faculty. Self Learning Material was prepared through writing and translation with full support of competent authority.

For the past few years UGC-DEB kept emphasizing on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Accordingly, at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, the syllabi of distance and regular mode are synchronized by following the norms of UGC-DEB and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG courses containing 6 blocks - 24 units and 4 blocks - 16 units respectively.

Distance education system is considered highly effective and beneficial around the globe. The large number of people enrolled in it stands a witness to the same. Realizing the literacy ratio of Urdu speaking population, Maulana Azad National Urdu University implemented Distance education from its beginning. In this way, the university reached out to Urdu speaking population through distance learning method prior to regular. Initially, the study materials of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University and Indira Gandhi National Open University were borrowed. The intention was to prepare our own study materials rapidly and not to be dependent on other universities but the intent and effort could not go hand in hand. Consequently, it took plenty of time to prepare our own Self Learning Material. Eventually, the task of preparing Self Learning Material commenced systematically at war foot. We had to face numerous hindrances but never gave up. As a result, university started to publish its own study material at high speed.

Directorate of Distance Education runs fifteen courses consisting of UG, PG, B.Ed, Diploma, and certificate courses. In a short span of time, courses based on technical skills will be 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. One hundred and forty four 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. DDE also utilizes ICT for its educational and administrative activities.

The admissions in all programs are done only through online mode. The soft copies of Self Learning Material for students are made available on the website of Directorate of Distance Education. In near future, the links of audio and video recordings will also be made available on the website. In addition, SMS facilities are being provided to students to have better communication. The students are informed through SMS regarding various facets of programs such as course registration, assignment, counseling, exams, etc.

Directorate of Distance Education will not only play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward Urdu speaking population into the main stream but also in the increase of Gross Enrolment Ratio.

Prof. Mohd Razaullah Khan

Director, Directorate of Distance Education, MANUU, Hyderabad

Introduction to the Course

The M.A. English programme is designed to give a sound knowledge of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory so as to empower the prospective students for higher studies and employment, apart from helping them prepare for competitive exams. It is spread over two years (four semesters) minimum duration. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

- a. to provide a sound base in the English Language
- b. to provide insights into the development of English and the phonological, morphological, syntactical and stylistic aspects of language
- c. to provide knowledge in the teaching of English
- d. to explore the various literatures in English
- e. to provide exposure to the different genres, movements and periods of English literature
- f. to facilitate critical and analytical abilities
- g. to introduce literary theory and criticism
- h. to build confidence among learners with language skills in English
- i. to enable the working target group to enhance their qualifications and
- j. To facilitate higher education in the open distance learning mode.

At the end of the two-year post graduate programme in M.A. English, the learner would have mastered the theoretical knowledge of the English language and literature. The learners would be able to appreciate literatures in English, take up critical analysis, understand the different movements, periods and concepts in the study of English language and literature. The two-year programme will prepare the learner for competitive examinations, for employment and for research by developing their skills, apart from leading to refinement.

The course “English Essay” aims to introduce the Learners to the various literary forms of essay, the origin, background and development of the essay across different ages representing various time and geographic zones. It also introduces them to the essay in British, American and world literatures. Some of the essays prescribed for your study are *Dream Children*, *Shooting an Elephant*, *Notes of a Native Son*, *This too is Life*, etc. The course is divided into four Blocks, each Block has four Units.

This SLM is supplemented by audio-video lessons. You may visit IMC MANUU YouTube channel <http://youtube.com/u/imcmanuu> for the complete list of AV lessons in English. With you in your journey through the fields of English language and literature!

Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb
Programme Coordinator

English Essay

Unit - 1: Origin and Development of the English Essay

Structure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Origin and Development of the English Essay

1.2.1 English Essay before Francis Bacon

1.2.2 English Essay under Francis Bacon

1.2.3 English Essay under Ben Jonson and Abraham Cowley

1.2.4 English Essay in the Restoration Age

1.2.5 The Periodical Essay of the 18th Century

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1.2.9 Let Us Sum Up

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1.0 Introduction

An essay is a short form of prose composition. Dr. Johnson defined essay as, “a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance.” An essay can be personal which states the experiences, thoughts, and expression of the essayist and it can be impersonal in which impersonal account of wisdom and philosophy are being narrated. The real form of English essay comes into existence in 1597 with the publication of Francis Bacon’s essays in England. In his essays there were wisdom, truth, and practical implications of human activities. His essay contained aphoristic touch and after him William Cornwallis tried to write in the same lofty aphoristic style but he never touched the same height as was enjoyed by Francis Bacon. In English, the most important essayist after Francis Bacon was Abraham Cowley. He acted as connecting bridge between Bacon and Addison.

The difference between Francis Bacon and Abraham Cowley was that Francis Bacon's essays were impersonal and aphoristic while that of Abraham Cowley's were personal and intimate. In addition, Francis Bacon's essays were highly deep and philosophical but Abraham Cowley introduced much intimated and personal type of essays which were less deep and philosophical as compare to Francis Bacon's essay. A number of essay writers emerged on the literary horizons who wrote essays but their contribution was not very much worth mentioning. Joseph Hall, John Earle, and Sir Thomas Overbury however are worth mentioning essayists. The style of Joseph Hall was satirical; Thomas Overbury wrote essays in an artificial manner while John Earle wrote in depth about the characters. While talking about the classic form of English essay, Sir Thomas Browne was another key figure whose *Religio Medici* became the best-seller in Europe.

After these came the Restoration Age that marked the origin of modern prose or English essay. Dryden, Locke, Halifax, and Temple were the most significant names of this period. Dryden is the most important among them. He is considered to be the greatest modern prose writer of English and also the forerunner of the eroticism. His prose works are mainly consisted of prefaces and essays. His approach was direct, his style was fluent and he had keen critical perception. His treatise *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1669) was his major contribution towards the development of modern English prose.

Check your progress:

1. Write the definition of essay as given by Dr. Johnson.

2. Name the literary age John Dryden belonged?

1.1 Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- know the origin and development of the English essay.

- understand how English essay developed from phase to phase till its present form.
- be familiar with the term, idea and concept of English essay.
- be aware about different periods of English literature through which essay goes through in the process of development.
- comprehend different forms and types of English essays during different literary periods.
- differentiate among diverse literary periods of English literature with respect to English essay.
- be familiar with the notable essayists of English literature from origin till the modern period.

1.2 Origin and Development of English Essay

1.2.1 Essays before Francis Bacon:

It was a French essayist Montaigne who is considered to be the first essay writer. The name of his collection was *Essais*. His essays were written with personal touch but in artistic fashion. His essays were extremely personal, subjective, and alluring at the same time. That is why Addison acknowledged him as: “The most eminent egoist that ever appeared in the world was Montaigne”. The English essay passed through phases to reach its present form. For the first time, proper form and structure of essay was formulated in Elizabethan Age. There is no denying the fact that Elizabethan Age was highly poetic yet prose was also making its way into literary horizon side by side.

Sir Philip Sydney’s critical book length essay *An Apology for Poetry* was a key document of the period which attained much prominence. Thomas Lodge in his pamphlet refuted it but that refutation did not attain much critical value. Hugh Walker admired this work of Sydney as “the only critical piece of the sixteenth century which may still be read with pleasure by that vague personage, ‘The general reader.’” Likewise, Thomas Nash was the prominent name among controversial writers.

Check your progress:

1. Who is the author of *Essais*?
-

2. Montaigne was an essayist of which country?

1.2.2 The English Essay under Francis Bacon:

Francis Bacon was the one who wrote the first ever essay in English hence, he had and has a prominent place. Hugh Walker admired Thomas Nash's traits as an essayist. He also admired the contribution of character writers but to him neither of these be termed as pioneer of English essay in true sense. Hugh Walker was of the view in this regard as "Although a few of Nash's tracts may fairly be classed as essays, it is obvious that he did not conceive of himself to be imitating a new fashion of writing. Nor did he in fact do so. Neither did the critics. Still less the forerunners of the character writers are described as the founders of the essay: they are too unformed and non-literary, Dekker, the successor of Nash and his superior, comes chronologically after Bacon. The latter consequently is the first of the English essayists, as he remains, for sheer mass and weight, of genius, the greatest."

The basic concept of Bacon or English essay was coined from the earliest essayist Montaigne, a French essayist. His essays were published 17 years before the first essay was written by Francis Bacon in English language. Bacon thought his style and form apt for the disposition of his genius and philosophical ideas. In addition, Francis Bacon himself called his essays as "dispersed meditations." His essays were the product of his own political, practical experience and empirical mindedness. His essays were loaded with empirical values and to be successful in life if followed in true spirit. His style was aphoristic; he used minimum words in his essays. His essays were condensed in term of words and deep meanings they contained. His essays were projection of his inner self and practical wisdom along with philosophical thoughts. His essays established him as one of the greatest genius and learned man of not only his time but of all times.

But Francis Bacon himself thought his essay as recreation as compare to his other works which were more serious in nature in term of their value and contents. Even then he was fully aware of his fame among literary circles. In 1622, he wrote to Andrews in these words "I am not ignorant that those kinds of writings would, with less pains and embracements (perhaps), yield more luster and reputation to my name than those others which I have in hand." Francis Bacon was fully conscious of the fact that his essays will serve people in their business of life and serve to get them bloom. It was due to his literary stature, practical wisdom and condensed diction that

his fame was not merely restricted to England rather his essays were translated and read in French, Italian and Latin so that maximum people can take benefits from his gems of knowledge and wisdom.

One key thing about the essays of Francis Bacon was they were not personal nor were confidential discourse of a philosophical mind of a great scholar. His essays were profound, deep and full of worldly wisdom. He broke the myth that true and great essay must be personal, confidential and intimate. His essays were deficient in communicating with the soul as was in Montaigne's essays. His essays were also not personal and intimate as were of Charles Lamb. In contrast to them, his essays were full of maxims of condensed nature which took few words but weights too much. Hence, John Freeman rightly pointed out that "Bacon is not an intimate but reserved figure, not a talker but a writer, not a babbler but a rhetorician, not a companion but a teacher, not a friend but a great chancellor, not a familiar friend forgetting his dignity but a supple states man asserting it; preferring to suppress, equivocate, and dissemble, and to justify every obliquity- anything rather than candidly pour himself out and leave the justification to the reader."

Check your progress:

1. Who is the first English essayist?

2. Whose essays are "dispersed meditations"?

1.2.3 English Essay under Ben Jonson and Abraham Cowley:

Even in the age of Francis Bacon there were few essayists who unlike Bacon wrote essays keeping in view the personal pattern of essays which was introduced by Montaigne. The important name among such essayists is Ben Johnson whose essays are personal. Self dominating pattern in his essays like that of Montaigne added charm and beauty to his essays. His style was lucid and crisp like that of Bacon. Another big name during that period was Abraham Cowley whose style was more confidential and intimate but was less profound, philosophical and weighty as compare to Bacon. The beauty of his essays laid in his simple and honest self projection of own self.

In addition, there was a thoughtful as well as a reflective persona of life presented in Abraham Cowley essays. The most delightful thing about his essays was that he had directly

written about himself in his essays. Keeping in view his literary stature, Edmund Gosse described Abraham Cowley as a pure essayist who was away from the condensed, heavy and philosophical didacticism that was found in Bacon's essays in these words "Cowley, who first understood what Montaigne was bent upon introducing, is a pure essayist, and leads on directly to Steele and Addison, and to Charles Lamb. If we read Cowley's chapter On Myself, we find contained in it, as in a nutshell, the complete model and style of what an essay should be, – elegant, fresh, confidential, constructed with as much care as a sonnet."

1.2.4 The English Essay in the Restoration Age:

During the Restoration Age, John Dryden introduced a new form of essay which was known as critical essay. The most notable earlier critical essay is *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* by Dryden which was written in 1668. It is still known as the most important essay that comprised of the most elaborate principles of critical essay. Later on, another very important collection of essays *Preface to the Fables* by Dryden appeared in 1699. It is a masterpiece that entitled Dryden as the father of criticism as well as "the first master of a prose which is adapted to the everyday needs of expression, and yet has dignity enough to rise to any point of the topmost peaks of eloquence."

Dryden's essays are far away from mannerism and they are marked for lucidity and simplicity. He had also altered the pattern of long winded sentences which were frequent among earlier essayists. He used simple, short and straightforward sentences as well as expression in his essays. Apart from Dryden there were two other big names during Restoration period and these were Sir William Temple and Lord Halifax. Both of these were politicians as well as men of high repute who contributed greatly in the development of English essay. Sir William Temple was a diplomat, statesman and well known for his essays. His important works include *Observations upon the United Provinces*, "Health and Long Life", and "Ancient and Modern Learning".

His style of writing was natural and plain. Macaulay was of the opinion about his writing style as "his style is stately and splendid. Temple is confidential and good natured." While Legouis Cazamain talked about the overall stature of Sir William Temple as "Temple is the first classicist; and his clear-cut style, unencumbered, simple, smooth but still compact, symmetrical and yet free from monotony, has almost always the rhythm and finish of the modern prose." Lamb praises as "the plain, natural chit-chat of Temple." Lord Halifax, the contemporary

of Temple was well known for his essay “The Character of a Trimmer” and it was written in a splendid style. The essay contained high value because it was full of political wisdom.

Check your progress:

1. Who is the author of *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*?

2. Which literary age did Sir William Temple belong to?

1.2.5 The Periodical Essay of the 18th Century:

The start of 18th century was marked by the rise of journalism hence, essays were published in the Periodical paper of Defoe named “The Review”. It was first published in 1704 which marked the beginning of Periodical essay. Though, it was the initial phase yet this form of essay gained prominence with the publication of “The Tatler” in 1709 and “The Spectator” in 1711. Richard Steele initiated “The Tatler” with the aim to unearth “the false arts of life, of pulling off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation, and of recommending a general simplicity in dress, discourse and behavior.” Later it was replaced by “The Spectator” in 1711 and it got its 550 issues before it put to end in 1712. The major aim of Joseph Addison in initiating “The Spectator” was to “enliven morality with wit and to temper wit with morality.” He himself was a classical writer of pleasant humor, satire and irony. In terms of nature and style Richard and Addison were literal complement to each other.

Steele was original, rash and erratic while Addison was painstaking, prudent and reflective. Steele was more innovative while Addison was more effective as compare to Steele. Steele was more warm-hearted and human in nature. In addition, Richard Steele was the early wittiest and wisest English essayist yet he was ranked below Joseph Addison. Other key contributors of Periodical essay during Queen Anne age were Pope and Swift. Pope’s qualities were more dignified as an essayist as compare to Swift whose humor was grim. Pope’s style of essay possessed numerous traits such as emotions, morality, and manner of Periodical form of essay. Dr. Johnson, Henry Fielding and Oliver Goldsmith were the true followers of Richard Steele and Addison. Oliver Goldsmith was one of the chief contributors and perhaps the greatest essayist of the 18th century English essay. He was remarkable in terms of boldness, originality and powerful narration.

Check your progress:

1. Who started the periodical “The Review”?

2. In which year did the publication of “The Tatler” commence?

1.2.6 English Essay in the 19th Century:

After Goldsmith there was a decline in Periodical form of essay which was replaced by critical journal review in the 19th century. This had very little to do with personal and social issues. Its chief concern was political. Besides political concern, literary criticism was also given consideration in critical journals such as “The Gentlemen’s Magazine”, “Blackwood’s Magazine”, “The London Magazine”, “The Quarterly Review”, and “The Edinburgh Review”. Charles Lamb was one of the key figures of the 19th century English Essay and he was rightly called “the Prince of English Essayists.” Lamb was the one who for the first time took his readers into confidence and nothing was kept secret by him. Pathos and humor were the more interlinked aspects in his essays. Likewise, he was fluent and rhetorical at the same time. His essays were poetic, delightful, eloquent, touching, amusing, and paradoxical.

William Hazlitt was also one of the best known essayists of 19th century. His approach was autobiographical. His style was free from any sort of mannerism. He had dignified language. Thomas De Quincey was also autobiographical and personal in his essays. He was at his best when dealing with visions and dreams instead of matter of facts subjects. His contribution which was marvelous towards English essay was that of sonorous prose. Leigh Hunt, another essayist of 19th century was confident in his tone of writing Essay. He wrote critical types of essays on Keats, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley.

Check your progress:

1. Who is called “the Prince of English Essayists”?

2. Write the name of at least one journal issued in 19th century.

1.2.7 English Essay in the Victorian Period:

In Victorian Period the English essay had witnessed another form of essay which became famous as historical essay. Thomas Babington Macaulay is considered to be the founder of this

type of essay. Though, he wrote essay on numerous historical perspective but his essays about English history became very famous. Some of his essays are autobiographical in nature. He had political biases and sometime he was rhetorical in his style. Apart from being an efficient essayist, he was also a standard reviewer and did tremendous job as a reviewer. One of the critics had talked about him as “In the hands of Macaulay the essay ceases to be a confession or an autobiography: it is strictly impersonal; it is literary, historical, or controversial; vigorous, trenchant, and full of party prejudice.”

Thomas Carlyle, another major essayist of Victorian period was also known as prophet of Victorian era. His approach was sincere and honest and he exposed numerous vices of the age in his essays. His essays were historical, autobiographical, political, social, and critical. They were melodious, lyrical, and contemplative as well. Matthew Arnold is another big name of English essay, also regarded as one of the greatest critics of English literature. Through his critical approach he advocated morality. Henry Newman, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater were few other notable essayists of the time. R. L. Stevenson, another essayist was famous for his personal essays. Hugh Walker admired him as an authentic and born essayist in these words, “Nature made him an essayist, and he cooperated with nature, developing, and strengthening the gifts with which he was endowed at birth.”

1.2.8 English Essay in the 20th Century:

While talking about the development of English essay 20th century is considered rich and fertile. Daily papers, weekly magazines, and monthly periodicals had enough space and scope for the publication of essay. The essays of the 20th century, which is also known as modern age, were both personal and objective in their approach. G K Chesterton was a well-known critic and essayist of the 20th century. His writing style was replete with paradoxes, epigrams, and humour. *Tremendous Trifles*, *All Things Considered*, and *A Shilling for My Thoughts* were his famous volumes of essays. E.V. Lucas was also a major name of the 20th century who wrote essays on personal style and tone. He had wider and broader experiences of life hence, his approach was wider and broader in term of scope in his essays. He wrote almost on every topic because he had never ending topics and subject matters due to his keen observation. “The Town Week” was his major work as an essayist.

A. G. Gardiner was another celebrated essayist of modern era who was perhaps the most delightful of all the others. *Many Furrows*, *Pebbles on the Shore*, and *Leaves in the Wind* were

the remarkable collections of his essays. He had persuasive and fluent style of writing and hence, was amusing and his essays were treated as short stories by the readers. His style was clear in which humor and satire was interlinked. Apart from these, there were numerous other essayists who wrote mostly personal essays. The chief among those were Max Beerbohm, George Bernard Shaw, Alice Meynell, Philip Agudilla, Maurice Baring, and Aldous Huxley.

Check your progress:

1. Which essayist is known as the prophet of Victorian age?
2. Who has authored the collection of essays titled *A Shilling for My Thoughts*?

1.2.9 Let Us Sum Up:

Essay is one of the finest and famous forms of composition which had an origin even in Greece and Roman but it was formerly written by a French essayist Montaigne. He is considered to be the first essayist. Francis Bacon is considered to be the first one who had introduced the genre of essay in English literature. He was not only the pioneer and forerunner of the English essay but also one of the greatest essayists that English language has. He was remarkable for his wisdom, philosophy and practical wisdom. His writing style is aphoristic, dense, and deep. His language was compact. After Francis Bacon English essay passes through many phases to reach its present form. In Restoration period it was Dryden who developed essay, 18th century witnessed the emergence of Periodical form of essay, 19th century introduced the critical approach towards English essay, and Victorian age was well-known for historical form of essay and in the 20th century English essay took the form of personal and objective essay.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit you should be able to know about the origin and development of English essay. After going through the Unit, you are expected to:

- be familiar with the term, idea, and concept of the English essay.
- be aware about different periods of English literature through which essay goes through in the process of development.

- comprehend different forms and types of English essays during diverse literary periods.
- differentiate among diverse literary periods of English literature with respect to English essay.
- draw a distinction between different types of English essay.
- be familiar with the notable essayists of English literature from origin till the modern period.

1.4 Glossary

Implication: Connotation

Aphoristic: Of, relating to, or containing aphorisms

Aphorism: A short clever saying that is intended to express a general truth

Eroticism: The quality of being able to arouse sexual excitement

Genre: A particular type or style of literature, art, film or music that you can recognize because of its special features

Refute: Disprove, counter

Recreation: Leisure, amusement

Luster: Shine, gleam

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The real and true form of English Essay came into existence in _____.
 (a) 1595
 (b) 1596
 (c) 1597
 (d) 1598
2. Francis Bacon's essays were impersonal and aphoristic in _____.
 (a) Style

- (b) Tone
 - (c) Thinking
 - (d) None of these
3. Joseph Hall, John Earle, and Sir Thomas Overbury are worth mentioning essayists among _____.
- (a) Characters writers
 - (b) Historical essayist
 - (c) Periodical writers
 - (d) Critical essayists
4. The history and origin of essay can be traced back in _____.
- (a) Latin
 - (b) Greek
 - (c) Roman
 - (d) Roman and Greece
5. Who was a French essayist who is considered to be the first essay writer?
- (a) Montaigne
 - (b) Francis Bacon
 - (c) Ben Jonson
 - (d) Abraham Cowley
6. Thomas Nash was the prominent name among _____.
- (a) Characters writers
 - (b) Controversial writers
 - (c) Critical writers
 - (d) Historical writers
7. Dryden introduced a new form of essay which is known as _____.
- (a) Periodical Essay
 - (b) Personal essay
 - (c) Objective essay
 - (d) Critical essay
8. The “Review” was first published in 1704 which marked the beginning of _____.
- (a) Critical essay

- (b) Religious essay
 - (c) Periodical Essay
 - (d) Political essay
9. Periodical form of essay was replaced by critical journal “Review” in the _____.
 (a) 17th century
 (b) 18th century
 (c) 19th century
 (d) 20th century
10. Victorian Period had witnessed a form of essay which became famous as _____.
 (a) Historical essay
 (b) Political essay
 (c) Social essay
 (d) Intimate essay

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the chief traits of Bacon as an essayist?
2. Who were the chief essayists of Victorian period? What traits they possessed?
3. Discuss briefly the Periodical form of essay that developed in the 18th century.
4. What role Ben Jonson and Abraham Cowley played for the development of English Essay after Francis Bacon?
5. Discuss the development of English Essay during 19th century.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How had English essay originated and what phases it passed through to reach its present form?
2. Why is Francis Bacon called the pioneer and one of the greatest essayists of English language?
3. What are the different types of English essay that developed over the times? Discuss briefly.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017.
2. Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Andesite Press, 2015.
3. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Kolkata: Supernova Publishers, 2019.
4. Hudson, W.H. *An Outline History of English Literature*. Noida: Maple Press, 2012.
5. Long, William J. *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World*. Noida: Maple Press, 2012.

Unit – 2: Joseph Addison “Sir Roger at the Assizes”

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 *Sir Roger at the Assizes*
 - 2.2.1 Joseph Addison
 - 2.2.2 Sir Roger at the Assizes
- 2.3 Learning Outcomes
- 2.4 Glossary
- 2.5 Sample Questions
- 2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

2.0 Introduction

With the rise of journalism at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the essay began to appear in periodicals deriving abundant material from the manners of the time. A revolution in the art of the essay and a great impetus to the essay from came with Richard Steele and Joseph Addison at the commencement of the eighteenth century in the periodicals known as *the Tatler* and *the Spectator*. They employed the essay for the double purpose of entertainment and the improvement of the morals and manners of contemporary society. Their style was conversational; the sheets were read at the breakfast table by men and women alike, and especially on Sundays, when games and pastimes were forbidden and theatres were closed, they formed excellent reading in family circles. In their essays, Steele and Addison dealt with the “more immediate and passing scenes of life” with “temporary and local matters”. These essays did not like their forerunners make their first appearance in the book form. They came out periodically in the case of the *Tatler* three times a week. In the case of the *Spectator* everyday each essay filling a single folio sheet and costing one penny.

Even before the *Tatler* thus appeared, there were two periodicals that could in any way be said to have belonged to the periodical form of writing and it is possible they may have given Steele some ideas. As early as 1691, appeared John Dryden’s *Athenian Mercury*. This journal professed to resolve all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious of either

sex. Questions were invited and answered on all sorts of subjects such as love, literature, religion, manners and science. Sir William Temple and his kinsman Jonathan Swift were among the contributors and Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, Samuel Richardson, the father of the English novel and he author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* wrote verses in praise of this journal which however had a successful career not longer than six years.

Daniel Defoe is rightly called the father of the English Newspaper. He began his *review* in 1704 and it continued till 1713, appearing for the greater part of time three times a week. Defoe wrote it all by himself. Its aim was mainly political, but it also dealt with moral and social topics such as gambling, drunkenness, duelling, the stage, trade and the poor. Moreover, Defoe imagined a Scandalous Club, which heard complaints and gave judgement upon them, and it is clear that Steele took the hint from it for his Trumpet Club in the *Taller* and Addison for the Spectator Club of the *Spectator* and Swift, Pope and Arbuthnot for their Martin Scriblerus Club. Defoe was an inventive genius. It was Defoe who, at the end of the Seventeenth Century discovered what is certainly true of a great majority of human beings, that they care but for a little reading at a time, wherein lies the secret of the rise and popularity of periodical literature.

The *Tatler* ran from April, 1709 to March, 1711 and the *Spectator* from March, 1711 to December 1711, again for a time under the guidance of Addison in 1714. From 1709 to 1712 therefore Steele and Addison were writing together and their joint labour in the field of periodical literature developed, in course of time, into the quarterly and monthly reviews and magazines and into the weekly journals of modern times. As the essays appeared at regular intervals more or less close, the author was able to give continuity to his ideas, and to carry the characters of his invention from essay to essay. Thus, the readers grew familiar with Mr Bickerstaff of the *Tatler* and Mr Spectator of the *Spectator*, and the immortal Sir Roger de Coverley, and the other satellites of the Spectator Club, Will Honeycomb, Andrew Freeport and others. Some of Steele's essays were very pathetic but wit and humour are the chief characteristics of these essays.

A host of imitations of the *Tatler*, including one in the provinces sprang up, but neither these nor those that imitated the *Spectator* are now remembered. An exception must be made in favour of Swift's *The Examiner* which was, however, a political journal. The best essays of Swift and Arbuthnot appeared in *The Examiner*. The next periodical that calls for mention is Dr. Johnson's *Rambler*, which appeared twice a week from March 1750 to March 1752. All the

essays in this periodical with the exception of four were written by Dr Johnson. The *Sparkle* and humour of Addison's *Spectator* were lost. In the hands of Johnson, the Essay became more serious and the style heavy and periodic. It was highly latinised. Nevertheless, the essay tradition was well maintained by Johnson, though as Lady Mary Wortley Montague wittily observed, it followed the *Spectator* "as a packhorse would do a hunter". Dr Johnson, however, is one of the most striking personalities in English literature. He is the hero of the greatest biography in English language that of *Boswell* and he gathered around himself some of the greatest men of the time. Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Sheridan and Goldsmith and dominated over them at all the weekly meetings of the Literary Club, more familiar to us in *Boswell's* pages with the shorter title of the *The Club*. But at the time of *The Rambler*, Johnson was comparatively an unknown man. Though many journals had sprung up after the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*, the *Rambler* is usually ranked as the first of the classical periodicals after the *Guardian*. A few years later, Johnson contributed to the *Universal Chronicle*, a series of papers called the *Idler*, which went on from 1758 to 1760. In the interval between the *Rambler* and the *Idler*, Johnson had contributed several interesting essays to *Hawkes worth's Adventure* (1752 – 1754).

Goldsmith contributed to *The Bee*, a periodical that ran only a few weeks, some essays characterised by his wonderful simplicity, grace and kindly humour. In 1760, he contributed anonymously to Newbery's daily paper the *Public Ledger*, a series of papers purporting to have been written by a Chinese visitor to London, Lien Chi Altangi. These were written in the form of letters sent by Lien Chi Altangi to his friend Fum Hoam at Peking and also some letters received by Altangi from his son, who had a romantic career. Like the portrait of Sir Roger De Coverly in the *Spectator*, Goldsmith gives us portraits of the Man in Black and Beau. Thus, these essays were published in book form in 1762 under the title of *The Citizen of the World*. After Addison and Steele, it may be said that Goldsmith was the first to capture and revive the secret of the illustrious essayists of Queen Anne's time.

Check your Progress:

1. Who wrote *Robinson Crusoe*?

2. Who were the pioneer writers of the periodical essay in 18th Century?

3. Who wrote *The Tatler*?

2.1 Objectives

The main objectives of the Unit are to:

- comprehend the concept of Periodical Essay.
 - understand well-known writers of 18th century periodical essay.
 - learn periodical writing of Joseph Addison.
 - know the character Sir Roger de Coverley designed by Addison.
 - understand qualities of Sir Roger de Coverley in the Assizes.
 - learn broad minded character of Sir Roger de Coverley.
-

2.2 Sir Roger at the Assizes

2.2.1 Joseph Addison:

As Bateson says, “Crucial innovations in a literature occur when some sub-literary form ceases to be trash and becomes the vehicle of aesthetic experience”. (P. 118 – The Penguin History of Literature, Vol. 4). The 18th century periodical essay was such a sub-literary form which was the result of “a reaction against that reaction” –it was a reaction against the anti-puritan reaction of the Restoration Comedy. The periodical essay was the by-product of the polemical journalism of the later 17th century. The periodical essay was a higher kind of journalism which enjoyed the privilege of –

- a) Rebuking, reforming the individual rather than the nation.
- b) Being social and moral in its objective rather than being political.
- c) Entertaining readers.

Steele became the engineer of this transition in Augustan Literary Culture, but its genius was of course, Addison. Addison’s *The Spectator* with its series of essays presents with rare playful irony and at times bitter satire on human failings, his portraits of the country squire Roger de Coverley and other characters. The Victorians preferred Addison to Pope as their model of irony, satire and refined prose style. Macauley praises him for his moral purity, which we find,

even in his merriments. Addison alone, says Macauley knew how to ridicule without abusing, who without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit with virtue. He rescued English humor from the obscenity of Restoration Comedy.

Addison and Steele were school fellows. Addison wrote in Steele's *The Tatler* as well. Addison's prose style, even today, is considered the best, in the whole range of English literature, more consistently excellent than even Shakespeare's, Dryden's, Arnold's, Shaw's etc. Dr. Johnson calls Addison's prose style "Model of the middle style – on grave subjects not formal, on high occasions not groveling, pure and exact without apparent elaboration." In other words, Addison's prose style was a combination of the high style of the epic, tragedy and ode genres, and the low style which contained mostly colloquialisms. In his commentary on the four essays on the pleasures of imagination in *The Spectator*, Hugh Blair calls Addison's style 'elegant'. In his essay no 116 in *The Tatler*, Addison calls a woman "a beautiful animal that may be adorned with furs and feathers". Here, Addison's ambivalent – attraction and repulsion, attitude towards women is not less stinging than Pope's in *The Rape of the Lock*. The description of Will Wimble in *The Spectator* no 108, "he hunts a pack of dogs than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare" presents a concrete detail of country life. Addison's one of the best essays in the *The Spectator* is that on "What is a classic" which Eliot has adopted verbatim. Eliot says that Addison's use of prose "realizes the genius of the English language. Addison's essays on *Paradise Lost* reveal his critical temperament and his closeness to Aristotle's concept of the epic. In the essay no 411 of *The Spectator*, Addison appears to us as a romantic, where he uses dreams as a literary genre in his vision of Mirza. In fact, England's progress towards romanticism was facilitated by his essays.

Check your Progress:

1. What is the purpose of 18th Century periodical essay?

2. What are the views of Bateson on 18th century periodical essay?

3. What quality of Addison's find in essay no 411 of *The Spectator*?

2.2.2 *Sir Roger at the Assizes:*

'*The Spectator*' was a periodical started on 1st March 1711 and it was published till 6th December 1712. It was published for about two years. Actually Richard Steele started the periodical, but Joseph Addison took a predominant share in the management of the journal. The name for the journal was carefully chosen that the journal observes each and every person in the society and their activities in sundry fields of life, just as the spectators of a play or a match observe the total activities of the performance. Yet, the nature and form of the periodical was not as it is today. It aimed at publishing information current and ancient and now and then it gave vent to local or some important news. But due to the lack of communication it was not possible for the editors to publish day to day news. And they gave way to publishing some article about the major historical or literary events of the past and writing and commenting on the contemporary writers and their literary activities. Nevertheless, *The Spectator*, in a limited measure, acted as the communicator to the particularly, noble and upper class.

Assize is to assess or to fix the quantity or price. In Scottish it is a trial by jury. The plural Assizes means periodical sittings of judges on circuit through the English countries with a jury. Old French 'Assizes' means an assembly of judges. Addison has delineated the character of Sir Roger Coverley in this article. In each article the reader comes to know one characteristic quality of Sir Roger. In the present article we see how Sir Roger as a Judge as well as a Jury dispenses with his responsibility. Addison's enthusiasm to ennoble Sir Roger is an endless pleasure for him. He wants to make the knight a noble man, a model and a perfect man. He is nonpareil in any aspect of human activity. As Sir Roger is very popular in the country, so he is a popular and just man in the neighborhood. Addison describes in detail some of the litigations with a view to show how honestly Sir Roger handles a case. He is an impartial judge and selfless.

As usual Addison begins the article with a quotation from some great ancient writer or poet. It represents the gist of the article. Addison develops the theme out of the allusion. It is like an epigram. 'An agreeable companion upon the road is as good as a coach'. The traveler gets satisfaction from his good companion as much as he gets from a coach or it may be said that a good companion is more desirable than a coach. A coach only saves us from the labor of walking but we may be bored without a dear friend in the company. This is an ordinary description of Sir

Roger's day at the Assizes. The humorous episode in the article makes it worthwhile. Addison has successfully produced the country atmosphere.

The author of the '*The Spectator*' thinks that a man should first of all try to avoid the reproaches of his own heart and then his second concern should be to escape the reproaches of the world. If he later comes in conflict with the first, one should give primary importance to the first that is one should avoid the reproaches of the heart. Sir Roger is fortunate enough in keeping peace within himself and at the same time in winning the love and respect of all around him. The author has seen how the people shower affection and good will upon him. He tells how the other day Will Wimble and himself accompanied Sir Roger to the country assizes.

On the way, Will Wimble joined two simple countrymen who were riding ahead while Wimble began conversing with them Sir Roger told the author about these two men. One of them was honest yeoman. He was also an expert hunter and rarely spent money on his dinners for he hunted hares and pheasants for his meal. The other man who rode beside him was a notorious fellow always engaged in law-suits. He was quarrelsome fellow and irritated people by bringing in law-suits against them on silly charges. As a result of this, he has practically lost all he was left with by his father. When Sir Roger and the author went near, Wimble sopped and told Sir Roger a dispute arose between himself and Tom Touchy. Touchy is the man who approaches the court for slightest pretext. In the conversation Wimble told about his hunting exploits. One of the exploits concerned the fishing at a certain part of the river. And Touchy caught a chance of picking quarrel with Wimble. That Wimble must come to the court because the fishing at a particular part was objectionable. Sir Roger heard both of them remained silent for a moment and then said that much might be said on both sides. On hearing this Wimble and Touchy looked quite satisfied.

When they arrived at the assizes they found that the court had already started. But the judges made room for Sir Roger. The session was proceeding and Addison was very pleased to see the solemnity of the atmosphere when suddenly he saw that Sir Roger rose to speak. The hall became silent at once and people gazed at him with wonder, amazed to find him speaking with the judge.

On their way back home, the spectator (author) and Sir Roger chanced upon a very pleasant incident. When they arrived near his estate, they decided to rest at an inn just on the verge of his estate. The inn-keeper was once a servant of Sir Roger's household. In order to show

his respect to the knight, this person had put up a picture of Sir Rodger on his sign board. When Sir Rodger came to know about this, he told the inn-keeper that it was too great an honor for him and suggested that he should alter the picture. Thus, the man brought a painter and had the picture changed. When Sir Roger came to the inn, the inn-keeper wanted to show him the altered picture. He brought it and showed. The alteration were really remarkable. The author of the Spectator discovered a faint resemblance to Sir Roger beneath the whiskers and the monstrous face. Sir Roger then asked him whether it was possible for people to discover his own face in the picture. The author at first remained silent, but being pressed too much, he replied wittily that ‘much might be said on both sides’.

Tom Touchy is an interesting character in the article. His peculiarity is not uncommon. In every society we see men like Touchy and they systematically exploit the protection given by law in a laissez faire. Touchy is a nuisance creator. His name is also interesting and symbolical. That he is like prickly bramble and whoever touches it the thorns stick to him. This Tom Touchy is very famous for ‘taking the law’ of everybody. There is not one in the town where he lives, that he has not sued at a quarter session. He is a rogue and once he had the impudence of going to law against a widow. He plagued give much trouble a couple of honest gentlemen so long for a tress pass in breaking one of his hedges.

So for as the character of Sir Roger is concerned, there appears a nobility trust upon him. There is nothing remarkable or a gallant feat that happens in the portrait of him. However there is humor regarding the picture of Sir Roger. He asked the alteration for no purpose. Because when it was altered, everything had gone wrong. That Sir Roger could not be identified out of the picture. It appears that the painter had drawn the picture from the description of Sir Roger from the faithful servant and hence there is least resemblance to the man whose picture it was. The author also reserves his judgment about the picture, as Sir Roger had reserved his about the dispute between Wimble and Touchy. It is a sly remark on the nature of Sir Roger. The frowning and staring features are not pleasant ones, the reference of Saracerist lead adds to the solemnity of the article. This is one of the adventures of Sir Roger that provides much pleasure to the author.

An Assizes is a sitting of the court of justice in the country. The sitting is not regular, as it is in consideration of a small number of cases that are brought to the court in the country. It is like a mobile court sitting at a particular village periodically and the neighboring people of the

country should sue their cases at the time. Sir Roger was a jury and he was a man of impartial verdict that all the neighborhood knew it. Sir Roger and Wimble and the author of the *Spectator* were going for the assizes according to the programme. On their way William Wimble had some dispute with a quarrelsome man Tom Touchy. It took some time to deal with the dispute and Sir Roger was a little late when he reached the place of assizes.

The court had already started with the proceedings. But when Sir Roger came, other judges and juries made room for him to sit and he was the chair for the occasion. It shows how Sir Roger was respected. Sir Roger was an expert advocator and soon he began to express his opinions on the law-suits that were under consideration. The author of '*The Spectator*' was listening to the proceedings with much attention and was greatly satisfied with the proper accomplishment of such a public administration of the laws. After an hour and in the midst of the hearing of a case. Sir Roger got up at once and began to speak. It was surprising for all others. He meant to tell in short about an urgent business he had to attend and asked the committee for an excuse. Upon his first rising the court was hushed and a general whisper ran among the country people that Sir Roger was up. His speech at the assizes was very little and there was nothing to comment on it. It appeared that Sir Roger had not prepared himself to attend to the cases to the full sitting. This is how Sir Roger dispensed with assizes.

The essay presents an aspect of the character of Sir Roger Coverley. He is an ideal man, a model and an example to be followed. And hence, the authors of *The Spectator* repeatedly bring him in the essays and try to connect him to the themes directly or indirectly. In the present article, Sir Roger is a jury, for a mobile court in the country. The assizes refers to that. According to the programme of the assizes Sir Roger sets for the place where the court was to sit. The sentence under reference, speaks of the encounter of Wimble and one Tom Touchy, between whom a dispute arose. Touchy was going to the court to present his law-suits and Wimble happened to speak to him just to make friendship with him. During the conversation between them Wimble gave an account of his adventures in fishing. He mentioned about such an act of a day in a particular part of the river. Touchy at once picked a quarrel with him saying that it was unlawful to go fishing at particular spot and Wimble must face the consequences of court proceedings. And Touchy himself would complain against him. Wimble tried to convince him that it was not his intention to violate law if at all there had been one. He pleaded for his innocence. But Touchy was not a man of consideration. He was a sort of brain worm seeking

after persons who he could involve in law-suits. Sir Roger gives many accounts of cases that Touchy sued. There is not one in the town where he lives that he had not sued at a quarter session. Thus, Wimble was helpless against Touchy and at the suggestion of Wimble both come to Sir Roger and tell about the dispute. Sir Roger could not set aside the legal implication involved in the matter. He registered the case at once and asked them to appear before the judge because ‘that much might be said on both sides’.

Sir Roger was returning after attending the quarter session of the mobile court in the country, when the party Sir Roger, Wimble and the author of the Spectator was very near to Sir Roger’s estate, they decided to stay at an inn for some time, take rest and proceed. The inn-keeper was an old servant of Sir Roger and out of respect and obedience, he had got a picture of Sir Roger and hung it in the sign board. Before reaching the inn, Sir Roger come to know about it and he did not like the idea for he thought that he did not deserve to be commemorated in that way. Such honor should be showed to great persons like a duke or king. He had asked the inn-keeper to modify the picture by adding whiskers and turning the face to gravity. He also recommended the painter. The inn-keeper followed the instructions and the picture was changed into Saracen’s head as it was suggested. A Saracen was a moor or Berber or an Arab or a Syrian nomad. The purpose was to disfigure the picture and people should not identify it with Sir Roger. When the party came to the inn, Sir Roger asked the inn-keeper to bring the picture before him. He seemed to be glad to see the alternation made in the picture according to his instructions. But at the same time, he became serious to see that there were some races below the whiskers and Sir Roger could have still been traced. Through the resemblance was far-fetched one. Sir Roger moved the picture of the head towards the author and asked for his opinion about it. The author of the Spectator could not say anything at first. But after some time he passed his remark saying that ‘that much might be said on both sides’. The statement is an imitation of Sir Roger’s words who had said the same upon the dispute between Wimble and Tom Touchy. Thus the author has wittily concluded the passage by adding something to the mirth and gravity of Sir Roger.

Check your progress:

1. In which year was the periodical ‘The Spectator’ started?

2. Who suggested the innkeeper to change the picture on the wall?

2.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of Periodical essay.
- know 18th century periodical writers.
- comprehend the writing and skills of Joseph Addison
- understand the character of Sir Roger de Coverley
- know social work done by Sir Roger de Coverley.

2.4 Glossary

Aesthetic:	Concern with beauty or the appreciation of beauty.
Ambivalent:	Having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.
Assizes:	Periodical sitting of judges or circuit through the English countries with a jury.
Bramble:	A prickly scrambling shrub of the rose family, especially a blackberry.
Colloquialism:	A word or phrase that is not formal or literary and is used in ordinary or familiar conversation.
Delineated:	Describe or portray something precisely.
Duelling:	A contest with deadly weapons arranged between two people in order to settle a point of honour.
Groveling:	Obsequious behaviour aimed at obtaining forgiveness or favour.
He is within the game-act:	This refers to old game laws by which persons were not allowed to obtain a licence unless duly qualified by birth or estate. The required qualification was ownership of lands of the minimum yearly value of 100. The Yeoman deserves that.

Inventive:	Having the ability to create or design new things or to think originally.
Laissez-faire:	The policy of leaving things to take their own course without interfering.
Litigations:	The process of taking legal action.
Merriments:	Gaiety and fun.
Mirth:	Amusement especially as expressed in laughter.
Nonpareil:	An unrivalled or matchless person or thing.
Obscenity:	Offensive or disgusting by accepted standards of morality and decency.
Old Business of the willow tree:	The old law suit which a willow tree was concerned.
Packhorse:	A horse used to carry loads.
Petty Jury:	The Jury which sits in court to give a verdict on the cases tried, as opposed to the grand jury which decides before trial whether the accused shall be sent for trial or not.
Polemical:	Expressing or constituting a strongly critical attack on or controversial opinion about someone or something.
Prickly:	Likely to cause offence or controversy.
Rebuking:	Expressing sharp disapproval or criticism.
Repulsion:	A feeling of intense distaste or disgust.
Saracen's Head:	A very common sign that was a relic from the Crusades, and may still be seen as in the Lamb Saracen's Head in Westminster. Saracen is a Syrian or Arab nomad, an opponent of the Crusaders. A moor or Berber.
Solemnity:	The State or quality of being serious and dignified.
Sundry:	Of various kinds.
The Widow:	A perverse widow who was brought before the jury with whom the knight fell in love.
Vent:	Give free expression to strong expression.
Verbatim:	Exactly the same words as were used originally.

Will Wimble: A fiend of Sir Roger de Coverley.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The periodical essay "*The Tatler*" is written by _____?
(a) Daniel Defoe (b) Addison and Steele
(c) Oliver Goldsmith (d) Dr Johnson
2. Who is the central character in "*The Spectator*"?
(a) Tom Touchy (b) Charles
(c) Steele (d) Sir Roger
3. Swift's '*The Examiner*' is a _____ journal.
(a) Social (b) Economical
(c) Political (d) None of the above
4. The Spectator was a periodical started in _____.
(a) 1st March 1711 (b) 1st March 1712
(c) 1st June 1711 (d) 1st June 1712
5. Sir Roger is a _____ in the essay 'Sir Roger at the Assizes'.
(a) Prisoner (b) Jury
(c) Innkeeper (d) None of the above
6. Who filed a case against Will Wimble in the court?
(a) Sir Roger (b) Innkeeper
(c) Tom Touchy (d) Addison
7. Whose picture the innkeeper had put up on the sign-board?
(a) Steele (b) Charles
(c) Jesus Christ (d) Sir Roger
8. Where did Sir Roger and Will Wimble decide to stay after returning from the court?
(a) Hostel (b) Home
(c) Inn (d) None of the above
9. Who was having dispute with Tom Touchy?

- (a) Will Wimble (b) Sir Roger
(c) Addison (d) Steele

10. Who is called the father of English Newspaper?

- (a) Addison (b) Steele
(c) Dr Johnson (d) Daniel Defoe

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who are major writers of periodical essays in 18th Century?
2. What is the purpose of periodical essay in 17th century?
3. What did Will Wimble told to Sir Roger on their way?
4. Why did Sir Roger suggested to innkeeper to change the picture?
5. How did the quarrel takes place between Will Wimble and Tom Touchy?

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a detailed note on dispute between Will Wimble and Tom Touchy.
2. Sketch the character of Sir Roger.
3. Write a detailed note on the incident of Sir Roger and the Innkeeper.

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Addison, Joseph, and Steele, Richard. *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*. Edited
2. Bond, Richmond. *Studies in the Early English Periodical*. Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press. 1957. Print.
3. Edward, Albert. *History of English Literature*. Revised by J. A. Stone. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1979. Print.
4. J. Robert. 1945. Allen. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.
5. Smith, Gregory. *The Spectator in Four Volumes*. Dutton, New York. Everyman's Library.
6. Walter, Graham. *English Literary Periodicals*. New York: T. Nelson and Sons. 1930. Print.

Unit – 3: *The Man in Black*

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Oliver Goldsmith
 - 3.2.1 Life, Career and Death
 - 3.2.2 The Man in Black
 - 3.2.3 Critical Appreciation
 - 3.2.4 The English Prose in the Eighteenth Century
 - 3.2.5 Conclusion
- 3.3 Learning outcomes
- 3.4 Glossary
- 3.5 Sample Questions
- 3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

3.0 Introduction

Oliver Goldsmith (1730 – 1774) was one of the prominent writers of the English literature from the Augustan era. He donned multiple hats such as that of a novelist, essayist and a playwright who also wrote poems of the eighteenth century. He was a versatile figure like Addison, Dryden, Grey and Johnson. He is well-known for his remarkable works namely *The Citizen of the World* (1762), *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), the pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), but mostly known for his plays *The Good Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771). *She Stoops to Conquer* is a fine comedy by Smith that could stand the test of time. It has been considered one of few plays from the long eighteenth century that could actually retain its appeal over the period.

Oliver Goldsmith was a prolific essayist, too. *The Bee* (1759) is considered his first ever serial miscellany that ran for successive eight weeks. In the year 1774, he wrote a bulky eight-volume long *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature* besides undertaking varied translations to ease his monetary constraints. It is specifically noted that he also lamented the untimely downfall of the art and culture in general in his noted analytical essay titled *Enquiry into the*

Present State of Polite Learning in Europe (1759). *The Citizen of the World* (1762) is his celebrated work, where he has described the essayist as a traveller while simultaneously presenting striking comparisons of different cultures and civilizations. In addition, the essays also throw light on the intellectual and political climate of his era.

Boswell said that Goldsmith ‘wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll’. The prominent characteristic observed for his writing was his versatility, which was reflected in his works that he penned across varied genres such as the novel, the essay, poetry, biography and even history as mentioned above. These works have played significant role in creating his versatile identity as a literary figure and attain the fame over the time with common traits such as order, good sense, moderation, and intellectual honesty.

The prose under-study in this chapter *The Man in Black* has been taken from his known collection of essays titled *The Citizen of the World* (1762). It can be said that the essay is filled with multiple instances of humour and humanism as has been considered the key traits that he has been experimenting with and reflecting upon in his writings.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- To familiarize students with the English literature and especially Augustan era
- To enable students to understand comprehend English prose of the Eighteenth century
- To make students critically appreciate the English prose in general and essays written by Goldsmith in particular
- To enable students to master the deeper understanding of the English literary works, the prominent literary figures and their contribution in the development of varied genres, here, English prose (essays)
- To understand and appreciate the contribution of Oliver Goldsmith as a versatile writer of the Augustan era by critically reading his celebrated essay *The Man in Black*

3.2 Oliver Goldsmith

3.2.1 Life, Career and Death:

Oliver Goldsmith was born to Rev. Charles Goldsmith at Pallas, a county in Ireland on 10th November, 1730. His year of birth varies in different academic reference works; hence, to ensure the uniformity, I have mentioned the year 1730 as mentioned in *A Short History of English Literature* (2009) by Pramod K. Nayar. He received his B.A. degree from the Dublin University after taking primary and higher secondary education at various local schools. The fundamental reason of his literary versatility lies in his numerous experiences over the period such as a learner of medicine, a seasoned traveller of across the continent, editor, and also a school usher prior to becoming the proprietor of the *Monthly Review*. His first recognizable literary endeavour was of creating a pseudonymous account of a French *Memoirs of a Protestant condemned to the Galleys of France for his Religion* (1758). It was only after that he began to write with his own name when his later work came out titled *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*. *The Bee* also came out in the year 1759, which was followed by *The Citizen of the World*, a series of the Chinese letters that were reprinted in 1762 and first came out from Newbery's *Public Ledger*. He published *The Traveller* in the year 1764 that was followed by the celebrated *Vicar of Wakefield*. In the successive two years, he published a comedy *The Good Natur'd Man* and produced in January 1768. His best-known play *She Stoops to Conquer* also known as *The Mistakes of a Night* that came out in 1773.

On 4 April, 1774, his untimely demise occurred in his chambers at 2 Brick Court, Middle Temple. He was buried in the graveyard of the Temple Church. However, his significant literary legacy continued to live even after his death. *Retaliation* has been considered his posthumous publication, which was a compilation of his meritorious works.

Check your Progress

1. Mention a comedy by Oliver Goldsmith.

2. What literary legacy did Goldsmith leave behind?

3.2.2 The Man in Black:

The essay understudy titled *The Man in Black* has been taken from his celebrated collection of essays titled *The Citizen of the World* that was published in the year 1762. The essays in the collection *The Citizen of the World or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* (1762)

were first published as *Chinese Letters* in the journal called *The Public Ledger* and later recollected as compilation in *The Citizen of the World*. This essay collection has helped Goldsmith in establishing himself as an essayist in the eighteenth century. The essays, in general, describe the Western society through the eyes of a Chinese traveller, an Oriental, who is a visiting London, England. It is satirical and ironical depiction of the West through Eastern eyes. This is also an intriguing work that looked at the Western society from an Eastern perspective. Most of the extensive history is filled with works that objectively gazes the East from the West's perspective. This is an interestingly altered version of the same.

The essay collection shares the experiences of a Chinese traveler who is exploring London, England with the Man in Black. The essay has two main characters and various other subordinate characters. The Man in Black is the main character in the essay. Oliver Goldsmith has once stated that the inspiration of creating the main character of the essay *The Man in Black* was drawn from his own father, who was an Anglican curate in Ireland. However, varied critics, over the period, have observed that besides considering the resonance of the character with Goldsmith's father, the character 'bears the striking resemblance' with him, as claimed by Richard Taylor that "Goldsmith himself seems to have had difficulty reconciling his philosophic opposition to charity with his own tenderness towards the poor . . . the man of feeling . . . he apparently found it natural and almost unavoidable for a 'man of sentiment' (Taylor, 1993).

The essay introduces a possibly English character named the Man in Black and a Chinese traveller who are en route to somewhere and walking across the streets in London. The essay describes experiences and sudden encounters that they have with underprivileged poor people as they walk by the passages in the city. These encounters also shed some light in understanding the different layers of personalities that human beings generally carry along, precisely with reference to the eighteenth-century England where men were expected to behave certain way, notably, they cannot be humane and show empathy towards those in need. Every human being carries multiple personalities that one decides to show under varied circumstances, but that becomes a choice of an individual. However, the then English society has a popular tradition of the code of conduct that ought to be followed by the masculine and famine citizens where the men in the society should not reveal their vulnerable empathetic self in the public. The men in the eighteenth-century England were expected to behave as practical, logical and ruthless being in the public life.

Hence, the essay as the title of the essay collection goes *The Citizen of the World*, is a reflection on how the world is filled with multitude of different types and kinds of people in strangely incredible manner. Most of the people, to add, live a masked life where their action and words do not match, sometimes for good, sometimes for not-so-good intentions. the essay is about how an English man named as The Man in Black turns out to be a person who intentionally attempts to prove that he is not a sympathetic or empathetic human but rather a rude and heartless one though his words during the conversations that unfortunately will not match with his actions. For instance, the main character of the essay, The Man in Black, is best described in a certain way at the beginning of the essay by the Chinese traveller and his companion where he is deliberate actions of creating and reflecting a juxtaposition in his personality through his actions gets revealed. To add further, the Chinese traveller could effortlessly see him through and beyond his rude words in no time. The Chinese traveller, who is a narrator begins the narration by describing the complex personality of The Man in Black who is constantly trying to hide his inner goodness of heart, But the narrator vividly and candidly notes that:

His manners, it is true, are tinctured with some strange inconsistencies; and he may be justly termed a humorist in a nation of humorists. Though he is generous even to profusion, he affects to be thought a prodigy of parsimony and prudence; though his conversation be replete with unbounded love. I have known him profess himself a man-hater, while his cheek was glowing with compassion; and, while his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of the most unbounded ill-nature. Some affect humanity and tenderness, others boast of having such disposition from nature, but he is the only man I ever knew who seemed ashamed of his natural benevolence. He takes as much pains to hide his feelings, as any hypocrite would to conceal his indifference; but on every unguarded moment the mask drops off, and reveals him to be the most superficial observer. (Goldsmith, *The Man in Black*)

The narrator describes the Man in Black with his apparent constant inner struggle to intentionally conceal his true self as a compassionate being as was the expectation from him as the man in the eighteenth-century England. However, the inner juggling could not contain his

true self and revealed it effortlessly in the brief interaction and duration with the narrator. As they say, however one tries to hide one's true self, the action speaks louder than words.

As the conversation furthers, The Man in Black is mazed and disgusted while describing the underprivileged who are still out begging to make their ends meet despite being the humane measures taken by the government. According to him, the poor in England have been provided for their fundamental needs by the government. Hence, what more one can ask for? The beggars and needy makes him feel repelled as they are asking for more than they might need, which is wrong. Therefore, he believes, they should better be jailed than left freely on the road. He says:

In every parish-house the poor are supplied with food, cloths, fire and a bed to lie on; they want no more, I desire no more myself; yet still they seem discontented. I am surprised at the inactivity of our magistrates in not taking up such vagrants, who are only a weight upon the industrious; I am surprised that the people are found to relieve them, when they must be at the same time sensible that it in some measure encourages idleness extravagance, and imposture, were I to advise any man for whom I had the least regard I would caution him by all means not to be imposed upon by their false pretense; let me assure you, sir, they are impostors, every one of them; and rather merit a prison than relief. (Goldsmith, The Man in Black)

The conversation as mentioned-above revealed the generalized and subjective perception the Man in Black hold of the civilians living in the English society. He vaguely puts everyone in the similar category of those who just wish to survive by becoming an added weigh on the government, therefore, on people's taxes. The conversation reads quite subjective and biased, if one only tries to judge the Man in Black based on his words. He even goes to an extent of saying that such people do not deserve to be left free and waltzing around the society but instead deserved to be jailed since they can not speak truth but are 'impostors' and pretending to be in the survival trouble.

However, while the Man in Black was still whining about these poor and opportunists' people, as noted by the narrator, they ran into an old beggar. This was an instance where the narrator first noted the difference in the word and actions of the Man in Black. The narrator did not budge and affected by the moving tale told by the old beggar but the Man in Black was immediately touched. Interestingly, he was still trying to hold onto his pretentious self as the

ruthless one but the narrator realized that he is willing to help the beggar but fail to do so in the presence of the narrator. Therefore, the narrator intentionally began to look around and created an illusion that he is not noticing the act of the Man in Black. He taken the opportunity and offer some money to the beggar and left the place. The instance has been reproduced here for your reference:

An old man . . . implored our compassion. He assured us that he is no common beggar, but forced into the shameful profession to support a dying wife and five hungry children. Being prepossessed against such falsehood, his story had not the least influence upon me; but it was quite otherwise with the Man in Black; I could see it visibly operate upon his countenance and effectually interrupt his harangue. I could visibly perceive that his heart burned to relieve the five starving children, but he seemed ashamed to discover his weakness to me. While he thus hesitated between compassion and pride, I pretended to look another way, and he seized this opportunity of giving the poor petitioner a piece of silver, bidding him at the same time, in order that I should hear, go work for his bread, and not tease passengers with such impertinent falsehood for the future. (Goldsmith, The Man in Black)

The narrator's nuanced description of the scene makes it clear that the Man in Black was a good-hearted man. However, it is distressing to read that the feeling of compassion has been considered as a "weakness" among men that was holding him back and pushing him to hide his true self. It has been an age-old code of conduct that imparts and imposes the Dos and Don'ts for a man and a woman. They, more astonishingly, despite disagreeing to the same could not, publicly denounce it. This was one of the reasons why have people been compelled to live with multiple masks. The emotions and sympathetic nature had been looked down upon as a weakness in the man. The categorization was so certain and deeply imbued in the society that not many men would dare to challenge it by not following it. Instead, they would continently begin to live a dual self, one for themselves and one for the society. Thus, to maintain the false image of a ruthless and practically logical man, he continues his "rail" against such pretentious beggars with "animosity as before" and narrated two instances where he could justify in afore-mentioned claims of the beggars as liars, he states, "the manner in which he would deal with beggars, were

he a magistrate; hinted at enlarging some of the prisons for their reception, and told two story of ladies that were robbed by beggarmen.”

Soon they cross their paths with a sailor who is selling chips, to whom the Man in Black rudely insulted and claimed that the chips are stolen goods. He proudly bargains to buy all of it in only one shilling. The unanticipated demand shook the sailor with shock; however, he immediately recovered and sold the good to the Man in black since “he was obliged to preserve the appearance of ill-nature before me, and yet relieve himself by relieving the sailor”. What a shame that a goodhearted man is forced to affront and abuse a man in need because he has to maintain his societal pretence? However, the essay is filled with other such instances where the narrator observed that the Man in Black is a good man by heart but had to push his goodness back just to ensure the society that he is following all the norms of pretence under the pseudo system of a social code of conduct. The Man in Black was lastly caught to reveals himself in the last instance before the essay ends in encounter when they saw “a woman in rags, with one child in her arms, and another on her back, was attempting to sing ballads, but with such as mournful voice that it was difficult to determine whether she was singing or crying”. However, the Man in Black let his true self revealed when he was willing to help them woman, careless of what his friend, the narrator might think of him, and ends up realizing that he has no money left to help the woman. The narrator observed that upon seeing the woman in pain “his vivacity and his discourse were instantly interrupted”.

The concluding paragraph was the revealing one when the Man in Black had crossed a point where he would think of maintaining his conceited self over looking at the woman in the extreme agony in front of him. The essay ends on the striking note when the Man in Black could finally leave behind the pretence and reveals his true vulnerable and ‘weak’ self in front of his friend, the narrator, that was affected and touched by the pain and suffering in the woman’s voice:

Even in my presence he immediately applied his hands to his pockets. . . when he found he had already given away all the money he carried about to former objects. The misery painted in the woman’s visage was not half so strongly expressed as the agony in his. He continued to search for some time, but to no purpose, till at length recollecting himself, with a face of ineffable good-nature, as he had no

money, he put into her hands his shilling's worth of matches. (Goldsmith, *The Man in Black*)

Check your Progress

1. Who is the narrator in the essay?

3.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

Oliver Goldsmith had established himself as an essayist with his celebrated collection of the essays titled *The Citizen of the World or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* (1762). These essays are written by a fictitious Chinese visitor named Lien Chi Altangi, who is visiting London. These letters were published as periodicals or a series in *The Public Ledger* between 1760 – 1761. Goldsmith uses his fictional characters, Altangi, and the Man in Black, his British companion, to look at the shallow British society of the Augustan era. The essays are filled with his wit, satire and ironical expressions in the form of instances described. He held extensively critical opinion towards the contemporary British society and its societal code of conduct.

The collection of the essays offers a direct and unfiltered glimpse into the eighteenth-century British society and their problematic social customs. This essays collection helped Goldsmith in marking himself as a nuanced essayist who is looking at his own society from an objective critical point of view, precisely presented through the eyes of an Oriental – Chinese visitor. The Chinese Oriental traveller, Altangi is a narrator in the essays. He is the one who is decoding the layered and shallow British society that was represented by a British man, the Man in Black, through the sharp apparent contrast that can easily be marked in his actions and words.

Goldsmith seems to have mocked the eighteenth-century British society that was hypocritical in nature in his essay *The Man in Black*. The ironical and satirical circumstances were aptly created in the essay where the main character the Man in Black, a British citizen represents the British society through his biased, judgemental and arrogant behaviour towards the needy and less privileged class of the society. It describes the complex social order that imbibes the shallow societal behaviour, self-serving and harangues attitude towards the underprivileged section of the society in a person who is unwillingly compelled to follow the unacceptable common painful social customs, as was the case with the Man in Black. The hypocrisy and superficiality are apparent in the entire essay. The narration is deeply moving and

touching. The Man in Black is essentially a goodhearted and sympathetic man who is shown to have been compelled to hide his true sympathetic self and cover it with a personality of a pitiless, egotistical and judgemental British man. His true identity was finally revealed towards the end of the essay where despite being aware of the threat of revealing his 'weakness' in front of an Oriental visitor, he could not hide his disappointment and deep pain by seeing the agonized mother struggling to survive with her children.

Oliver Goldsmith had received remarkable eminence among the writers of his era with his astonishing works in different genres such as essays, plays, novel and poetry. He donned multiple hats as a writer during his lifetime. In fact, his friend Dr. Johnson called him a 'flower that blossomed later'. His works stood the test of time and achieved permanence because the characters that he depicted in his works, whether plays, novel, essays or poetry were of the kind that resonate with the commoners. He could manage to receive a lot of respect as a writer from his contemporary colleagues, however, he was a different man as a human being who could not receive the equal respect. He had a complex personality. His personal self and his literary works greatly vary from each other.

A striking aspect of the literary creations of Goldsmith was that despite moving amid the sophisticated Londoners, he could still manage to retain his pastoral and provincial manners in his actions and more through his literary creations. He did not try to change himself according to his surroundings. The county man in him lived graciously with him through his works. That could be the reason why he could appeal to many readers. He could bring the ordinary and common on the stage, in his writing with ease, whether it was his essays, dramas, poetry or novel. He was a gifted writer. Even as a person he was undistinguished or sometimes considered physically common, like a common man walking in the crowd on the street. Therefore, the charm that he created which lasted long was through his writings. All of the characters that he created were created with deep affection. His writing is full of with, satire and irony which was mingled by his spontaneous intermingling of joyfulness and grief.

The most recurring theme that can be traced in his oeuvre is the humane personality traits that his characters showcase. It is the quality that makes his work more appealing. This characteristic style of Goldsmith can be marked across the literary works that he penned during his brief lifetime as a writer. For instance, the instances that are shared in the Man in Black essay, an encounter with a poor beggar, a beggar woman singing ballad and expressing her deep

pain and the reactions that are given by the Man in Black, a British citizen makes the reader mull over them. In addition, the paradoxical and contradictory actions and verbal exchange strikingly brings the shallow human nature, where despite wanting to offer some help to the needy fellow citizen, a privileged man is expected to cruelly criticise and even mock the beggars. This widespread social contradiction that was thriving in the Augustan era was brought to people's attention by the witty, satirical and ironical works of Oliver Goldsmith. Interestingly, the essay *The Man in Black* can also be compared with Goldsmith's *A City Night-Piece* and with George Orwell's *Why are Beggars Despised?*

Goldsmith gave visibility to the people who have mostly been neglected and intentionally made invisible in the society owing to their poor economical circumstances. The readers could see their needy fellow citizen, different human situations without becoming judgmental about them, and the human dilemma, pain and life challenges through the works of Goldsmith. Therefore, it can easily be established that Goldsmith was a writer who has rightly been described as 'natural, simple and affecting.' This simplicity and commonality found in his essays could last the test of time and can also be considered as relevant today as they were in the eighteenth-century.

Check your Progress:

1. What is an alternate name of the essay under discussion?

2. Could these essays bring name, fame and recognition for Goldsmith?

3. Mention one more essay title that can be used to compare the essay *The Man in Black*.

3.2.4 The English Prose in the Eighteenth Century:

The eighteenth-century in the English literature is also known as the Augustan period. The literature written in the post-1700 era represents many of the intellectual concerns of the Enlightenment to mark the apparent distinction from the earlier Restoration era. The most common traits that were marked in most of the literary figures of the Augustan era were rationality, reason, scientific thinking and empiricism. Pramod K. Nayar notes the below-mentioned five characteristics of the non-fiction (prose) of the eighteenth-century in *A Short History of English Literature* (2009) as follow,

- Influenced by Montaigne and Francis Bacon
- Dealt mostly with morals and manners
- Often served the purpose of social commentary
- Used everyday life as a theme
- Aim was to amuse while also providing information and advice

The third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671 – 1713) in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* argues about the intrinsic moral sense that helps men in distinguishing between the good or bad virtue. The notable non-fiction writers of the eighteenth-century were Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Edward Gibbon, Edmond Burke, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Gilbert White, David Hume and Oliver Goldsmith. Dr. Johnson, an extraordinary literary figure of the period and Oliver Goldsmith were close literary friends. Dr. Johnson is generally known as the maker of the dictionary (1755) in the Augustan age. He had extensively written on Oliver Goldsmith and his career. It was Dr. Johnson who called Goldsmith as someone “who left scarcely any kind of writing untouched, and who touched nothing that he did not adorn”.

The prose works or the non-fiction of this era mostly represented the general theme of the era as rightly mentioned by Shaftesbury that revolved around moral, virtue, men and manners. Pamphlets, periodicals, historical accounts, letters and essays were some common genres that were produced in the eighteenth century by the known literary figures of that era. Eighteenth century has primarily been known as the age of Enlightenment in the history of English literature. Therefore, the literature written in this era magnificently embodied the spirit of enlightenment as can be marked in the prose or non-fiction literary works that were produced in this era.

Check your Progress:

1. Who were the famous literary figures of the Augustan Era?

2. Why was the period famous as an era of Enlightenment?

3. What were the key traits that were embodied in the era?

3.2.5 Conclusion:

The collection of essays titled *The Citizen of the World or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher* (1762) have been considered a brilliant literary contribution that Oliver Goldsmith has made as an eighteenth-century versatile writer, playwright, novelist and poet. His one of the essays *The Man in Black* as a prescribed essay is a vivid representation of his remarkable writing skills as a writer whose works have immortalized him despite living a short life. The main character in the essay is called the Man in Black and skilfully represents the human weaknesses such as egotism, pretence, selfishness, biased and judgemental attitude towards less privileged underprivileged fellow citizens. The Man in Black is a common British man who does not practice what he preaches, a common human inconsistency is apparently showcased by him in front of an Oriental – Chinese friend who is visiting London. He tries to establish that he possesses extremely conceited nature and he is very economical and logical person. He puts lots of efforts to conceal his sympathetic and humane side in front of an Oriental friend and follow the common code of conduct that should be followed by a British man that is ruthlessly logical and pitiless in nature. However, the instances described in the essay could tactfully bring the intentionally hidden humane side of the Man in Black, regardless of how will he be perceived by an outsider Orientalist. Therefore, the essay *The Man in Black* is a incredible representation of a common human being, who despite trying to hide his sentimental self behind his apparent cruel self couldn't help but reveal himself while witnessing the extremely saddening and painful human circumstances. The essay establishes the belief in the inner goodness of a human being. Moreover, the essay also through a sharp light on the gendered way of societal behaviour, where a man has to hide himself to be able to be a part of the larger social group and carry himself as an unemotional and detached human being. The essay, in a nutshell, offers a nuanced inside into the heart and soul of a man, which has barely received any attention in the society since women and men are grouped to behave and express themselves certain way, which itself is a problematic narrative.

Check your Progress:

1. Why are men expected to behave like a heartless being?

2. How does the essay throw a light on the gendered views of the societal codes of conduct?

3. Why should the gendered view be considered problematic?

3.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- familiarize with the English literature and especially Augustan era
- understand and comprehend English prose of the Eighteenth century
- critically appreciate the English prose in general and essays written by Goldsmith in particular
- master the deeper understanding of the English literary works, the prominent literary figures and their contribution in the development of varied genres, here, English prose (essays)
- understand and appreciate the contribution of Oliver Goldsmith as a versatile writer of the Augustan era by critically reading his celebrated essay *The Man in Black*

3.4 Glossary

Augustan Age	:Eighteenth century in the English literature is also known as the Augustan age that tried to emulate the Golden period of Roman writing that was produced during the reign of Emperor Augustus
English Prose	:The non-fiction works of literature that were produced during the Augustus era or the eighteenth century are also called English prose
Genre	: A category of literature
Critical appreciation	:It is an analysis that was carried out by the reader to examine a piece of literature from a discernible point of view
Juxtaposition	:the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect
Posthumously	:After the death of someone, here, writer

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

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the full title of this essay?
2. When was the collection of the essay first published?
3. Where were these essays published as a periodical series?
5. How long the periodical series of essays published prior to its compilation in the collection of essays?
6. What is the name of Goldsmith's famous play?
7. What other literary genres did Goldsmith try his hand into?
8. When was Oliver Goldsmith born?
9. Where was Goldsmith buried?
10. What is the name of the work that was published posthumously?

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Why was Oliver Goldsmith considered a versatile literary figure of the Augustan era? Write the answer by providing some references from his works.
2. Critically analyse the essay *The Man in Black* with suitable examples from the essay.
3. Write a note on the main characters of the essay *The Man in Black*.
4. Provide a brief overview of the English prose.
5. Elaborate two instances from the original essay and critically examine the behaviour of the Man in Black.

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. 'Much of Oliver Goldsmith's writing was inspired by a great distaste of the literature available in his times.' Prepare a list of contemporary essayist or prose writers that you do not like with the reasons for your choices.
2. Draw a character sketch of Oliver Goldsmith that resonates with the Man in Black. Take help of the original essay and some reference reading material to write an elaborate answer.

3. Describe Oliver Goldsmith as a versatile literary figure of the Augustan era or the eighteenth-century England.

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Dobson, Austin. *Life of Oliver Goldsmith*. London: Scott, 1888.
2. Ginger, John. *The Notable Man: The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*. London: Hamilton, 1977.
3. Nayar, P. K. (2009). *A Short History of English Literature: Literature of the Enlightenment*.
4. Rousseau, G. S., ed. *Goldsmith: The Critical Heritage*. London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.
5. Woods, Samuel H., Jr. *Oliver Goldsmith: A Reference Guide*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982.

Unit – 4: *Dream Children: A Reverie*

Structure

- 4.0** Introduction
- 4.1** Objectives
- 4.2** *Dream Children: A Reverie*
 - 4.2.1** About the Author
 - 4.2.2** Summary of the Essay
 - 4.2.3** The Characters
 - 4.2.4** Critical Contexts
 - 4.2.4.1** The Autobiographical Elements
 - 4.2.4.2** The Romantic Elements
 - 4.2.4.3** Humour and Pathos
 - 4.2.4.4** Quaint and Old-Fashioned Language
 - 4.2.4.5** Literary Allusion
 - 4.2.4.6** Sympathy for Imperfection
 - 4.2.4.7** Significance of the title
 - 4.2.5** Features of an essay
 - 4.2.6** Let Us Sum Up
- 4.3** Learning Outcomes
- 4.4** Glossary
- 4.5** Sample Questions
- 4.6** Suggested Learning Resources

4.0 Introduction

“Dream Children: A Reverie” is one of the most popular and celebrated essays by Charles Lamb in the history of English literature. As an essayist, Lamb used most of the features of an essay in it. It has been written in a conversational style by different characters. Unlike Bacon, Lamb is not an objective essayist. His essays are much inclined towards his personal life, humour, pathos, likes, and dislikes. In a word, his essays are his own personal reflection. The current essay, as prescribed in your syllabus, “Dream Children,” belongs to his famous work *Essays of Elia* (1823), published in London magazines. While reading the essay, you will not learn any didactic or moral lessons; instead, it will leave an indelible impression on your minds

and hearts, as if you have been transported into Elia's world. As a reader and learner, you can empower your imaginative thoughts to associate yourself with the imaginary character of Lamb.

Check your progress:

1. *Essays of Elia* is a collection of _____.

2. Who is the author of *Essays of Elia*?

_____.

4.1 Objectives

This Unit is written for the students interested in learning about Charles Lamb as an essayist and gaining a critical understanding of his essay, "Dream Children." Specifically, it is prescribed in the syllabus to achieve the subsequent learning objectives:

- To make the readers and learners familiar with the life events of Charles Lamb, such as his autobiography, education, and personal life.
- To make them aware of Lamb as an essayist.
- To make them comprehend the different personal and autobiographical incidents of Charles Lamb that have been depicted in his essay, notably Dream Children.
- To understand the importance of the essay in the Romantic era.
- To understand Lamb's importance as a romantic.

4.2 *Dream Children: A Reverie*

4.2.1 About the Author:

Charles Lamb was born on February 10th, 1775, in London, England. Until 1789, he attended Christ's Hospital School. He was quite close with both Leigh Hunt and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. From 1792 until his retirement in 1825, Lamb worked as a clerk at East India House (the headquarters of the East India Company). Mary Lamb, Lamb's sister, murdered their mother in 1796 due to insanity. The Lamb was powerful and assumed responsibility for Mary. His most notable accomplishments were his remarkable letters and essays published in the London

Magazine under the pen name Elia. He wrote in a highly personal and mannered style. In the year 1807, Lamb and his sister published *Tales from Shakespeare*, a retelling of the plays for children. He died in Edmonton, Middlesex, on the 27th of December, 1834.

Check your progress:

1. Which literary work was coauthored by Lamb and his sister?

2. Which English writer used the pen name Elia?

4.2.2 Summary of the Essay:

The essay starts with the references of how children love to listen to stories in order to stretch their imaginations. Their traditional grand-uncle or even grandame generally aids this story and their imagination. This is where the narrator's children crept in, in order to listen to the stories about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a house in Norfolk. In that ancient yet enormous house, there was a wooded inscription that talked about the story of the children and their cruel uncle, which was known as the ballads of the children in the wood. This story of the Robin Redbreasts was lost after a foolish rich man substituted the wooded inscription with a more modern marble piece. Here, Alice looked like her mother and gave one of her looks. Then the narrator went on to tell them how religious their grandmother was and how she was not the mistress of the house but was only in charge because the owner preferred to live in a more fashionable and modern house. Though she lived in that house as if it were her own, when it came to decay, and all its ornaments were pulled down, they were taken away to the new fashionable mansion of the owner. In that house, however, the ancient furniture looked like a tomb in Lady C's tawdry-gilt drawing room. That would be foolish, as John said. The narrator also described how, because she was such a good and religious woman, her funeral was attended by both gentry and poor. She knew the Psalter and a significant portion of the Testament by heart. The narrator also depicted how their grandmother was the country's best dancer and a cancer disease destroyed her zeal. However, her good spirits were not defeated by cancer. She was also very religious and thus courageous, and therefore, she lived in the house alone with the apparitions of the infant. The narrator also depicted how he used to spend time in that house while looking at the twelve Caesars who had been Emperors of Rome and were made of marble. He also depicted how he would stroll along the house all the while, looking at its ancient

furniture and ornaments, and how a gardener would occasionally cross him. He was never tired of walking across the large house, and he would never try to pluck the nectarines, and peaches were almost like a forbidden fruit to him. He also never tried to have a taste of the red berries and grapes because he loved ripening along with them instead of trying to taste them. The narrator also depicted how their great-grandmother loved their uncle John L---- a little more than the other grandchildren because he was handsome and had the spirit of youth full in him. He was almost like a king to the others, and instead of strolling across the house, he would join hunters and would ride horses. However, he loved the house too. When the narrator was lame footed he, John would carry him on his back. But when John also became lame footed, the narrator didn't make enough allowance for his impatience. After his death, the narrator missed him badly, and the pain of his death haunted the narrator more and more. The narrator wanted to play with him; he missed his kindness and his love. The children started crying in this situation, and they wanted to listen to the stories of their pretty mother. The narrator depicted the wooing days of Alice, which lasted for seven years, and how she was coy and shy at first. This is where the child Alice gave one of her mother's looks, and it was hard to distinguish who was sitting right there. Then the narrator had awakened from his dreams and he understood that he was dreaming. In the last part, he heard the children say, they are not of Alice, not of him, and they are nothing at all; they are thoughts lost on the shores of Lethe, the river of oblivion, and thus, the children of Alice call Bartrum the father.

4.2.3 The characters:

Mrs. Field: Charles Lamb's great grandmother.

Uncle John: The elder brother of the author who was older than him by about 14 years

Alice: An imaginary girl, through whose eyes Lamb saw her beloved Ann.

John: A boy imagined by the author.

4.2.4 Critical Contexts:

4.2.4.1 The Autobiographical Elements:

In "Dream Children", the autobiographical details are used imaginatively to sustain the readers' interest. Lamb describes his childhood and adolescence, including his happy days at his grandmother, Mrs. Field's, mansion. The essay contains a description of Lamb's mode and manner of living in Mrs. Field's mansion during his holidays. Lamb is the implied hero of his

essay. He reveals with assurance everything he has loved and lost, coveted and enjoyed. This autobiographical element has rendered Lamb's works deeply intimate and affecting.

"I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels ..."

The affectionate relationship with his elder brother John, his appearance, courage and affection for the author have all been described with eerie details. Lamb's profound grief at the death of his brother is, too, revealed here. The essay records his sense of unhappiness and regret for his lonely and bachelor life and his courtship with Ann Simmons. Apart from "Dream Children", in essays like "The South Sea House", "Christ's Hospital Five", "Thirty Years Ago", "A Bachelors Complaint", we come across his personal activities, his jobs, his studies, and his professional life.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two autobiographical elements implied in the essay.

4.2.4.2 The Romantic Elements:

Charles Lamb, as an essayist, emphasized the quality of finer imagination, feelings, psychology, and emotions in interpersonal relationships. Lamb was a city-minded person. He was different from Wordsworth and Coleridge in his perception of Romanticism. In his essays, Lamb elaborated on Romanticism. The association of the Romantic Movement with "return to nature" does not really mean what is associated with only nature but also what is natural in human beings. Furthermore, that is how Romanticism aptly justifies the etymological evolution of the Enlightenment that preceded it. In "Dream Children: A Reverie", we find all the components of Romanticism. Personal experiences of joy and sorrow are scattered throughout his essays. The unfulfilled desires and longings get subjective expression throughout the essay. Charles Lamb had a genius for reminiscence. It is for this reason that he has been called "A Visualizer of Memories." The essay's allure stems from its imaginative depiction of romantic emotion. This essay is "A Lyric in Prose" and conjures up old acquaintances, architecture, mental hauntedness, etc. The sensuous descriptions of the succulent fruits and smells of the garden, recalling scenes from childhood and from later life, all indulge the author's sense of romantic aesthetics. Lamb has a propensity to mystify others, like other romantic writers. In order to make his essays entertaining, he provides some false information and advice. In "Dream

Children: A Reverie,” Lamb discusses his brother’s untimely passing. His essay is pitiful because of this. But John Lamb did not pass away young. Lamb tells his dream children once more that he courted Alice W-n. However, he genuinely loved Ann Simmons.

4.2.4.3 Humour and Pathos:

Lamb’s essays are an excellent admixture of humour and pathos. His essays have a wonderful blend of humour and pathos. Lamb, in his personal life, faced much disappointment. But, in his essays, there is an attempt to laugh the tragic and pathetic away with humour. As a result, rather than lamenting the tragedies, he attempts to make light of them through his humor. The essay is a memoir that talks about his failed past. John’s death and failed relationship with Alice represent the idea of pathos in the text. The idea of the path is represented in front of his “dream children.” He gets back to his past and relives it through his dream children, almost in a state of unconsciousness. There is a vivacious description of his brotherhood and courtship. However, just as he depicts the death of his brother, the children take him away to the stories of Alice. Thus, the pathetic is constantly followed by the humorous. It’s amusing and amusing to see a bachelor man dreaming about his children and representing his lady love Ann with Alice. But it cannot be denied that within that very humour, there is hidden pathos. Behind the humorous element are the hidden pains of a man who considers himself a complete failure. Thus, the text is a perfect juxtaposition of humour and pathos.

4.2.4.4 Quaint and Old-Fashioned Language:

Charles Lamb is known for his unique style of writing, which often includes the use of quaint and old-fashioned language. This style of writing was common during the Romantic period, when writers sought to express their individuality and creativity through the use of language.

In Lamb’s essays, he often employs archaic or poetic language, such as “thou” instead of “you,” “hither” instead of “here,” or “morn” instead of “morning.” He also uses expressions that were popular in his time but are no longer in common use, such as “peradventure” instead of “perhaps,” or “methinks” instead of “I think.”

While this use of language may seem strange or even outdated to modern readers, it was a deliberate choice on Lamb’s part. He saw language as a living thing, constantly evolving and changing, and believed that by using older forms of language, he could connect with the past and express his own unique voice.

Furthermore, Lamb's use of quaint language adds a distinctive charm to his essays, creating a sense of nostalgia and whimsy. His style is characterized by a combination of humor, irony, and sentimentality, and his use of archaic language adds to the overall effect.

4.2.4.5 Literary Allusion:

Charles Lamb was well-read and his essays often include literary allusions and references to classical literature. He uses these references to illustrate his points and to show his readers the depth of his knowledge. Here are a few examples of literary allusions found in Lamb's essays:

“Dream-Children: A Reverie” - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including Shakespeare's “The Tempest” and “Hamlet,” Milton's “Paradise Lost,” and Sir Philip Sidney's “Arcadia.” Lamb uses these allusions to create a dreamlike, fantastical atmosphere in the essay.

“The Superannuated Man” - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including Shakespeare's “As You Like It” and “Macbeth,” Milton's “Paradise Lost,” and Samuel Johnson's “Rasselas.” Lamb uses these allusions to explore the idea of retirement and aging, and to reflect on the passage of time.

“A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig” - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including the biblical story of Isaac and Abraham, and the Greek myth of Prometheus. Lamb uses these allusions to explore the theme of sacrifice, and to create a humorous and playful tone in the essay.

“On the Tragedies of Shakespeare” - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several of Shakespeare's plays, including “Hamlet,” “Othello,” and “Macbeth.” Lamb uses these allusions to explore the nature of tragedy and to reflect on the enduring power of Shakespeare's works.

Check your progress:

1. Name any two literary works that have been alluded by Lamb in his essay “Dream Children”.

4.2.4.6 Sympathy for Imperfection:

One of the recurring themes in his essays is the idea of sympathy for imperfection, which he explores in various ways throughout his work.

In many of his essays, Lamb expresses his empathy for those who are flawed or imperfect. He recognizes that all humans are prone to error and that it is often our imperfections

that make us interesting and endearing. In his essay “Imperfect Sympathies,” Lamb writes, “I am not of that cold-blooded order of beings who can be contented with the smooth and plausible surface of things, but must look below into the depths of human nature, and see there the seeds of every kind of vice and virtue.”

In “Dream Children: A Reverie” by Charles Lamb, the narrator reflects upon his own life and regrets not being able to marry the woman he loved due to family circumstances. The story is an exploration of the power of imagination, memory, and the human condition.

One of the central themes of the story is the idea of sympathy for imperfections. The narrator feels a sense of empathy for the imperfect aspects of his life, such as his inability to marry the woman he loved, and this sense of empathy extends to his dream children.

In the story, the dream children are a manifestation of the narrator’s imagination and represent his desire for a perfect family. However, as the story progresses, the dream children begin to reveal their imperfections, such as their inability to remember their mother’s face. Despite these imperfections, the narrator continues to feel a deep sense of sympathy for them.

Through the character of the narrator, Lamb suggests that imperfections are a natural part of the human condition, and that sympathy and understanding should be extended to those who have them.

4.2.4.7 Significance of the title:

The essay by Lamb takes place in a dream. The children in the essay are a mere representation of the author’s imagination. They also represent the author’s failed love relationship with Ann Simmons. The astonishing aspect of the essay lies in the fact that the children are its driving force of the author’s imagination. They also represent the author’s failed love relationship with Ann Simmons. The astonishing aspect of the essay lies in the fact that the children are its driving force. They have no representation in reality, and they only occur in the author’s dreams, only to get lost in oblivion on the shores of Lethe. However, without them, we would not be able to know the seven years of the author’s courtship. We would not be able to relive his relationship with his brother and remain in complete oblivion of the author’s personal struggles. Thus, being a creation of imagination, the children become the crux of the essay. Thus, the title of the essay is apt and justified.

4.2.5 Features of an essay:

1) Written in Simple Prose

- 2) Doesn't subscribe to the enormous plot structure of a novel
- 3) Doesn't germinate out of an innate conflict like a drama
- 4) No use of heightened rhetoric
- 5) It follows a linear narrative structure

4.2.6 Let Us Sum Up:

Lamb's essay is a representative of the romantic era, where the imagination reigns supreme. The essay is an autobiography that works both as a romantic prose and a memoir due to its emphasis on individuality. The essay is also a personal tribute to Ann Simmons, who is represented in the essay as Alice. The essay has a wonderful admixture of humour and pathos that makes the romantic fervour of the essay even more heightened.

4.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through the Unit, you are expected to know:

- Autobiographical elements
 - Romantic prose elements
 - Lamb's personal life
 - Humour and Pathos
 - Features of an essay
 - Importance of the title
-

4.4 Glossary

Couchant:	Lying like an animal on legs with head raised
Filial:	Relating to a son or daughter
Ekphrasis:	The literary device of describing a piece of art
Superflux:	Superfluidity or excessive flowing
Dace:	A small freshwater fish, usually found in a pond
Tegument:	An insect or parasite's tough outer layer
Tawny:	An orangish brown or yellow color

Coxcomb:	A dandy, or a vain man
Rake:	A wealthy person with unsavory or promiscuous habits
Manducation:	Eating, or chewing
Chit:	A short notice of money owed
Salopian:	A native of the English Salop shire
Welkin:	The sky or heavens
Defiliation:	The separation of a male child from his parents
Descant:	To ramble, often tediously
Deportment:	A person's conduct, behavior, or manners
Endenized:	To make someone or something a member of some group
Incunabula:	An early printed book
Fuliginous:	Covered in soot or dusky
Foppery:	Excessive concern with one's appearance or show of wealth, in the sense of a British fop

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

- 1) Who is Lady C?
 - a) Grandmother of the children
 - b) Great grandmother of the children
 - c) An imaginary lady
 - d) The wife of the rich man
- 2) Who is Ceaser?
 - a) A king
 - b) An imagination of the author
 - c) A marble sculpture
 - d) The gardener
- 3) Why did the poor and gentry attend the great grandmother's funeral?

- a) She was poor
 - b) She was rich
 - c) She was scary
 - d) She was religious
- 4) Alice looked like _____.
- a) Her mother
 - b) Her father
 - c) Her brother
 - d) None of the above
- 5) Who was Bartrum?
- a) Narrator's brother
 - b) Alice's brother
 - c) Elder Alice's husband
 - d) Author's younger brother
- 6) Whom did the mansion belong to?
- a) A rich gentry
 - b) The great grandmother
 - c) Ann Simmons
 - d) The author
- 7) Who is John?
- a) Author's brother
 - b) Bartrum's brother
 - c) Narrator's brother
 - d) None of the above
- 8) What is testament?
- a) A religious book
 - b) An imaginary book
 - c) A heretical book
 - d) A romantic idea
- 9) Who became lame footed?
- a) The narrator

- b) The author
 - c) John
 - d) Both narrator and John
- 10) Who tried to look courageous after hearing about the apparitions?
- a) John
 - b) Alice
 - c) Great grandmother
 - d) None of the above

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who was Ann Simmons?
2. What is the theme of the essay Dream Children?
3. What is the ballad of the children inscribed in the wood and where is carved?
4. Why did both the rich and poor people attend the funeral ceremony of Mrs. Field?
5. What is the significance of the apparition of two infants?

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What Autobiographical elements do you find in The Dream Children?
2. Justify the Title of the essay, Dream Children: A Reverie.
3. How would you see Dream Children as a juxtaposition of Romantic Humour and Pathos?

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Lamb, Charles. *Select Essays of Elia*. New York, Cincinnati. American Book Company Publishing, 1909.

Unit – 5: English Essay from Victorian to Modern Age

Structure

- 5.0** Introduction
- 5.1** Objectives
- 5.2** English Essay from Victorian to Modern Age
 - 5.2.1** Chief characteristics of the Victorian Age
 - 5.2.2** Important essayists during the Victorian Age
 - 5.2.3** Key features of the Victorian Essay
 - 5.2.4** Chief characteristics of the Modern Age
 - 5.2.5** Important essayists during the Modern Age
 - 5.2.6** Key features of the Modernist Essay
 - 5.2.7** Let Us Sum Up
- 5.3** Learning Outcomes
- 5.4** Glossary
- 5.5** Sample Questions
- 5.6** Suggested Learning Resources

5.0 Introduction

The Victorian Age is one of the most important ages in the history of English literature. It was primarily an age of prose and fiction. The preceding age, the Romantic Age, is often referred to as ‘the age of poetry’ while the Victorian Age is often called ‘the age of novel’.

Queen Victoria ruled England from 1837 to 1901. During her rule, England witnessed scientific development and economic progress. It was an age of colonialism and industrialization. The scientific temperament challenged the religious beliefs. The conflict between science and religion widened. The increasing materialism led to poverty and exploitation of the poor, paving the way for a spiritual deterioration in the society. Moreover, the landscape of the entire country changed from the country side to the urban cities. The Romantics celebrated the nature while the Victorians witnessed the transition from the agrarian to the industrial landscape, with an increasing number of industries and factories replacing the green fields. The poor began to be exploited for their labor. The middle class emerged and grew in number due to the growing trade

between England and its colonies. There was a transition from the Romantic perceptions towards a more realistic portrayal of the society. Strict moral codes were enforced, especially for women. Thus, the Victorian age was the time of many changes in the social, political, economic and religious fields. During this period, religious ideas were questioned by the developments in the scientific thought. The gap between the affluent and the needy widened. A sense of dissatisfaction and doubt prevailed in the masses. It was a time conducive for the development of literature, particularly prose and poetry.

After the death of the Queen Victoria in 1901, came the Modern Age (1900-1950). The two most important events during the Modern Age were the two World Wars. The First World War spanned from 1914 to 1918, and the Second World War occurred during the period 1939 to 1945. The early twentieth century was the war period; it was the time of tragedy, violence and death. The wars had a huge impact on the human psyche and the contemporary literature.

In an age marked by industrialization, capitalism, social change and scientific development, Modernists became dissatisfied with the Victorian morality. A spirit of confusion and discontentment prevailed in the literature produced during the Modern Age. Modernist writers abandoned old forms and techniques. Progress in the fields of Political thought, Philosophy and Psychology paved the path for novel ways of self-expression. Thus, the individual became more important than the society in the literature of this period.

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of this unit are to:

- identify the characteristics of the Victorian Age
- write about the famous Victorian Essayists
- explain the features of the Victorian Essay
- identify the characteristics of the Modern Age
- write about the famous Modernist Essayists
- explain the features of the Modernist Essay
- discuss the development of essay from the Victorian to the Modern Age

5.2 English Essay from Victorian to Modern Age

5.2.1 Chief Characteristics of the Victorian Age:

The chief characteristics of the Victorian Age could be summed up as follows:

- i. The Victorian Age is the age during which Queen Victoria ruled Britain.
- ii. It extended over the span of the later 19th century (1837-1900).
- iii. It was an age of colonial expansion and imperialism.
- iv. The Biblical concept of the origin of the First Man was challenged by Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution proposed in his revolutionary scientific work, *Origin of Species*. This shook the religious foundations in the English society.
- v. It was torn with the conflict between science and religion
- vi. It was marked by tremendous scientific and industrial progress.
- vii. It was an age of rapid economic development.
- viii. The gap between the haves and the have-nots widened.
- ix. It led to the emergence of the middle class.
- x. It was an age of increased urbanization due to migration of the people from rural areas to urban areas but there was a lack of proper housing in urban areas.
- xi. Industrialization aggravated pollution and health hazards.
- xii. Increased materialism led to the poor condition of the people in the work houses and harsh working conditions in factories.
- xiii. Child labour was prevalent.
- xiv. Intellectual development, spread of education and proliferation of schools also marked the Victorian Age.
- xv. Rigid moral code and moral deterioration paved the way for hypocritical morality of the Victorians.

5.2.2 Important Essayists during the Victorian Age:

The most significant essayists of the Victorian Age are Thomas B. Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, R. L. Stevenson, J. S. Mill, John Ruskin, W.H. Pater and Henry Newman.

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59): Thomas Babington Macaulay is famous for his *Minute on Education* in India. He is rightly called by critics, the founder of the historical essay. English history is the central theme of most of his memorable essays. Some of his biographical essays were published in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. His writings reveal a richness of details and clarity in expression. He introduced his theme in a simple way, and then ornamented the text with interesting references and detailed descriptions. His writing style is impressively rhetorical and grand. However, sometimes the quality of his essays suffer due to his strong political biases. His essays are historical, controversial or literary but not personal or confessional or autobiographical. They are replete with his prejudiced political perceptions. Besides a successful historian and essayist, he was also an accomplished reviewer. His remarkable achievements include *Critical and Historical Essays: Contributed to the Edinburgh Review* (1843) and *History of England* (1849).

Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881): Thomas Carlyle is, often, called the prophet of the Victorian Age. Among the Victorians, Thomas Carlyle was a leading essayist with an inspirational writing style. He employed rhetorical devices to persuade his readers. He condemned many vices of his society through his essays. German Philosophy had a huge impact on his personality. He wrote a variety of essays: political, biographical, social, historical, critical. He was a master of strong and clear writing style, marked by heart-touching beauty of expression, which at times becomes melodious, almost lyrical. His notable contributions include *The French Revolution* (1837), *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (1839), *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841), *Past and Present* (1843), *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845) and *The History of Frederick, the Great* (1858-65).

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888): Matthew Arnold was both a poet and a critic. His work reflects the spirit of the Victorian society. Through his work, he criticized the social vices and tried to inculcate the values in the Victorian society. He produced all his prose material in the form of essays. He is one of the best critics in English literature. Besides being a critic of literature, he is a critic of society. He emphasized the need for a moral purpose in every form of literature and art. He was the champion of clarity and directness in expression. Arnold's prose writings are long, bulky and rich in variety. His critical essays are the most celebrated ones, particularly *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888). His other well-known works in Criticism include *Culture and Anarchy* (1862), *Mixed Essays* (1879) and *Literature and Dogma* (1873).

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894): Robert Louis Stevenson was another famous essayist of the Victorian times. He was a master of the personal type of essay. He is moralistic in his approach. He is the master of a powerful, yet graceful, writing style. His passion for artistic finish reveals his charming personality. He was a diligent student of English pronunciation. He studied the English sounds in detail and used them artistically. His chief characteristic is his personal note reflected in his writings. Those essays which are the confidential conversation of a friend are the most appreciated of his essays. His famous works in the essay category include *The Day After Tomorrow* (1887), *On the Choice of a Profession* (1887), *Memories and Portraits* (1887) and *Essays in the Art of Writing* (1905).

John Ruskin (1819-1900): A prolific essayist, John Ruskin, raised a strong voice against the many vices of the society. He was inspired by Thomas Carlyle in terms of intellect and style. In Ruskin's essays, there are frequent references to the Scripture. He also wrote satirical essays. He had a flexible, yet rich, prose style, ornamented with picturesque images. His essays are vividly rhythmic, punctuated by brief, memorable sentences. His famous works include *Modern Painters* (1843) and *Unto This Last* (1860, 1862).

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873): John Stuart Mill was one of the most significant intellectuals of the Victorian times. His essays have earned him the reputation of a respectable social critic. Many of his contemporaries, especially during 1850s and '60s, have appreciated his intellectual power. He is the author of two highly renowned essays, *Principles of Political Economy* and *System of Logic*. These two intellectual works consolidated his position as a great philosopher and economist in the Victorian England. His *System of Logic* became the standard text in the Oxford University, and his *Principles of Political Economy* became the gospel of the economics and political science.

Other notable essayists of the Victorian age include **Henry Newman** (1801-1890), and **Walter Pater** (1839-1894). Henry Newman mastered the graceful prose style. However, some of his essays do reflect his obsession with details. Walter Pater mastered beautiful prose style. His aesthetic theories are well-expounded in his famous essay, *Appreciations*. However, these writers write with a lot of effort and finish. Their essays lack ease, felicity, conversational tone and personal touch. **Arthur Henry Hallam** (1811-1833) wrote a famous essay entitled "*On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry and On the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson*." **Charles**

Darwin, Herbert Spencer and **Thomas Henry Huxley** were significant writers of the scientific prose.

5.2.3 Key Features of the Victorian Essay:

The Victorian Essay has the following key features.

1. The Victorian essay, like all the Victorian literature, reflects a conflict between science and religion. While some writers upheld religion, some favored science and others supported a compromise between the two.
2. Another key feature of the Victorian essay is the importance of reason and rationality. The Victorian prose bears a strong impact of contemporary scientific thought. Darwin's contribution in this regard is illustrious. A questioning spirit typical of the Victorian Age permeates the Victorian prose.
3. Pessimism forms another common feature of the Victorian essay. A string of dejection and discontentment permeates the prose fabric of the Victorian age.
4. The Victorian essay is marked by social realism. It critiqued the Industrial Revolution and its socioeconomic impact on England.
5. Some essayists used their writings as tools of social propaganda to foster a social reform. They condemned the social vices and infused a change in the contemporary social thought through their work.
6. Moral purpose is one of the key features of the Victorian essay. The Victorian essayists, particularly John Ruskin, John Henry Newman, Thomas Carlyle, W.H. Pater, Charles Darwin, Mathew Arnold and Lord Macaulay, aimed at giving a message to their countrymen through their writings. A moral concern prevails throughout the literature of this period. Most of the Victorian essayists attempted to preach morals through their writings.
7. Some Victorian prose writers delved deep into the subject of Criticism and wrote remarkable Criticism Essays, contributed immensely towards the understanding of arts and literature. Prose writers such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, William Johnson Fox, John Stuart Mill, Arthur Hallam and Mathew Arnold enriched the field of Criticism through their criticism essays.
8. A new genre, the historical essay, emerged during the Victorian Age. When printing became cheaper, journals and periodicals proliferated, journalistic and periodical writing increased in popularity. Some famous works of non-fiction prose on British history were written by

essayists like Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill.

9. A spirit of revolt is apparent in the Victorian prose. Most essayists have written voluminously against the increasing materialism of the Victorians. The Victorian prose writers condemned the growing commercialism caused due to rapid industrial development. Hence, they resorted to the ethos of the Middle Ages for solace.

10. The hallmark of the Victorian Essay is a spirit of individuality. The Victorian prose writers had originality in outlook, character and style. The Victorian art and literature focused on man and woman. The individual was very important.

11. Another hallmark of the Victorian essay is humanism with a strong belief in individual dignity and liberty. Renowned essayists like Ruskin, Macaulay and Carlyle and demonstrated insurmountable faith in humanism, upholding value and wisdom in combination with the passion for progress.

12. Schools proliferated and masses became literate. Inexpensive mass publishing catered to the taste of the expanding literate class, and the periodicals became popular. Periodical writing became the hallmark of the Victorian literary output.

13. During the mid-Victorian period, the rise of the middle classes paved the way for the establishment of a rich variety of periodicals. Most of the periodicals such as Lloyd's "Weekly Newspaper" and Charles Dickens's "Household Words" targeted family readership.

14. Romanticism and its spirit continued to bear an impact on the Victorian Prose in several ways. The Victorian Essay is influenced by the principles of Romanticism such as appreciation of beauty, love for freedom, desire for rural life, exaltation of emotion over intellect, examination of human personality, self-exploration, etc.

15. Women writers started contributing to the periodicals. Journalism became a popular profession for women. Periodical writings were used by reformers and women journalists such as Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau to spread social awareness regarding pertinent matters.

5.2.4 Chief Characteristics of the Modern Age (1900-1950):

The chief characteristics of the Modern Age could be summed up as follows:

- i. The Modern Age began with the end of the Victorian era.
- ii. It extended over the span of the early 20th century (1900-1950).

- iii. It can be labeled as a time of sea change in the British society.
- iv. Imperialism was weakening. Colonies were turning into independent countries.
- v. People who were once ruled by kings were given autonomy and self-governance.
- vi. People who once could not vote, could now exercise their political rights.
- vii. People asked for more rights.
- viii. The world became more technologically advanced.
- ix. Factories mushroomed and factory workers grew in great numbers.
- x. The First World War (1914-1918) caused a huge loss of lives and resources.
- xi. Women began to exercise a visible role in the political scene during the World War I. This led to the Women's Rights movement and women began fighting for their right to vote.
- xii. The crashing of the Wall Street Market caused the Great Depression in 1929. This led to the large-scale unemployment and migration to other places for livelihood.
- xiii. World War II (1939-1945) again caused tremendous devastation to humanity.
- xiv. Nagasaki and Hiroshima were attacked with nuclear atom bombs with horrendous irrevocable consequences.
- xv. It was an age of scientific advancement, technological progress, leading to increased materialism, urbanization, unemployment, poverty, moral decay and war.

5.2.5 Important Essayists during the Modern Age:

The most important essayists of the Modern Age are Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Edward Verrall Lucas, Alfred George Gardiner, Robert Lynd, Hillaire Belloc and Virginia Woolf.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965): Thomas Stearns Eliot was an American-born English writer. He was one of the most eminent modernists. A great poet-critic, he used realistic themes in his works. His personal experiences shaped his literary style. He contributed immensely to literary criticism. The school of New Criticism was greatly influenced by him. He revived the appreciation of the Metaphysical poetry through his criticism essays. His well-known essays include "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919), "The Frontiers of Criticism", "Poetry and Drama" (1950) and "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" (1921). *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920) and *Selected Essays* (1932) are two renowned collections of his essays. For his unparalleled contribution to Modern literature, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 1948.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936): G.K. Chesterton was one of the twentieth century's most significant writers. He was a prolific writer in various genres. He wrote nearly hundred books and thousands of essays. He was a great essayist, humorist and critic of literature and society. He composed essays on a plethora of topics, over a period of more than forty years. He was primarily a serious writer. He was famous for his brilliant, vigorous, and witty style. He did hold some controversial views. He liked satire, paradox and also favored epigrammatic expression. His style is remarkable for its originality, humour, paradoxes and epigrams. His language is clear, elegant and powerful. His prose is marked by reason. *All Things Considered* (1908), *Tremendous Trifles* (1909) and *A Shilling for My Thoughts* (1917) are some of his well-known volumes of essays .

Edward Verrall Lucas (1874-1936): E.V. Lucas is known for his mastery of the personal essay. He is the biographer and the editor of Charles Lamb. He revived Lamb's tradition of the personal essay. He was a prolific writer. In addition to producing an authoritative study of Charles Lamb, he composed more than thirty collections of essays. Quick wit and graceful humour are the hallmarks of his perfect style. The exquisite beauty of the city life of London fascinated him. He wrote amusing essays on a wide variety of topics. For four decades, his essays were found to be interesting and engaging, and he continued to enjoy a wide readership. He primarily wrote essays for the periodicals. His essays were later published in volumes such as *Domesticities* (1900), *Fireside and Sunshine* (1906), *One Day and Another* (1909), *The Phantom Journal* (1919), *Giving and Receiving* (1922), *Visibility Good* (1931) and *Pleasure Trove* (1935).

Alfred George Gardiner (1865-1946): According to many critics, the most enjoyable of the modern essayists is A. G. Gardiner. 'Alpha of the Plough' was his pseudonym. *Pebbles on the Shore* (1916), *Leaves in the Wind* (1919) and *Many Furrows* (1924) are some of the famous collections of his essays. His essays read like short stories as they are replete with entertaining anecdotes from everyday life. His essays reflect his insight into human nature. His writing style is fluent and persuasive. Rich historical references, interesting literary allusions, pleasant diction, witty humour and clarity of thought and expression render his essays delightful and memorable. Though his writing style is journalistic, his wit and wisdom establish him as one the greatest essayists of the Modern Age.

Robert Wilson Lynd (1879-1949): Robert Lynd is one of the most widely-read and appreciated essayists of the twentieth century. He wrote under the pen-name, Y. Y. He contributed

immensely to the English prose. He is a personal and autobiographical essayist. Stevensonian humour, reflectiveness and sympathy are the hallmarks of his essays. He writes essays on petty matters but takes up a detailed criticism of life. He can be described as a personal essayist and his writing style is confidential. His style is simple. Besides humour, irony and satire are some of the important features of his essays. *Selected Essays* (1923), *Y. Y.: An Anthology of Essays* (1923) and *Further Essays of Robert Lynd* (1942) are some of his notable contributions.

Hilaire Belloc (1896–1953): One of the most controversial yet highly successful writers of the early twentieth-century England was Hilaire Belloc. He was a prolific essayist, historian and travel writer. He has earned a very high and respectable position among the essayists of the Modern Period because of his essays like “On Nothing”, “On Something” and “On Everything”. His writing style is clear, humorous and incisive. He produced convincing essays on many topics, in a clear, yet witty, prose style. *Essays of a Catholic Layman in England* (1931) and *Selected Essays* (1936) are some of the collections of his well-known essays.

Adeline Virginia Woolf (1882-1941): Virginia Woolf is another famous Modernist English writer. In fact, she is considered as one of the most prominent literary figures of the twentieth century. She is credited with introducing the use of stream of consciousness as an interesting narrative technique. A great innovative writer, she produced a body of work considered among the most groundbreaking in the twentieth-century literature. A major part of her literary output is autobiographical in nature. She has composed more than five hundred essays and reviews. Like *A Room of One's Own* (1929), a few of her essays are as long as a book. The well-known collections of her essays, *The Moment and other Essays* (1947) and *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (1950) were published posthumously.

Other Essayists: There are a few other prose writers of the twentieth century who made significant contributions to the Modernist Essay. Most of them practiced and popularised the personal essay. Besides being an essayist, George Bernard Shaw (1856 -1950) was a great dramatist, and Max Beerbohm (1872 – 1956) was a cartoonist and a critic. Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) were scientific essayists who wrote on scientific subjects.

5.2.6 Key Features of the Modernist Essay:

The Modernist Essay has the following key features:

1. The Modern Age is characterized by a strong revolt against tradition. It offers a strong reaction against the established social, political and religious views. The Modernist literature too expressed a revolt against tradition. A plethora of experimental writing techniques, that broke the conventional rules of storytelling, were introduced and successfully employed by the Modernist prose writers. Imagery, absurdism, nonlinear narratives and stream of consciousness are some of these literary techniques.
2. The hallmarks of the Modernist literature such as Formalism, Symbolism and Imagism also influenced the essay form. The Modernist essayists wrote criticism essays on these topics and applied these theories in their essays.
3. With the developments in the field of Psychology, stream of consciousness became a popular technique in the Modernist literature. Some essayists adopted this technique in their personal essays. Psychological theories began to be applied in the expression and interpretation of literature, both poetry and prose.
4. Science was a central feature of the Modernist literature and the Modernist essays drew heavily on the contemporary scientific developments. Rapid scientific and technological progress had an impact on the Modernist prose in terms of themes and style. Many modernist texts incorporate scientific elements into their content and form.
5. In the Modernist essay, there is a revival of Lamb's prose style, where the personal factor gains prominence in the modernist essay. Most essayists adopt a personal and a conversational tone. They freely express their thoughts and emotions through their writings.
6. During the twentieth century, a reasoning and questioning spirit dominates the entire literature, including the essay form. Traditions are questioned and conventions are challenged. The Modernist essayists use the essay to spread their ideas on many contemporary issues.
7. The Modernist essays offer a critique of life. The Modernist essayists employ essay as a tool to popularize their views on various aspects of life.
8. The themes are diverse. An essay could be written on any topic. Thus, mosquito is the theme of one of A.G. Gardiner's essay.
9. The language used by the Modernist essayists is very simple, easily understandable by the lay reader. It is the language of everyday speech.
10. The prose style is lucid, yet dignified. The vocabulary is simple, without ornamentation.

11. The Modernist essay is characterized by wit and humour. Humour is mild and epigrams are rare.
12. In the Modernist essay, the individual is the champion and the inner strength is celebrated. Thus, the spirit of Individualism influenced the essay tremendously.
13. The two World Wars impacted the themes of the Modernist prose to a great extent. Soldiers created memoirs, kept diaries, and wrote letters during the war. Materialism, crime, depression, anguish and change filled this era. This had a direct influence on the prose of the period.
14. Absurdity is another hallmark of the Modernist literature. After the two World Wars, some philosophers defined life as meaningless and unordered. They questioned the absolute truth. Alienation, isolation, loss and despair are common themes in the Modernist prose.
15. With the growing awareness of women's rights, many women writers emerged during the Modernist Age. Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson enriched the Modernist Essay immensely.

5.2.7 Let Us Sum Up:

The Victorian Age was one of the most significant eras in the history of English literature. It was marked by the blossoming of the English poetry; it produced greatest English novelists and it marked the growth of the English prose. Great intellectuals contributed immensely to the Victorian prose. The English essay developed and reached its heights in the hands of the greatest Victorian essayists such as Macaulay, Arnold, Ruskin and others. The essays written by Thomas Carlyle had a remarkable impact; Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of Carlyle's readers became a great American essayist. Later, Robert Louis Stevenson also elevated the essay form to greater heights.

The twentieth century provided an ideal ground for the nourishment of the essay. The essay form continued to grow with more energy and charm. It produced a highly remarkable prose output. The countless daily newspapers, periodicals, journals and magazines offered a fertile platform for the essay. Great essays, both objective and personal, have been produced by the writers of the Modern Age. Some of the leading luminaries include G.K. Chesterton, Robert Lynd, E.V. Lucas, Augustine Birrel, Hilaire Belloc, A.G. Gardiner, Max Beerbohm and J.B. Priestley. During the Modern Age, a number of essayists, such as T.S. Eliot, tried to clarify and simplify the trends and tendencies of the new movements in art and culture through their essays. The essay form

reached its zenith in the hands of such great Modernist essayists as E.V. Lucas, Robert Lynd, G.K. Chesterton, A.G. Gardiner and Hilaire Belloc. Virginia Woolf and Edmund Wilson wrote highly famous literary criticism essays.

5.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you are expected to:

- have gained knowledge about the chief characteristics of the Victorian Age
- have gained knowledge about the chief characteristics of the Modern Age
- have grown familiar with the characteristics of the essay written during the Victorian Age
- have become acquainted with the famous Victorian essayists
- have grown familiar with the characteristics of the essay written during the Modern Age
- have become acquainted with the famous Modern essayists
- have acquired a comprehensive knowledge about the development of essay from the Victorian Age to the Modern Age

5.4 Glossary

Colonialism: the practice by which a powerful country controls another country

Alienation: the feeling that you do not belong in a particular group

Imperialism: a political system whereby one country rules and dominates other countries

Proliferation: the sudden increase in the number or amount of something

Deterioration: the fact or process of becoming worse

Prolific: (of an artist, a writer, etc.) producing many works, etc.

Periodical: a magazine that is published every week, month, etc.

Metaphysical: 17th century English poetry which explored the nature of the world and human life through surprising images

Allusion: something that is said or written that refers to another person or subject in an indirect way

Stream of Consciousness: a spontaneous and continuous flow and expression of ideas, thoughts, and feelings, as they are experienced by an individual

Formalism: a movement in arts and literature, whereby formal rules and correct presentation take precedence over inner values.

Symbolism: the use of symbols to denote specific ideas, particularly in art and literature

Imagism: an early twentieth century poetic style that employs vivid images for expression

Epigram: a short poem or a phrase that uses wit or humour to express an idea in a clever way

Memoir: a self-written account of one's own particular experience or whole life

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The Victorian Age was primarily an age of _____.
 - (a) poetry and drama
 - (b) prose and novel
 - (c) verse and play
 - (d) epic and novel
2. After the Victorian Age, came the _____ Age.
 - (a) Post-Modern
 - (b) Modern
 - (c) Post-Colonial
 - (d) Metaphysical
3. *Origin of Species* was written by _____.
 - (a) Herbert Spencer
 - (b) T. S. Eliot
 - (c) J. S. Mill
 - (d) Charles Darwin
4. _____ is famous for his *Minute on Education* in India.
 - (a) Thomas Macaulay
 - (b) Rudyard Kipling

- (c) G. K. Chesterton
 - (d) R. L. Stevenson
5. Who is the author of *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888)?
- (a) Robert Browning
 - (b) Mathew Arnold
 - (c) Thomas Carlyle
 - (d) John Ruskin
6. The Victorian age witnessed the genesis of an essay called the _____.
- (a) personal essay
 - (b) historical essay
 - (c) philosophical essay
 - (d) religious essay
6. American-born English Nobel Laureate, _____ was one of the most eminent modernists.
- (a) G. B. Shaw
 - (b) E. V. Lucas
 - (c) T. S. Eliot
 - (d) Charles Lamb
7. Who introduced the use of “stream of consciousness” as a literary technique?
- (a) Emily Dickinson
 - (b) Virginia Woolf
 - (c) Hellaire Belloc
 - (d) Robert Lynd
8. The hallmarks of the _____ literature include Formalism, Symbolism and Imagism.
- (a) Victorian
 - (b) Romantic
 - (c) Elizabethan
 - (d) Modernist
9. Who was a prominent American essayist?

- (a) Ralph Waldo Emerson
- (b) A. G. Gardiner
- (c) J. S. Mill
- (d) Herbert Spencer

10. When was the Second World War fought?

- (a) 1914-1918
- (b) 1919-1926
- (c) 1939-1945
- (d) 1942-1951

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the chief characteristics of the Victorian Age?
2. Mention the key features of the Modern Age?
3. Write about the famous Victorian essayists.
4. Discuss, in brief, the important Modern essayists.
5. Summarize the contributions of any one prominent Victorian essayist.
6. Write a note on any one of the leading Modernist essayists.

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the chief characteristics of the Victorian Essay.
2. Describe the main features of the Modern Essay.
3. Discuss the development of the English Essay from the Victorian Age to the Modern Age.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Collins, Arthur Simons. *English Literature of the Twentieth Century*. London: University Tutorial Press Ltd., 1960.
2. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*, vol. 1-4. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd., 1984
3. Drabble, Margaret. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Unit - 6: R. L. Stevenson “The Lantern Bearers”

Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 R. L. Stevenson “The Lantern Bearers”

6.2.1 Life and Works of R. L. Stevenson

6.2.2 Brief Summary

6.2.3 Critical Analysis

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

6.0 Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) the Scottish novelist well known for his romantic adventures, was also an essayist, and poet. He has also written several political, geographical, and biographical sketches. It seems that many romantic novels of the late 19th century carry the traits of Stevenson’s novels. His romantic novels were widely read and discussed during these periods. Most of his works were experimental. He was, in a way, experimenting with different methods to combine the depth of his characters and plot. His last unfinished work *Weir of Hermiston* (1896) was a masterpiece where Stevenson has mastered the techniques of narration. Some of his remarkable works which gained readers’ attention across the globe are *Treasure Island* (1883), *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Kidnapped* (1886), and *A Child’s Garden of Verses*. His works covered a wide variety of subjects and forms. His essays are extensive record of his development as writer and narrator. *The Lantern Bearers* was first published in 1888 in the *Scribner Magazine*. The essay manifests memories from his childhood, his joyful days in North Berwick where he explored nature with childhood friends, and the way he posits each memory as an anecdote to creative writing. At the core, this essay highlights the everyday realities of human life and experience which can act as a catalyst to ignite one’s imaginative and

creative writing. In sum, Stevenson is assessing the power of imagination and its articulation in prose.

6.1 Objectives

The main objectives of this Unit are to:

- read and understand the works of R.L Stevenson
- appreciate the writing style and narrative techniques in the prose
- critically analyse the essay “The Lantern Bearers”
- evaluate Stevenson’s philosophical thoughts
- enhance the readers’ aesthetic sense and help them to reread a text

6.2 R. L. Stevenson “The Lantern Bearers”

6.2.1 Life and Works of R. L. Stevenson:

Stevenson was born in Edinburgh. His father Thomas Stevenson was an established engineer. Unfortunately, Stevenson suffered from serious bronchial trouble throughout his life. But this never hindered his quest for writings and exploring new places. From a very young age itself, he was interested in writing. He tried to follow his father’s footsteps to become an engineer, but never succeeded due to his health issues. This resulted in a conflict with his father. Their dispute was not limited to earning a living, it extended to religious matters and general view on life. He travelled to Edinburgh and took several trips around Britain. He followed a bohemian lifestyle there, which were later accorded in his travel narratives. His works *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879), details the delightful accounts of his walking tours. He took a series of excursions to many places including south France, in search of a favourable climate suitable to his health condition. His works were full of detailed descriptions of places he travelled, socio-political observations, and light-hearted humour. In 1890, he settled in Samoa where he spent his last days of life.

In 1876, he met Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, the love of his life. She was already married at that time. After her divorce in 1879, Stevenson married Fanny and shifted to

California. *Silverado Squatters* (1884) is based on real incidents from their honeymoon days in an abandoned mining camp. With the publication of *Treasure Island* (1883) and its enormous success, Stevenson's fame grew to a wider readership. Later Stevenson moved to Bournemouth along with his family, where they lived for three years. It was during this period, he wrote *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Kidnapped* (both published 1886).

He died in 1894 at the age of 44 due to severe health issues. If we analyse his works in chronological order, we can see that the writing pattern evolved from romance to adventure fiction and then toward a darker realism which was more influenced by the political situation in Samoa. Here along with extensive literary activity, he became active in the political affairs and social circles. He was also involved in the internal improvement of the lives of people in Samoa. He died from a brain haemorrhage while working on *Weir of Hermiston* (1896).

Stevenson's works had a rather unusual combination of the Artist and the Moralist. There was also a touch of the fragile, the strange, the mysterious charm that one attains by blending the borders of the real and the unreal world. The essays are filled with imagination, ironies, keen and witty images from real life events. These essays reflect the imaginative scope of real life incidents and its recollection in prose. Most of his essays are autobiographical reflecting on his childhood in Scotland, his early life in a family of eminent marine engineers, his struggles to cope up with father's expectations, his adolescent bohemian travels, his love life, marriage, and most importantly his formative encounter with the visible ebb and flow of civilizations.

Check your Progress:

1. Who is Robert Louis Stevenson?

6.2.2 Brief Summary:

In the essay "The Lantern Bearers", Stevenson records his childhood memories and life in North Berwick. He remembers the lively ambiance of the town, the golf, climbing Berwick Law, cheerful peers, roaming around town, lame jocks, and fishing expeditions. These delightful memories from the past brings happiness whenever recollected. He also remembers some of the unpleasant incidents that happened during the time. For instance, he recalls the fisher-wife who cut her throat and was lying in a pool of blood. These bloodstained images and its memories haunted him throughout his life. Stevenson himself saw her injured body being carried to prison. The essay portrays both the delightful memories of the past along with some darker shade of

memories. It also reflects the universal thought that life is an amalgam of good and bad. Only the memories remain!

Stevenson continues to describe his life in North Berwick and his favourite past time. It was the night-time meetings by lantern-light aka lantern bearers where children will gather along with their lanterns. They would carry their lanterns, and roam across the town. They entertain themselves in the dim light, giggling and talking whatever they want. For Stevenson, these lantern talks came to symbolize the power of imagination and evolve into what is poetic. After many decades, he was still able to articulate these memories in words. He talks about broader themes, such as “the ground of a man’s joy” (p. 224), and how the lantern evenings for him embodied that joy. He concludes that “Not only love, and the fields, and the bright face of danger, but sacrifice and death and unmerited suffering humbly supported, touch in us the vein of the poetic” (p. 228). All these past experiences enriched his thoughts and poetic imaginations and ultimately it culminated in words.

Check your progress:

1. Who are The Lantern Bearers and what is their purpose or what do they represent?

6.2.3 Critical Analysis:

Several critics rank Stevenson among the world’s greatest writers of prose. His essays reflect a deep sense of empathy that becomes brighter as we draw nearer. These essays are not merely entertaining but worthy of serious and prolonged study. The essay “The Lantern Bearers” was premiered in the February 1888 issue of *Scribner Magazine*. Since then, its light has never faded, only spread.

Delahant (2018) rightly points “The Lantern Bearers, an allegory, has endured in print as another timeless essay from the mind of Robert Louis Stevenson who would be the first to point to the inequality of quality in his very long list of essays, even using three examples from Saranac Lake to prove it”. Stevenson opens the essay by describing the cheerful days of boyhood summers spent in a village by the sea. The essay begins with these lines, “These boys congregated every autumn about a certain easterly fisher-village, where they tasted in a high degree the glory of existence” (Stevenson 1988, 226). Along with his friends, Stevenson explored “penny cigars”, “tide pools”, “fishing”, “the illustrations in *The London Journal*”, “bottled lollipops”, “a beach with the jawbone of a whale for a landmark”, and endless other things that add joy to the childhood expeditions. He writes:

These boys congregated every autumn about a certain easterly fisher-village, where they tasted in a high degree the glory of existence. The place was created seemingly on purpose for the diversion of young gentlemen. A street or two of houses, mostly red and many of them tiled; a number of fine trees clustered about the manse and the kirkyard, and turning the chief street into a shady alley; many little gardens more than usually bright with flowers; nets a-drying, and fisher-wives scolding in the backward parts; a smell of fish, a genial smell of seaweed; whiffs of blowing sand at the street-corners; shops with golf-balls and bottled lollipops; another shop with penny pickwicks (that remarkable cigar) and the *London Journal*, dear to me for its startling pictures, and a few novels, dear for their suggestive names: such, as well as memory serves me, were the ingredients of the town. (Stevenson 1988, 226).

Here Stevenson is narrating certain childish rituals immersed in romance and illicit excitement. Look at the picturesque narration. It is as though we are walking down the memory lane. The street, clustered trees, the manse, the kirkyard, little gardens, smell of fish, everything comes into mind while we read it. Everyone has some images that take them back to the past. These images like “golf-balls”, “bottled lollipops”, “pickwicks”, “magazines with startling images”, definitely take the readers to the narrator’s childhood days and also back to their own childhood days. Such images and imagery enrich our childhood memories which always evoke a sense of nostalgia whenever we try to recollect them.

These realistic images from the rustic life and mundane activities become an anecdote in his creative life at a later point. Emily (2018) rightly observes “He then goes on to use this anecdote as a metaphor for truth in storytelling, arguing that so-called realist literature gets things wrong when it tries to portray regular people as devoid of any poetry or *joie de vivre*”. It is difficult to judge anything and anyone from external appearances. Emily (2018) argues that “what store of inner passion and joy a person holds at their heart; and yet, this hidden, invisible store of personal poetry is often the most crucial core of their psychology”. Stevenson seems to portray the ordinary people and daily activities as close to their original apprehension to capture the real essence of life without missing the spark of poetry that characterizes the human existence.

The rhythm in his life is echoed in his writings. Look at these words, “There was nothing to mar your days, if you were a boy summering in that part, but the embarrassment of pleasure” (Stevenson 1988, 227). While reading this essay, we get to travel along the boy to every nook and cranny of that village, enjoying the mere embarrassment of pleasure. He details the errs and flaws of each weather and the adventures the boys had at times, “You might bathe, now in the flaws of fine weather, that we pathetically call our summer, now in a gale of wind, with the sand scourging your bare hide, your clothes thrashing abroad from underneath their guardian stone, the froth of the great breakers casting you headlong ere it had drowned your knees. Or you might explore the tidal rocks, above all in the ebb of springs, when the very roots of the hills were for the nonce discovered; following my leader from one group to another, groping in slippery tangle for the wreck of ships, wading in pools after the abominable creatures of the sea, and ever with an eye cast backward on the march of the tide and the menaced line of your retreat” (p. 227). The boys had all the freedom to explore the nature and neighbourhood, to thrive in the very essence of life. These narrations surely take us down the lane of memory to our own on childhood days. This is the reason why Stevenson’s writings gain immense appreciations from the readers across the globe and time, as it perpetuates the universality of life in its real essence.

In the essay, along with the joyous memories, Stevenson also shares some of the unpleasant tragedies he witnessed in childhood. For instance, look at these lines, “There are mingled some dismal memories with so many that were joyous. Of the fisher-wife, for instance, who had cut her throat at Canty Bay; and of how I ran with the other children to the top of the Quadrant, and beheld a posse of silent people escorting a cart, and on the cart, bound in a chair, her throat bandaged, and the bandage all bloody—horror!—the fisher-wife herself, who continued henceforth to hag-ride my thoughts, and even today (as I recall the scene) darkens daylight” (p. 228). He continues to say that, even after all these years, such memories still haunt him. He recollects another incident where he visited one dead man’s house and was scolded harshly by “a dark old woman” who cursed them “in a shrill voice and with a marrowy choice of language” (p. 228). Thus, Stevenson narrates both the funny memories and the scary ones as well. He recalls the doubtful sentiments, the fear and the fun, the merry days, and trumpeting squalls, all as though happened yesterday. His language brings the freshness, the scent, the rhythm, the harmony, the joy of boyhood just as fresh as the dew drop. The readers can feel and touch it.

For Stevenson the most wonderful sport is to go lantern-bearing. The boys who were the lantern bearers kept their lights covered and would converge at pre-arranged secret places like “the belly of a ten-man lugger” (p. 229). The coats of these boys would be unbuttoned so that they can see the bull’s-eye. Stevenson writes,

The essence of this bliss was to walk by yourself in the black night; the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned; not a ray escaping, whether to conduct your footsteps or to make your glory public; a mere pillar of darkness in the dark; and all the while, deep down in the privacy of your fool’s heart, to know you had a bull’s-eye at your belt, and to exult and sing over the knowledge. (p. 230)

Stevenson led the boy’s team; they attached the bull’s-eye lanterns to their belts and stride into the darkness. Even though they had hidden the lanterns by their overcoats, they could detect each other by the smell of “blistered tin” issuing from their coats. The boys assembled in some remote spot, unveiled their lamps, and “delight[ed] themselves with inappropriate talk.” This was the height of pleasure for all of them. Apparently, Stevenson invites the readers’ attention to the realistic world around him which he endured, lured and luminated with his wit, imagination, fancy, and realistic narration. He rightly points that anything that brings personal delight along with the decision to live for the sake of it, should be appreciated. As pointed earlier, Stevenson is hinting the readers towards his philosophical thoughts of mindfulness, to embrace life in its fullness, with all its flaws and sweetness.

This essay is also a piece of literary criticism. Stevenson, in a way is opening a window to the lives of young romance writers, and the true realism with which each one indulges in their writings. He presumes that these romance writers, whenever they find it hard to write, might have walked alone in the woods and in the cities, might have been to sea and the places which they hated or feared, might have done the craziest things to refill the pen of thoughts to inscribe the incredible thoughts. Creative writing is not at all an easy task. Writers can stumble upon words and may feel stuck in between the words at times. In such times, a flash of memory can act as an anecdote to create magic in words. A writer’s greatest pleasure is always in his literary composition. In his own words, “one pleasure at least they have tasted to the full—their books are there to prove it—the keen pleasure of successful literary composition.” (p. 234). He says that such romantic works inspires him “with despairing admiration, and whose consistent falsity to all I care to call existence, with despairing wrath.” (ibid). He says,

no man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids, but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of his brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls...the man's true life, for which he consents to live, lies altogether in the field of fancy...Justice is not done to the versatility and the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination...a blazing bonfire of delight.(p. 234)

Here Stevenson is inviting readers attention towards the power of imagination and the essence of real life. He says that true realism is universal. It is always and everywhere the same that of the poets, "to find out where joy resides and give it a voice far beyond singing" (p. 234). He further suggests some realistic arts like - *Anna Karenina*, George Meredith, *King Lear*, "Dostoeffsky's *Despised and Rejected*," or, at least, key scenes from these books as example. This is also retrospective in a way, when he expounds on creative writing in general, he seems to reflection his personal experiences. He elaborates on his writing style and narrative development in most of the essays. His articulation of memories and imaginations incarnates the realistic elements of rustic life.

As J.M. Barry (1888) observes, "So Mr Stevenson puzzles the critics, fascinating them until they are willing to judge him by the magnum opus, he is to write by ... [he] is not to labeled novelist. He wanders the byways of literature without any fixed address". His infectious use of rhythm and alliteration at times makes his prose seemingly poetic. He takes real incidents from his life and presents them as an anecdote, as a metaphor for truth in storytelling. Look at the fable of the monk. Stevenson posits the symbol of the nightingale as an anecdote to our memories. One flash of memory can make us alive again in the midst of trillions of disappointments. Just like evoking the song of the nightingale from the past, we can also evoke good memories from the past to enlighten our bleak lives.

Stevenson also talks about the artistic temperament and the everyday struggles of romance writers. They might have drained out of words at times. They might have gone through hell to write a piece of art. It is true we have to admire them. But it never makes them elite or different from the common man. He writes, "The artistic temperament (a plague on the expression!) does not make us different from our fellow-men, or it would make us incapable of writing novels; and the average man (a murrain on the word!) is just like you and me, or he would not be average" (pg. 232). Here Stevenson seems to highlight the necessity of breaking the barriers between writers and the common man. In fact, there is an artist in everyone. As

Stevenson rightly points out, “the average man was full of joys and full of a poetry of his own” (pg. 232). In the eyes of an observer, they can be a mere dancer, a dirty butcher, harrow boys, or silly lantern bearers. But heaven knows what pleasure they are indulging in the mundane everyday activities, which brightens their lives with endless pleasures. Stevenson writes, “To the eye of the observer they are wet and cold and drearily surrounded; but ask themselves, and they are in the heaven of a recondite pleasure, the ground of which is an ill-smelling lantern” (pg. 233). These lines surmise Stevenson’s ideologies and philosophies. Everyone is unique and our value depend on how we treat ourselves. To sum up, Stevenson is inviting readers’ attention toward the essentiality of finding one’s happiness and inner delight. It actually relies in our perspective towards ourselves and life in general.

The essay ends with these lines, “We have heard, perhaps, too much of lesser matters. Here is the door, here is the open air. *Itur in antiquamsilvam*” (pg. 235), a roman phrase which means “so it goes”. Stevenson ends the essay by revoking the greater classical works, the brightness of poetry, and the richness of romantic novels, fairy tales, and noble books. But there are still undiscovered treasures of literature around us, which we might not have read or heard. Let’s open our hearts and ears to those unsung heroes of unread books. Maybe we can lighten our imagination and evoke memories from the past to write prose or poem or a story, thus opening doors for unsung heroes.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

This essay reflects the true essence of life which according to Stevenson exists in the small moments where we cherish our lives. After reading this essay, students will start positively appreciating their life. In this essay Stevenson recollects his childhood memories and his rustic life in the North Berwick. While he narrates the lively moments, adventurous expeditions and joyous moments with childhood friends, the readers tend to take a journey inward to their own childhood memories.

The Lantern Bearers were the boys who carried the lanterns in the midnight. Stevenson was one among them. In this essay Stevenson adds ineffaceable glory on the common things of childhood and highlights the inevitable light within us. Sometimes we can’t recognize them by

their light because it is hidden from the world around them and from without, they can appear to have a less than enviable existence. In other words, Stevenson is talking about the notion of invisible lights inside mediocre-apparent people, the common man. Students can relate to the philosophical thoughts propounded by the author. Apparently, anything that may provide personal delight along with the decision to live for the sake of it, is the invisible light within us that lead us forward. One has to realize that eternal happiness relies upon our perspectives on life. We have to believe in our potential, the inner light within. Life is not always thorns and hardships. There can be momentous joys that can enlighten our souls. Cape drum, live in the moment! This is what Stevenson's essay surmises.

Stevenson creates a lively picture of rustic life using simple imagery like the "smell of seaweed", "whiffs of blowing sand", "golf-balls", "bottled lollipops", and "bull's-eye lantern". These were some of the refreshing memories from his childhood. These memories later become an anecdote to write a poem or a short story or a novel. Stevenson says that even the greatest writers of the millennium like Shakespeare, Napoleon, or Beethoven, must have faced some obstacles in writing at some point in their life. They also might have sat before an empty paper and struggled to write a single line. They might have gone through what Stevenson calls "the artistic temperament". At such moments some grains of memory and stark images from real-life events can inspire the writer to create a masterpiece. In this way, this essay encourages the readers to set alight their imaginative and creative minds. Even if someone feels that they are stuck or they can't write any more, it's momentary. Writer's block is natural. Constant efforts and imaginative recreation of real-life incidents can help the writers to get back on track.

In a nutshell, this essay emphasises the power of imagination and its articulation in writing. Realistic events can add more colour to literature. Stevenson uses the lanterns that the boys hide under their coats as a symbol of man's belief in their individuality, their own inner light. He also celebrates the poetry hidden in everybody's soul. Reading this text can help students to work on their own life experiences and memories and incarnate these into creative writing.

6.4 Glossary

Anchorites: someone who lives alone and away from other people for religious reasons.

Bestrew: cover or partly cover (a surface) with scattered objects.

Clamorous: making a loud and confused noise.

Dainty: tasting good; pretty in a delicate way dainty flowers; having or showing delicate or finicky taste. E.g.: He is a dainty eater.

Flanked: be on each or on one side of.

Inscrutable: impossible to understand or interpret. E.g.: Guy looked blankly inscrutable.

Itur in antiquamsilvam: this is a native English speaker's way of rendering "and so it goes" into Latin.

Phantasmagoric: a sequence of real or imaginary images like that seen in a dream. E.g.: what happened next was a phantasmagoria of horror and mystery.

Podleys: A young coalfish.

Pickwick: A pointed instrument for pulling up a wick, as on an oil lamp.

Sparsely: in a thinly dispersed manner; in small numbers. E.g.: a sparsely populated region.

Tipling: To make a habit of taking, especially in small quantities. Other definition of tipple is alcoholic drink.

Urchins: a young child who is poorly or raggedly dressed. E.g.: he was surrounded by a dozen street urchins in rags

Whiffs: a puff or breath of air or smoke.

Wreaths: a garland or intertwined chaplet; a drift of snow or sand. E.g.: wreaths of fire; wreath of flowers; of sand; of sea.

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. "These boys congregated every autumn about a certain easterly _____, where they tasted in a high degree the glory of existence".
(a) Countryside (b) Fisher village
(c) Small town (d) City
2. "A few novels, dear for their suggestive names: such, as well as memory serves me, were the ingredients of the _____".

- (a) Soup (b) Village
(c) Town (d) Bread
3. "There was nothing to mar your days, if you were a ____ summering in that part, but the embarrassment of pleasure".
- (a) Boy (b) Girl
(c) Adult (d) Lady
4. Who continued to hag-ride Stevenson's thoughts that haunted him for several years?
- (a) Stranger (b) Fisherman
(c) Fisher-wife (d) Police
5. Who cursed Stevenson and his cousin?
- (a) A stranger (b) A dark old woman
(c) Neighbours (d) Fisherman
6. Why Stevenson's writings gain immense appreciations from the readers across the globe and time?"
- (a) The universality of life (b) Humour
(c) Criticism (d) Poetic
7. "one pleasure at least they have tasted to the full", what is that one pleasure Stevenson mentions here?
- (a) Writing a book (b) Playing games
(c) Roaming in the woods (d) Singing aloud
8. "heaven knows where they have set their treasure!", what is the treasure implied in these lines?
- (a) Gold and diamonds (b) Inner delight
(c) Ancestral properties (d) Creative talents
9. "they have been to sea, they have hated, they have feared, they have longed to knife a man, and maybe done it," here Stevenson is referring to _____.
- (a) The lantern bearers (b) Sailors
(c) Struggles of romance writers (d) Boys
10. What is artistic temperament that Stevenson points?
- (a) Artists are of higher temperament
(b) There is an artist in every common man

- (c) Artists have to maintain certain level of temperament
- (d) A scale to measure all artist

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

Annotation (Paragraph Questions)

1. “‘His mind to him a kingdom was’; and sure enough, digging into that mind, which seems at first a dust-heap, we unearth some priceless jewels.” Discuss the philosophical thoughts imbued in these lines?
2. “But heaven knows in what they pride themselves! heaven knows where they have set their treasure!”. Who is Stevenson talking about in these lines? What treasure they hold?
3. “A remembrance of those fortunate hours in which the bird has sung to us, that fills us with such wonder when we turn the pages of the realist.” Stevenson uses the metaphor of nightingale to evoke a memory. Discuss?
4. “The artistic temperament (a plague on the expression!) does not make us different from our fellow-men, or it would make us incapable of writing novels; and the average man (a murrain on the word!) is just like you and me, or he would not be average.” According to Stevenson, what is artistic temperament? Discuss in detail?
5. “To the eye of the observer they are wet and cold and drearily surrounded; but ask themselves, and they are in the heaven of a recondite pleasure, the ground of which is an ill-smelling lantern”. Who are they? What is the relevance of lantern here?

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What is true realism, according to Stevenson? Discuss in detail quoting examples from the text?
2. Reflect upon the philosophical thoughts propounded by Stevenson in this essay?
3. Memories serve as an anecdote in creative writing. Discuss in detail based on this particular essay?

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Barrie, J.M. "Robert Louis Stevenson", *British Weekly*, 9:2, 1888.
2. Norquay, Glenda. "The Lantern-Bearers". *R L Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022, pp. 139-150.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474471343-014>
3. Stevenson, R.L. *The Lantern Bearers and Other Essays*. Ed. by Jeremy Treglown. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988.

Unit -7: *Street Haunting: A London Adventure*

Structure

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Objectives

7.2 *Street Haunting: A London Adventure*

7.2.1 Virginia Woolf as an Essayist: An Introduction

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7.0 Introduction

In her review of Ernest Rhys' collection of essays, Virginia Woolf sets out to reflect on what a good essay should be, and had thoughtfully remarked that "a good essay must have this permanent quality about it; it must draw its curtain round us, but it must be a curtain that shuts us in, not out." This is the maxim that Woolf lives by when she pens "*Street Haunting: A London Adventure*" for even in the present century, her essay resonates with the reader, thereby attaining permanence in time and memory. Before delving further into the essayist and her essay, it is crucial to pause and briefly ponder on the origins of the English essay.

The essay, a form which was developed sometime in the 1500 by Montaigne, and was later adopted and advanced by essayists like Francis Bacon, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, G. K. Chesterton, E. V. Lucas among others, has carved its way from the peripheries and today occupies a pivotal niche in the literary landscape. Though the essay has resisted the confinements of any singular definition due to its inherent fluidity, Dr. Johnson had attempted to define it as "a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance". The Modern age saw the essay undergoing significant changes in its trajectory, becoming more

conversational that it already was at the hands of Lamb. The modern essay also tends to be more subjective where the essayist expresses his views on varied aspects like life, emotions and psychical thought-processes. Virginia Woolf is one such modern essayist who has further nourished the form of essay by incorporating the stream of consciousness technique and adopting a conversational style of writing. Her “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” is a modern essay that, through its digressive trajectories, helps the reader transgress beyond the limitations of the self and embrace the pluralities of life.

7.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- read and comprehend Virginia Woolf’s essay “Street Haunting”
- familiarize the reader with the writer Virginia Woolf, her style of writing, especially non-fiction, and the context in which she was writing in brief
- acquaint readers with the thematic aspects of the essay
- develop the ability of critical thinking in the reader by providing a brief critical analysis of the essay
- explore the style of writing that the essayist adopts in the essay
- assist the reader in tracing the nuanced relationship between the essayist and her essay
- appreciate the digressive trajectories of the essay
- develop aesthetic sensibility in the reader so as to help derive pleasure from reading

7.2 *Street Haunting: A London Adventure*

7.2.1 Virginia Woolf as an Essayist: An Introduction

Regarded as one of the most significant and influential writers of the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941) was a prolific English writer whose usage of the technique of stream of consciousness in writing assigns her a place with the likes of James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, among others. Woolf was born in an affluent family and was later married to writer and journalist Leonard Woolf with whom she founded the Hogarth Press in

1917. A series of deaths in the family at an early age, and sexual abuse at the hands of a half-brother had rendered Woolf traumatized, and she often would suffer from what we today know as bipolar disorder. Still, Woolf continued to delve into learning and rose to become an established writer and critic.

Constantly striving to capture the excitement, drudgery, pleasures, pain, beauty and horror of the modern age, Woolf believed that a new form of writing was required to capture the complexities of the modern mind. It is with this intention that Woolf began to employ the technique of “stream of consciousness” in her writings. This narrative technique attempts to capture the many thoughts and emotions that take place in the mind of the narrator or character. Her most renowned fictional works are *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1936) and *Between the Acts* (1941). Woolf also delved into non-fictional works and wrote numerous essays, autobiographical pieces, and reviews. The essay “A Room of One’s Own” (1929) is regarded as one of the pivotal texts on feminist literary criticism. Her other well-known essays include “The Death of the Moth”, “On Being Ill”, “Granite and Rainbow”, “Modern Fiction”, “On Not Knowing Greek”, among others.

As an essayist, Woolf wrote on varied subjects and contributed significantly to the discussions and debates of her times. Most of her essays are characterized by a poetics of digression where the narrator flicks from one topic to another, and the conversational tone of the essay makes it engaging and interactive for the reader. “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” is one of her remarkable essays that showcases life in London and its streets in the early twentieth century. The other important essays written on the city of London, its streets, and its people are “The Docks of London”, “Oxford Street Tide”, “Great Men’s Houses”, “Portrait of a Londoner”, “Abbeys and Cathedrals” and “This is the House of Commons”.

Today, Virginia Woolf is academically researched on across the world and is immensely influential in popular culture. Many of her works have been adapted to films and other art forms. Contemporary writers like Margaret Atwood, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison claim to be influenced by Woolf’s writings. Thus, Virginia Woolf remains a transnational influential literary figure even till this day.

Check Your Progress:

1. What was the name of the publishing house founded by Woolf and her husband Leonard Woolf?

2. Describe the technique of stream of consciousness that Woolf had adopted in her writings.

7.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Essay:

Interestingly, Woolf's essay on walking in London begins with an observation on a rather unallied subject - a lead pencil. Through the narrator's reflection, it is soon understood that the desire to purchase a pencil is only an excuse or a "pretext" to leave behind the familiarity and monotony of one's home as well as one's self, and indulge in the "greatest pleasure of town life in winter" which for the narrator meant strolling through the streets of London. Seated amidst household objects that ceaselessly thwart the present of the narrator with memories of past experiences (like that bowl from Mantua that rekindles the memories of the "sinister old woman" on that "windy day"), the narrator seeks to "shed" this familiarity and dreariness of thoughts, memories and the self. She aspires to forego, even if temporarily, all the accumulated markers of identity and escape into outdoor spaces, especially the streets of London and become a part of the "vast republican of anonymous trampers" where she can finally be herself.

The specifics of the ideal season, period of day and time for strolling in London, which is prescribed to be winter evenings, between "four and six", lends authenticity to the narrator's experiences and emotions. Enthralled by the beauty of London streets in winter evenings, she reflects on gazing thoughtlessly at the scenes with a gaze unlike that of a miner, or diver or seeker after buried treasure. All that is aspired for is to experience the visuals of the street as though floating "smoothly down a stream", without the intention of any sort of extraction or possession.

As the narrator walks through the streets, crossing "islands of light" and "long groves of darkness", there comes a tract with trees and grasses where night unfolds gradually, and one's auditory senses are stimulated by the "cracklings and stirring of leaves and twigs", the "hooting" of an owl, and the "rattle" of a train in the distant valley. Even though this space oozes an essence of the rural, the narrator assures that this is very much London – the London beyond the noisiness of the industrialized early twentieth century. At London Square, work is still being continued in the houses and offices under lamp lights, and the narrator, who had drifted into

imagining the internal scenarios, warns the self as well as the reader about the “danger of digging deeper than the eye approves”. Instead, the reader is encouraged to appreciate the visible “glossy” motor omnibuses, the “yellow flanks and purple steaks” of flesh in the butcher’s shop, and the bright “red bunches of flowers” that is noticeable from the glass of the florist’s window. However, when the eyes, which tend to be attracted by beauty, have been satiated by too many alluring and colorful scenes on the streets, it becomes necessary to pause if not retreat. Hence, the narrator recounts that even though there was no intention to buy a pair of shoes, it was necessary to recoil from the over-stimulating experiences or “paraphernalia of the streets”, and recoil into a “duskier chamber” which is the boot shop.

With this, the narrator digresses into the story of the dwarf girl who had come to that boot shop to purchase shoes, or purchase momentary happiness, and explicitly urges the reader to wander – “What, then, is it like to be a dwarf?” Here, the narrator delves into the psyche of the peevish dwarf who, like most impaired people, resented the sympathy that she nonetheless needed owing to her disability. Because she had the perfectly “arched” and “aristocratic” feet in her deformed body, it was only at the boot shop that she could exude self- confidence, and she was willing to spend lavishly upon her shoes even though her clothes were shabby. With those shoes on, she perhaps envisioned that “the rest of her body was of a piece with those beautiful feet.” However, by the time she had bought the shoes and reached the streets, all that ecstasy transformed back into “the old peevishness, the old apology” and she was, once again, reduced to “a dwarf only.”

The momentary encounter with the dwarf girl had an impact on the psyche and even after being out in the streets again, the narrator recounts that the “mood had changed” and the bodily deformities that were witnessed began to manifest itself in the visions around the narrator. The narrator also elaborates on the two stone-blind bearded brothers who tread along tremulously with a small boy guiding them before digressing to ponder where the deformed, which is, “the halt and the blind” have been produced. With much uncertainty, it is suggested that the deformed and debilitated could be created in the top rooms of the “narrow old houses between Holborn and Soho”. Even though a series of dark imagery of deformity, debilitation and poverty is etched here, the quintessence of the essay lies in its ability to believe that “life which is so fantastic cannot be altogether tragic”.

As the narrator walks on, perceiving “everything to be accidentally but miraculously sprinkled with beauty,” there is a vocal appreciation for observation without intention of possession. Without the burden and limitation of the “thought of buying,” the observer tends to be more “sportive and generous”, creating, adorning and enhancing the beauty of objects through one’s imagination. One can not only built houses and design its interiors in one’s imagination but also wear pearls or silk in a balcony overlooking the gardens of Mayfair, or even watch the cat creep along Princess Mary’s garden wall.

Thoughts overlap thoughts, and the present self of the narrator merges with the self in the imagination to a point that she is left to wander, “Am I here, or am I there?” The multiplicity of her own identity eludes the narrator even though she concedes knowing that an individual is always expected as though she is one distinct persona and not many: “for convenience sake a man must be a whole.”

As the narrator walks on, the second-hand bookshops, which comprises of “wild books” and ‘homeless books,” opens a new avenue for exploration and she yearns to make “sudden capricious friendships” with rare, unknown books. After expounding on books and the varied narratives, stories and experiences they encapsulate, the narrator urges to glimpse and move on.

On reaching Strand and walking across the Waterloo Bridge, the narrator is reminded of what “really must” be done – she must buy the pencil. Even though her mind resents the “rod of duty” that always tends to assign a task and chastises one for simply enjoying, she obliges to buy the pencil. Then on entering the stationery to buy the pencil, the narrator perceives the atmosphere of tension between the husband and the wife. They have been quarreling which they stopped on seeing a customer in the narrator. Though the stationer failed to find a pencil, his wife was able to provide it, and the longer the couple stood, “the calmer they grew”.

With the errand of buying the lead pencil completed, the narrator walks back towards her home through the streets that have become desolate with nightfall. Delving deeper into the lives of the people she had encountered during her walk, the narrator urges us to delight in abandoning the linearity of our personalities and putting ourselves in other’s shoes, albeit for a moment.

Finally, on reaching the doorstep of her home, the walk is completed and the narrator is once again girdled by the comfort of old possessions and old prejudices. Even though the narrator reiterates that street haunting is the “greatest of pleasures”, she is at the same time, aware of the comfort and security that is exuded by one’s own room. Though the essay ends with

the narrator relishing her walk by revering the lead pencil which she regards as the “only spoil” of her adventure, the reader is aware that the rewards of the walk are the experiences, the memories and the encounters that will remain etched in the psyche of the narrator.

Check Your Progress:

1. Why does the narrator retreat to a boot shop from the streets?
2. Why does the writer say, “Am I here or am I there?”

7.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Essay:

Considering the themes embedded in Virginia Woolf’s “Street Haunting”, it is understandable that this digressive essay not only introduces new threads of thinking but also evokes many of the pivotal imagery and ideas prevalent in Woolf’s earlier works. Through the frame plot of the narrator’s evening walk in the streets of London, the essay reflects on the themes of escape, memory, identity, disability, poverty, beauty, non-linear thinking, and implicitly unfurls few of the social concerns of the times. The present section will elaborate on the salient themes present in this essay.

First, the essay celebrates the theme of escape from not only the familiarity and comfort of one’s home but also the rigidity of the self by going for a walk outdoor. It suggests that when the drudgery of familiar objects, memories and thoughts gnaw on one’s present existence inside the home, the “greatest pleasure” would be to set out in the streets of London on the weak pretext of purchasing a “lead pencil” and glorify the freedom to be oneself completely. It acknowledges the importance of treading into the streets and into the worlds of the “other” (for instance, the dwarf, the blind men, the old couple at the stationary among others) for not only giving “oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind”, but also to gaze at the other with an empathetic eye. Hence, even though the celebration of escaping one’s familiar self and surrounding might seem hyperbolic, it is important to understand that Woolf wants her readers to shed the superficial “shell-like covering” and become the “central oyster of perceptiveness” that retains its cognitive fluidity so as to experience the plurality of beings.

Second, though the essay celebrates the beauty of the London streets in winter evenings, and confesses that the eyes possess a “strange property” of resting “only on beauty”, it does not turn a blind eye to the crevices of London from where emerge the marginalized, the deformed

and the derelicts. With one eye set on the pearls, the silk, and the magnificent mansions of Mayfair, the writer also explores the “duskier chamber” wandering, “What, then, is it like to be a dwarf?” Exploring the psyche of the deformed girl whose disability has left her “peevish” and “apologetic”, the writer carefully showcases that it is but for a moment that the girl is able to escape the shackles of her deformity in the boots shop where it is only her “arched” and “aristocratic” feet that draws attention. The bearded blind brothers who were guided by a young boy, the old man and the “feeble –minded boy” also appears in the essay, thereby lending visibility to the “halt and the blind”. The “hunger-bitten” Jew, the old humped woman also haunts the streets, thereby laying bare the underlying poverty of London during and after the First World War. Hence, the beautiful and grotesque intermingle, and the reader is left grasping the beauty in the grotesque and the grotesque in the beauty of London in the early twentieth century.

Third, though indirectly portrayed, the essay does hark on the theme of consumerism and materialism prevalent in the industrialist society of early twentieth century London. The essay, which was written in 1926 during the economic prosperity of the “Roaring Twenties” in Europe, captures the surplus of wealth as well as wealth inequity of those times. Throughout the essay, beginning with the “bowl from Mantua”, the narrator enlists materials and objects like pearls, and silk that illustrates the obsession with materialism. For instance, the dwarf girl is portrayed as being “ready to lavish any money upon her shoes” to buy momentary ecstasy. The wealth disparity is also portrayed vividly through the description of Holborn and Soho which appears to be a contrast to the wealthy locality of Mayfair. Though the essayist does not indulge in critiquing the wealth disparity, her observation that eyes tend to be “sportive and generous” when they do not intend to possess or purchase hints at her anti-consumerism stance in the essay.

Fourth, the essay also hovers around the theme of identity. It outlines how, amidst society, one is expected to project wholeness or embrace a singular identity for “convenience sake”. However, she reflects that one can choose to adopt multiple identities when one is outside in the streets among the “anonymous trampers”. Woolf, who was well aware of the complex processes of the psyche and was familiar with its non-linear instincts and desires, urges the reader to penetrate into the lives of the other, and relish in the illusion that one is “not tethered to a single mind”.

Finally, the essay also reflects on the theme of time and space and challenges its unilateral progression. There is a physical time and space that we dwell in but in our mind or memory, we could dwell in a completely different space. That is why even though the narrator was walking in the street on a wintry evening, she felt that she was standing in a balcony wearing pearls in June. Baffled by the intermingling of time and space, and the reality with the imagined, the narrator struggled to grasp the absurdity of the situation, wondering – “Am I here, or am I there?” Similarly, when the writer observes someone gazing at the Thames River, she realizes that it is actually her former self that she has meddled up in her mind. Though this trope is unconventional, it is very characteristic of modernist writings and the deconstruction of time and space helps in recreating a narrative that is more accommodating of the complexities of the human psyche. These are the important themes that have been explored in Woolf’s “Street Haunting”.

Check your Progress:

1. What does the references to the pearls and silk signify?

2. How is the theme of freedom explored in the essay?

7.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Essay:

In her essay titled “The Modern Essay,” Woolf writes: “The principle which controls it [an essay] is simply that it should give pleasure ... It should lay us under a spell with its first word, and we should only wake, refreshed, with its last”. This is exactly the proposition that has guided the composition of “Street Haunting”. From a critical lens, Woolf’s “Street Haunting” is an essay that explores the streets of London, its people and its society. As she strolls across the byways in a wintry evening, she leads the reader into her subjective perception and unfurls a macrocosm that is not always linear or continuous and often, borders on the absurd.

The very title “Street Haunting” ushers an element of interest in the essayist’s choice of words. The word “haunting” could have been used as the narrator, much like a ghost, aspired to move through the street in the darkness, and also through the mind and bodies of the people she encountered, unnoticed and unheard. It is also crucial to mention that the etymology of the word “haunt” can be traced to 1300 when it referred to “a habit, custom”, or a “place frequently visited”. Thus, Woolf could also have used the word haunt rather simplistically to imply at her

habit of walking through the streets of London, a fact which has already been well documented in her biographies.

Considering the style of writing, the essay is digressive where the essayist leaps from one subject to another without delving deeply on any one particular topic, thereby capturing the shock and discontinuities of modernity. “Let us dally a little longer, be content still with surfaces only”, is what was proposed by the narrator, and the stylistic of the essay lives up to its aim by employing the poetics of digression. To each of the episodes in her digressive essay, Woolf has attached a setting, plot, character and mood. Much like the convoluted route taken by the narrator, the essay meanders through varied subjects and objects which in turn, can make it seem incomprehensible at times. However, the essay is also conversational, and has an innate quality to absorb the reader into the labyrinths of its episodes. The words “no one”, “we”, “us” indicates that the reader is already made a participant inside the conversational essay.

The essay comes to a full closure not only with the return of the narrator to her doorstep but also through the development of her character in which she has, through her time spent outdoor in the street battering “like a moth at the flame of so many inaccessible lanterns”, reassessed the value of being sheltered and enclosed in one’s own home. The essay that began with the celebration of the outdoor and eventful has also finally acknowledged the significance of the mundane and the familiar. Though the essay ends with the narrator revering the lead pencil as the “only spoil” of her street adventure, the reader is aware that the reward also lies in the experiences and memorable visual delights that the narrator has witnessed while street haunting through the lanes of London.

Check your Progress:

1. What does the word “haunting” in the title signify?
2. Is the pencil the “only spoil” of the narrator’s adventure?

7.2.5 The Essay and the Essayist: Relationship

Like an adept writer who is expected to let go of her subjective thoughts, prejudices and inhibitions and embrace objectivity in her writing, Virginia Woolf mostly adopts an impersonal approach when she engages in writing her fictions as well as non-fictions. However, every poet, novelist or essayist is, first of all, a subject embedded in her socio-political circumstances and

bio-psychical experiences. Understandably, traces of one's subjectivity is bound to seep through the cracks and crevices into her writing, unconsciously if not consciously. Thus, as the reader navigates through the essay, it is important to know few of the instances where Woolf's personality resonates through this essay.

First, as the sub-title "A London Adventure" suggests, the essay is set in the city of London. Woolf, who lived in London for most part of her life, shared a deep connection with the city, and the streets, byways, corners of London has been explored or invoked in most of her works. In one of her expressive letters to her friend Ethel Smyth, Woolf had written: "Yet, it [London] is what, in some odd corner of my dreaming mind, represents Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. It's my only patriotism" (Woolf 1980: 460). Few of the other essays where Woolf has explored London are "The Docks of London," "Portrait of a Londoner," "Oxford Street Tide," to name a few. Perhaps the affection that she nourished for London compelled her to invoke the city in her writing, time after time.

Second, as the entire essay revolves around the narrator's adventure of walking in the streets of London, it is important to remind the reader that Woolf herself was well known for strolling down the streets of London, gathering first-hand experiences of the contemporary London life. Like the narrator who sets out in the streets to buy a pencil, Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway had set out in the streets to buy flowers. Street was the place where Woolf could meet, interact and observe people from all rungs of society. It is the place where Woolf, an elite woman, could notice the misery in the eyes of a "hunger-bitten Jew" or the apology in the persona of a dwarf girl who could never transgress her deformity. Even In *A Room of One's Own*, the writer had urges the reader to "loiter at street corners" and indulge in the "fascination of London Streets". She would later transform these cityscapes and its people into textual experiences that would continue to intrigue readers even in the twenty-first century.

Third, one of the ideas that this essay has propagated is the idea of embracing the plurality of ourselves and thoughts as well as the plurality of others around us. She had shown how, even though the self in the body keeps walking on a wintry evening, the self in the mind can stand on a balcony in June wearing pearls and silk. It is important to note here that in life, Woolf has been an advocate of plurality, diversity, equality and had held humanist views all her life. Even though she has often been critiqued for being elitist and anti-Semitic, her works at large implicitly propagate plurality and diversity.

Finally, one cannot look away from the section on the dead poet whose book was found in the second-hand bookshop. One cannot look away from the word “drowned” in the essay. At hindsight, the word “drowned” serves as a premonition for the reader is aware that the writer had actually taken her own life by drowning in the river Ouse beside her home. The fact that she had drowned the poet in her essay before drowning herself in Ouse today showcases how the subconscious of the essayist seeps through in the essay. Thus, as the reader explores the relationship between the essay and its essayist, there is an understanding that objectivity in works of art is often an illusion and the reader can always look for traces of subjectivity in a writer’s work of art.

Check your Progress:

1. What does the sub-title of the essay indicate?

2. Why does the word “drowned” remind us of the writer’s own life?

7.0 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit you should be acquainted with Virginia Woolf’s style of writing, especially her essays. You should be able to comprehend, inquire and appreciate the digressive style of writing which is typically a modernist approach. Besides, you are also expected to grasp the stream of consciousness technique of writing and its characteristics through the study.

7.4 Glossary

- Rambling:** Here, the activity of walking or strolling in the countryside for deriving pleasure
- Tramper(s):** an individual who resorts to walking in the countryside for long distances for leisure
- Sinister:** Evil, or suggestive of evil
- Quixotic:** Utopic or idealistic but also unrealistic and illogical
- Fleeced:** Here, being cheated, or deceived, especially with regard to money

Indelibly: In a way that cannot be erased, obliterated or forgotten

Imperceptibly: In a way which is so subtle that it remains unseen, unnoticed, or unperceived.

Revealed: Make known, or disclose to others

Obscured: To prevent from being seen clearly or distinctly; conceal or obfuscate.

Suffusedly: In a way that spreads through or over something completely

Peremptorily: In a way that is assertive and expects to be obeyed and attended to immediately, thereby leaving no room for one's denial or refusal

Satiety: The condition of being content or satisfied, especially with regard to food or pleasure

Benevolent: Kind-hearted, compassionate, and sympathetic

Peevish: Irritable, cranky, bad-tempered

Impetuosity: The quality of acting or behaving with impulsiveness or recklessness

Pirouetted: An act of spinning or whirling quickly on one foot as in ballet

Shabbily: Here, to dress in dilapidated, worn out clothes

Ecstasy: Overwhelming feeling of happiness or joy

Asunder: apart

Swathed: To be enwrapped in many layers of cloth or fabric

Crevices: A fissure or crack primarily in a wall or a rock

Crannies: a narrow opening or split

Maimed: Wounded, mutilated or disfigured; disabled

Brandished: To wave or showcase something in a threatening or excited manner

Derelicts: Here, people without home, wealth or a job; a vagrant

Alabaster: A variety of hard translucent calcite which is often used to make ornaments or other artifacts

Dowagers: Wealthy widows with title or property derived from their late husband

Sibilantly: In a way that has or produces a hissing sound

Promenading: To walk leisurely for the purpose of being seen by or meeting others

Pariah: An outcast; a leper

Capricious: A person, thing or situation that is given to sudden or unpredictable changes in behaviour

Sententious: Moralistic and didactic in a pompous way

Corduroy: Thick, ribbed fabric of cotton with velvety texture

Spinster: An unmarried woman

Expounding: To elaborate and describe in detail

Prodigious: Incredibly vast or enormous in size, extent or degree

Gesticulating: To use gestures or signs to express oneself, or to emphasize on what is being verbally communicated

Balustrade: A railing that is supported by balusters which comprises of a series short decorative pillars

Effusiveness: Quality of being friendly or enthusiastic

Brambles: A prickly shrub related to the Blackberry family

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What was the season, period of day and time ideal for street haunting as prescribed by the narrator?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Winter, dusk, five to six | (b) Winter, dawn, four to five |
| (c) Winter, evening, four to six | (d) Winter, evening, four to seven |

2. What does the book-seller's wife prefer to talk about?

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| (a) Newspapers | (b) Overcoats |
| (c) Hairpins | (d) Hats |

3. How did the poet of the finely engraved book of poems that was found in the second-hand bookshop die?

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| (a) Train accident | (b) Drowned |
| (c) Suicide | (d) Gun fight |

4. Whose title page would the old man in the stationary shop not disgrace?

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Samuel Johnson | (b) John Dryden |
| (c) Ben Jonson | (d) Samuel Richardson |

5. What was the stout lady swathed in?

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Shiny snakeskin | (b) Shiny sealskin |
|---------------------|--------------------|

- (c) Glossy walrus skin (d) Glossy sealion skin
6. What does the accustomed tyrant tell the mind to do?
- (a) To challenge time and space (b) To return home as it was dark
- (c) To buy a pencil (d) To critique consumerism
7. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate pair of words: “His is the happiness of _____; ours the _____ of life”.
- (a) Walking, grief (b) Death, insecurity
- (c) Wholeness, celebration (d) Victory, worries
8. Where does the narrator balance herself after experiencing the “splendors and miseries of the streets”?
- (a) At the boot shop (b) At the stationary
- (c) On the Waterloo Bridge (d) At the second-hand bookshop
9. Who had started the hobbling grotesque dance?
- (a) The young convoy (b) The hunger-bitten Jew
- (c) The dwarf (d) The old man
10. What kind of ink was used to paint portraits in Rhine?
- (a) Persian Ink (b) Indian Ink
- (c) Peruvian Ink (d) Chinese ink

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the reasons stated by the narrator for desiring to leave her room in the first place?
2. Why was the dwarf girl ready to lavish any amount of money on her shoes?
3. What was the atmosphere in the stationary like when the narrator had entered the shop?
4. Why does the narrator blame nature for the duality of her thoughts and experiences?
5. Does the narrator privilege the outdoor over the comfort of the indoor? Give reasons for your answer.

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Woolf challenge the notion of time, space and identity in “Street Haunting”? Elaborate with instances from the essay.
2. Through the narrator’s perspective and depiction of the deformed girl in the boot shop, can you elaborate on what it is like to be a dwarf?
3. How do the narrative and the narrator come to a full circle by the end of the essay?

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Briggs, Julia. *Reading Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
2. Cuddy-Keane, Melba. *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
3. Goldman, Jane. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
4. Majumdar, Robin and Allen McLaurin, eds. *The Critical Heritage: Virginia Woolf*. Routledge, 2003.

Unit – 9: Origin and Development of Essay in America

Structure

- 9.0** Introduction
- 9.1** Objectives
- 9.2** Origin and Development of Essay in America
 - 9.2.1** Definition of the Essay
 - 9.2.2** Brief Origin of the Essay
 - 9.2.3** Origin of the English Essay in America
 - 9.2.4** Development of the English Essay in America
- 9.3** Learning Outcomes
- 9.4** Glossary
- 9.5** Sample Questions
- 9.6** Suggested Learning Resources

9.0 Introduction

This Unit aims at tracing the origin and development of English essay in America, but before we do that, it is quite important to define what an essay is, and also briefly trace its origin. The origin of the English Essay is especially most important to this chapter because America originated from Britain; the founding American Fathers are expatriates who escaped religious and political persecution in the motherland and at a certain point in the history of America, it was a British colony. As such, the origin and development of English Essay in America is tight to relationship with Britain in one way or the other. This is also so important in that unlike the origin and development of English in other countries like Japan, China, India or Nigeria which are multilingual, the English Essay in America met no such difficulty or challenge of imposing itself on a totally new audience since American's were already English speaking and share a lot with the British.

9.1 Objectives

This Unit has the following objectives:

- to establish what an essay means in the American context
- to trace the origin of English Essay in America
- To trace the development of English essay in America
- To examine the influence of the era on essayists.

9.2 Origin and Development of English Essay in America

9.2.1 Definition of the Essay:

In Unit 1, you have already studied the meaning and definition of an essay. There is no extensive and complete definition of the essay widely accepted by all. It is usually referred to as a piece of writing or composition relatively shorter, lacks completeness and not systematic. Dr. Johnson defined the essay as, “a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, indigested piece, not a regular and orderly composition.” (Zia ohyeddin, 2016). The Oxford English Dictionary gives it a more compelling definition by defining it as, “a composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish – (‘an irregular indigested piece’ – Johnson), but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range.” These definitions are insufficient, ambiguous and inadequate and unable to include essays like Locke’s “*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*”. Some essays also appear in verse such as, “Essay on Criticism” and “Essay on Man” of Alexander Pope. Hudson, on his definition of an essay states that, “The essay, then may be regarded, roughly, as a composition on any topic, the chief negative features of which are comparative brevity and comparative want of exhaustiveness.” Crabbe’s definition of the essay takes into consideration Huddson’s two main features of an Essay. He claims that the essay is not difficult to write because it has fewer characters. However, Sainte-Beuve refutes this observation. He rather holds that the easy is one of the most difficult pieces to write because of its condensed form and its brevity, although condensed and brief he says it is one of the most entertaining form

of writing as well. He further argues that personal and subjective essays are the true forms of essay because they are a get way lyrical poetic types. Just like poems, the true essay is a relevant tool through which people can see the innermost part of the writer; the mind and personality of the writer. This is because the writer's mind does not wander in an aimless manner but rather perambulates his body, getting only material that is within him. "A good essay", says É.V. Lucas, "more than a novel, a poem, a play, or a treatise, is personality translated into print: between the lines must gleam attractive features or we remain cold." (Wootton 2007). As such, the essay cannot only be limited to their brevity but also as a mirror reflection the mind and thoughts of the essayist as it affects at the particular time he is writing or brooding over the subject.

Montaigne, often considered the first person to have written an essay, was also a writer from a personal stance. He opined, "I am the subject of my essays because I myself am the only person whom I know well." The essay is broad in scope and subject. "Apparently there is no subject, from the stars of dust-heap and from the amoeba to man, which may not be dealt within an essay" (Hugh Walker). Different essayists vary in thoughts and subject of interest, depending on their experiences and/or interests. For instance, Beacon's essays always focus on informing people about the world and worldly wisdom. Anderson on his part writes essays that are limited in thoughts and diluted, often including personal gossips and sometime didacticism; For Lock, his essays on human understanding rather take a formal thoughtful tone and are systematically written with philosophical principles, while Macaulay's essays instead appear in the form of books. Beacon on his part focuses on philosophical subjects such as death, truth, well studies, whereas Lamb writes on such minute subjects as chimney sweepers, old and new schoolmasters and roast pigs.

Check your progress:

1. Write the definition of essay given by Dr. Johnson.

2. Who is considered as the first person to write an essay?

9.2.2 Brief Origin of the Essay:

It is generally believed that the essay originated from the works of French Writer, Montaigne. His work is often technically considered as the first essay. While growing up, his writing life was greatly influenced by Roman writer Cicero. Cicero himself was inspired by great Greek philosophers such as Plato. In England, Francis Bacon is often considered to be the first essayist who took the essay there but following a different path or format from Montaigne. The two essayists vary in that Montaigne's essays are subjective and personal, full of self-revelation whereas Bacon's essays are objective or impersonal and more of philosophical broodings (Edmund Gosse, 1911).

As seen above, the origin of the essay is traceable to ancient Greece and Rome. Because it did not succeed in Greece and Rome, it is accredited that Montaigne is the founder of the essay and his prose works which express his personal thoughts and were published as 'essais', with an artistic thread is often considered the first essay. He often describes his subjective feelings and experiences in his essays. Addison correctly notes that: "The most eminent egoist that ever appeared in the world was Montaigne". He writes personal and alluring essays.

The English prose style was introduced during the Elizabethan age and came to replace the earlier specimen which had been imitative. During the Elizabeth age, poets were obsessed with poetry and drama, yet there were progressive experiments in prose. At this time, it was considered that the English tongue had developed to maturity and could delve in prose. From the onset, the essay grew and is founded on three different phases, the character-writers of the seventeenth century, the critical prose and the controversial writings.

The character-writers were greatly influenced by the works of Theophrastus. In depicting human conditions, the writer uses humour and satire to do so. Joseph Hall also uses this modal. His characters on virtue and vice or good and bad replicate the satirical style used by Theophrastus. Another writer who was greatly influenced by Theophrastus in depicting characters similar to those in the ancient book of Theophrastus is Thomas Overbury. The characters in Theophrastus' book are truncated character-sketches such as, Milkmaid, Pedant and Franklin etc. John Stephens with his *Microcosmography* followed suit. Sometimes later, Samuel Butler drew the characters of a modern statesman, a mathematician and a romantic writer. Dekker's *Bellman of London* introduced several kinds of rogues as characters.

Between Caxton's Prefaces and Wilson's "*Art of Rhetoric*", Caxton's is attributed the honour of the first essay in the arts whereas Wilson's is too long and elaborate that it is not. Another essay collection worthy of note is Gascoigne's "Certayne Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English". An outstanding work in the field of polemic is Gosson's "*School of Abuse*" which provoked Sidney's famous "*Apology for poetry*". Because it is too violent and one-sided, Thomas Lodge dismisses the pamphlet that it is not valuable for critical works. Thomas Walker rather holds that Philip Sidney's "*Apology for Poetry*" is the only work of the sixteenth century that can still be pleasurable to the general public or the vague reader. The Critical essay in its tend was developed by Sir George Harrington and George Chapman in their prefaces developed the critical essay whereas Thomas Nash is noted for his controversial essays and the most noted controversialist of the time.

Check your progress:

1. Who is "the most eminent egoist" according to Addison?

2. Which literary work provoked Sidney's "*Apology for poetry*"?

9.2.3 Origin of the English Essay in America:

As earlier noted, America was the extension of the British Empire and one favourable characteristic of the English essay in America that it took after English essayist was its objectiveness. The essay from origin in America was objective and addresses issues of such great concerns like slavery, colonialism, revolution, love and romance, rebellion or resistance, celebrations, conquests, etc. depending on the era in which this development happened. The forgoing paragraphs are going to trace the English essay in America from Origin and how it developed, also highlighting the champions of the various developmental eras.

The English essay in America can be traced as far back as the brief period before 1776 when American nationalism against British colonialism started. It is noted by historians that one of the key factors to the American war of independence was the contribution of writers. Thus, the origin of the essay can be traced to Early American and Colonial Period before 1776. This was the period when the spirit of the revolution was at the peak. Thus, it is no coincidence that all essay writers of this time strove to send it over their works. Injustices of various types including unjust laws, slavery and the fight against it, criticism against unjust government policies,

disagreement with aristocracy, and warning of implications such as global warming Core topics of interest for essayist this time.

At this time, Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) and John Woolman (1720-1772) published their masterpieces, “The Selling of Joseph” and “Some Considerations in the Keeping of Negroes” and this made them the most famous essayist of the era. For example, Samuel Sewall is often considered as the earliest colonial abolitionists because of his publication of “The Selling of Joseph” which is also often considered as the first recorded anti-slavery tract published the future United States. In the essay, he condemns in the greatest possible terms the buying and selling of slaves as one of the most barbaric acts. Sewall argued, “liberty is real value next unto life: none ought to part with it themselves, or deprive others of it, but upon the most mature consideration.” He regarded, “man-stealing as an atrocious crime which would remain forever restive and ‘alien’”, but also believed, “there is such a disparity in their conditions, colour, hair, that they can never embody with us, and grow up into orderly families, to the peopling of the land.” Although holding such segregation views, he maintained, “these Ethiopians, as black as they are; seeing they are the sons and daughters of the First Adam, the Brethren and Sisters of the Last Adam, and the offspring of God; they ought to be treated with a respect agreeable” (Samuel Sewall, 1700).

Check your progress:

1. Who has written the masterpiece *The Selling of Joseph*?
-

2. Mention three issues addressed in the beginning in American essays.
-

9.2.4 Development of the English Essay in America:

The era that followed this era considered as the origin was even more decisive as it is considered to be the era of real American essay. During this era, essayist were conscious of what they wrote and were essay focused, with a lot of publications and publication houses which had sprouted all over, making the genre not only a popular revolutionary tool but also a popular tool of communication and genre of writing then. The era is often called the Democratic Origins and Revolutionary Writers, spanning from 1776-1820. Because of the triumph of independence in America at this time, mood was greatly influenced such that most of the essayists described anti-slavery, the weakness of American democracy, the exceptional nature of America, the

constitution, generalities and the relations between the erstwhile colonial master, England and the then independent America. Because these writers were not paid for writing, they did all their best to write on original, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) became one of the most famous essayist of this era with his “Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress”, “The Art of Procuring Pleasant Dreams”, “The Temple of Learning”, and “The Whistle”. Apart from him, other notable figures of the period included Thomas Paine (1737-1809) “Common Sense” and “The American Crisis”, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) “The Declaration of Independence”, and Washington Irving (1783-1859) “The Mutability of Literature”.

Among the leading pillars of this period is Benjamin Franklin. He is regarded as the Founding Fathers of the United State, and the main protagonist in drafting and signing the United States Declaration of Independence, and the first United States Postmaster General. Franklin, Just like other advocates of republican values insisted that the new republic should be built on the principles of virtue and that was the only way it would survive. Many civic organizations were founded by him, including the “Library Company”, Philadelphia’s first fire department, and the “University of Pennsylvania”. He earned the title “the First American” through his huge contribution to the American society and defatigable campaigning of colonial unity, and spokesman in London for several colonies.

One of his contemporaries, Thomas Paine, a British-born American was also a great force off the era. He wrote two of the most influential essays when the American Revolution started “Common Sense” (1776) and “The American Crisis”, and helped motivate the patriots in 1776 to declare independence from Great Britain. His ideas reflected Enlightenment-era ideals of transnational human rights (Solinger, J.D, 2010). Apart from these two great figures of the era, Thomas Jefferson, the third American president and one of the founding fathers was also of the era. Being the prominent author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was a proponent of republicanism, and individual rights who motivated American colonist to break from the Kingdom of Great Britain and form an independent nation.

With the glories of independence, freedom, the booming American economy and the new political and economic position of America as a world power, subsequent writers did not focus so much on the post-independent spirit that characterized America like their predecessors had done (nevertheless, most of them still wrote on other sensitive issues which were not necessarily love or social life). They took up new topics that focused more on love and social life. The era is

often referred to as the Romantic Period and spanned from 1820–1860. They were equally known as American Renaissance. This was the period wherein writers were self-expressive, inspired, and played important roles of arts for both the growth of the society and the individual. The Romantic Movement started in Germany but later spread to other parts of Europe, most particularly to England and France. Essayists of this era were poets and fiction authors as well, with the central topic of self-development. They wrote about self-awareness, arts, the unity of self and nature, and a human mission in this world. Some of the most famous essayists of this era and their notable works include Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) “Self-Reliance”, and “Gifts”, and the poet, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) “The Philosophy of Furniture”, Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. (1809-1894) “*The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*”, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) “*Papers on Literature and Art*”, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) “The Destiny of Colored Americans”, Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) “On Women’s Right to Vote”, and Donald Grant Mitchell (1822-1908) “*My Farm of Edgewood: A Country Book*”.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (May 25, 1803 – April 27, 1882) was one of the most prominent figures of this age. He was purely essay oriented, with no political affiliations. He was mostly identified with the name Waldo, his middle name. He was not only an American essayist but also a lecturer, philosopher, and abolitionist. He was the most renowned transcendentalist poet of the time and led the movement of the mid-19th century. He was considered as campaigner of individualism and presciently criticized the countervailing pressures of society, and his ideology was propagated through dozens of published essays and more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States. Unlike his contemporaries, he did not share in their gradually religious and social beliefs, as such he formulated and expressed the philosophy of transcendentalism in his 1836 essay “Nature”. After the publication of this work, he made a speech titled, “The American Scholar” in 1837, which Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. opines that it is America’s “intellectual Declaration of Independence”. Most of Emerson’s notable essays were first written as speeches before being revised for print. The core of thinking is reflected in his first two collection of essays “Essays: First Series” (1841) and “Essays: Second Series” (1844). They include the well-known essays “Self-Reliance”, “The Over-Soul”, “Circles”, “The Poet”, and “Experience.” Coupled with “Nature”, these essays made the decade from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s the most fertile years for Emerson. He wrote on varied subjects, however, he did not propagate fixed philosophical principles, but rather expatiated a good number of ideas such as individuality,

freedom, reiterating the fact that humankind could realize almost anything they desired. He also focused on the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world. Emerson's essay titled "Nature" was more philosophical than naturalistic and in philosophical considerations, he asserted that the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. He took a rather pandeist or pantheist approach to life among other philosophers to refute the view that God is separate from the world. Emerson remains one of the central figures of the American Romantic Movement and his writings have greatly influenced the thinkers, writers and poets that followed him. "In all my lectures" he asserts, "I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man." (Journal, April 7, 1840). He is also well known as a mentor and friend of Henry David Thoreau, a fellow transcendentalist.

Another of his contemporaries is Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). He was an American writer, poet, and literary critic, best known for his macabre and Gothic tales, as well as his poetry. He is considered one of the most influential writers in American literature, and is often credited with pioneering the genres of horror, detective fiction, and science fiction. Poe's works are known for their dark and mysterious themes, vivid imagery, and use of psychological suspense. Some of his most famous short stories include "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which is considered the first modern detective story. He is also known for his poetry, including "The Raven," which is one of his most well-known and widely anthologized poems.

Poe's writing often explored themes such as madness, death, the macabre, and the human mind, reflecting his own tumultuous life and personal struggles. He experienced many hardships throughout his life, including the loss of his parents at a young age, financial difficulties, and struggles with alcoholism and depression. In addition to his fiction and poetry, Poe also wrote literary criticism and essays, and he was known for his scathing critiques of his contemporaries' works. Despite facing financial difficulties during his lifetime, Poe's works gained popularity after his death, and he is now considered one of the most important and influential writers in American literary history.

The euphoria that characterized the romantic period was short lived. With the return of the cold war, romantic moods could not take ages. From 1860, realism returned to the writing scene and it was its heyday. The U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) gave writers new impetus about new topics to write on. Pessimism and exhaustion became part of the major themes that replaced

optimism. With the transformation of America as a powerful nation, people mastered how to quote famous writers of the period as their words reflected the mood and ambiance of the period. Topics of interest at the time included industrialization, war, urbanization, individual, alienation, and national strengths. Renowned essayist of this period are A. Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) “*Table-Talk*”, Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) “*Death of a Soldier*”, Mark Twain (1835-1910) “*Advice to Youth*”, “*The Danger of Lying in Bed*”, and “*On the Decay of the Art of Lying*”, and Henry Adams (1838-1918) “*A Law of Acceleration*”, Mary Hunter Austin (1868-1934) “*The Land of Little Rain*”, and W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) “*Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others*”.

The period that followed was the Modernism and Experimentation era which lasted from 1914-1945. Gertrude Stein’s statement, “You are all a lost generation” is usually used to describe this era, often associate with the lost generation. The writers of this period are best defined by these words of the well-known author and art collector. Disillusionment was a key characteristic of the period and writers like, Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and other authors of their time who portrayed reality exposed these realistic themes that were common such as wars and life values. Another great historic event that had a great impact on writers of the time was the Great Depression (1929-1939). They used tricky and meaningful ways through writing techniques to experiment their thoughts. Famous American essayists and their renown essays during this period include; George Ade (1866-1944) “*Luxuries*”, Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956) “*The Libido for the Ugly*”, T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) “*Selected Essays*”, 1917–1932, Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) “*The Days Before*”, F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) “*What I Think and Feel at 25*”, William Faulkner (1897-1962) “*The Sound and the Fury*”, and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) “*The Snows of Kilimanjaro*”.

The subsequent era was recognized as American Essay Writers of Postwar Period (1945-1990). During this period, essayist focused more on self-reflection. They were extremely observant and they described and commented on everything they noticed around them. Some of the writings of this period are very important to the contemporary society especially in understanding models of life and postwar Americans. An outstanding characteristic of the period was verbal genres’ originating and booming. Essayists used speeches, movie scripts, and song lyrics to describe and express public sentiments better. Latin American realism and European existentialism as well as the Apartheid hero, Nelson Mandela greatly influenced writers of this

period. Famous American essayists of this era include, Norman Mailer (1923-2007) “The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster”, John McPhee (1931-present) “The Search for Marvin Gardens”, Edward Hoagland (1932-present) “Heaven and Nature”, Wendell Berry (1934-present) “Against the Death Penalty”, Joan Didion (1934-present) “*The White Album*”, Joseph Epstein (1937-present) “*Plausible Prejudices: Essays on American Writing*”, “*A Literary Education and Other Essays*”, and “*Masters of the Games: Essays and Stories on Sport*”, and Robert Lee Fulghum (1937-present) “*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*”.

The last generation of American Essayists are present day essayists. Also known as the postmodern era, they question every idea of their predecessors, adapting them to the fast changing world. They are interested in topics such as, gender equality, human rights, post-feminism, global urbanization, and other social issues. Because the current internet age has influenced writing style and form and most people do not want to read long manuscripts, writers go online and publish short essays for easy and fast reading, which compel and hold the attention of the readers. Ideas are also communicated through other forms of social media outlets such as audio and video, as it’s the best way to reach Gen Z. Famous contemporary American essayists are Marilynne Robinson (1943-present) “*When I Was a Child I Read Books*”, Stephen Edwin King (1947-present) “Great Hookers I Have Known”, David Shields (1956-present) “*Reality Hunger*”, Sarah Vowell (1969-present) “*The Partly Cloudy Patriot*”, and John Jeremiah Sullivan (1974-present): “*Pulphead*”.

In conclusion, essay writing is more than just a college assignment, even though assignments can go a long way to imbibe learners in the essay tradition. Through this literary form, you can look back, rethink historical events and social heritage, understand the surrounding community better, and develop critical thinking. It is also a form of revolt and a form of emancipation. English Essay in America particularly traces and reflects the history and happenings in America from precolonial to the modern American society and America as a tech-giant and World super power.

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote the essay “Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress”?

2. What was the nationality of Ernest Hemingway?

9.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- know what an essay is and how it originated
- understand how English essay originated in America
- know how English essay developed in America
- comprehend how the various historical events and eras influenced essayists
- know the prominent essayist of the various eras
- be able to distinguish the various developmental eras and stages

9.4 Glossary

Expatriate: Emigrant

Persecution: Harassment

Composition: Word of art

Ambiguous: Vague

Inadequate: Insufficient

Brevity: Conciseness

Condensed: Compressed

Perambulate: Roam

Stance: Position

Dilute: Adulterate

Truncate: Shorten

Microcosmography: The figurative description of man as a miniature universe

Polemic: Controversialist

Disparity: Difference

Embody: Encompass

Segregation: Separation

Sprout: Germinate

Proponent: Supporter

Presciently:	Knowledge of things or events before they happen
Countervailing:	Having equal force but an opposite effect
Pantheist:	The religious belief that God is in everything in nature and the universe
Refute:	Disprove
Heyday:	Peak
Imbibe:	Absorb

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Who sees the essay as a delightful form of writing because of its brevity?
 - E.V Lucas
 - Montaigne
 - Hudson
 - Saint-Beauve
- Who is the founder of the Essay?
 - Hudson
 - Hugh Walker
 - Montaigne
 - George Chapman
- He is considered the father of English Essay _____.
 - Francis Beacon
 - George Harrington
 - Samuel Butler
 - Saint-Beauve
- Who is considered pioneers of the English Essay in American except _____.
 - Samuel Sewall
 - John Wolman
 - Peter Watts
 - Francis Bacon
- Which is considered the earliest anti-slave tract published in form of an essay?
 - Some Considerations on Keeping Negroes*
 - The Selling of Joseph*
 - Common Sense and the American Tract*
 - Adventures Huckleberry Finn*
- When was Sewall's *The Selling of Joseph* published?
 - 1700
 - 1800
 - 1730
 - 1652
- The era of self-expression and inspiration was also known as _____.
 - The independent era
 - The Romantic era
 - The expressionist era
 - The surrealist era

8. One of the following is a member of the revolutionary writers _____.
(a) Margaret Fuller (b) Susan b. Anthony
(c) Thomas Jefferson (d) Ernest Hemingway
9. The post-war era was also known as _____.
(a) The Renaissance era (b) The lost generation
(c) The Neoclassical generation (d) The Romantic
10. The following but one topic are covered by contemporary writers _____.
(a) Human Rights (b) Gender equality
(c) Globalisation (d) Evolutionism

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on Montaigne as an essayist.
2. Write about essay in brief.
3. State two writers of the contemporary English Essay in America
4. What was the main influence of the post-war writers?
5. What were the characteristics of the modern era of essay writing?

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Critically examine how the American history influences the development of the English essay in America.
2. Trace the factors that influenced the origin of English essay in America.
3. Discuss in the detail the development of essay in America.

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Allen, Gay Wilson (1981). *Waldo Emerson*. New York: Viking Press. ISBN 0-670-74866
2. D'Agata, John (Editor) (2009), *The Lost Origin of the Essay*. St Paul: Graywolf Press.
3. Goose, Edmund (1911). "Essay, Essayist". In Chisholm, Hugh (ed). *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Vol.9 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 776-778.
4. H.W. Brands. (2010) *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, P.390. ISBN 9780307754943
5. Samuel Sewall, Melvin Yazawa (1998). *The Diary and Life of Samuel Sewall*. Boston: Bedford Books. ISBN 978-0-312-13394-8.
6. Zimmerman, Brett (2005). *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and style*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. PP.85-87. ISBN 978-0-7735-2899-4.

Unit – 10: Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The Over-Soul”

Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Ralph Waldo Emerson: “The Over Soul”

10.2.1 Ralph Waldo Emerson as an Essayist

10.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Essay

10.2.3 A Critical Appreciation of the Essay

10.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

10.0 Introduction

“The Over-Soul” is one of the most influential writings by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the greatest essayists of America. He was born on May 25, 1803 in Boston, New England. He was a lecturer, a preacher, a poet, an essayist and a philosopher. He is called ‘the sage of Concord’. He did not agree with the popular contemporary religious and social views. He gave more importance to personal experience than outside authority. He strongly believed in individualism, and propagated his thoughts through lectures and essays.

Emerson is called ‘the father of American Transcendentalism’. In his essay "Nature," published in the year 1836, he laid the foundations for Transcendentalism. *Nature* (1836) is his first publication and the finest manifestation of his Transcendental Philosophy. For two years, from 1842-44, he was the editor of *The Dial*, a Transcendentalist journal. Later in the year 1837, he delivered a talk entitled, "The American Scholar," popularly described as America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence." A majority of his essays were first delivered as lectures, and later revised to be published as essays. Two collections, *Essays: First Series*, published in the year 1841 and *Essays: Second Series* published in the year 1844 constitute the

first two volumes of essays by Emerson. These two essay collections reflect his philosophical ideology. Some of the most influential essays from these two volumes include "The Over-Soul," "Self-Reliance," "The Poet," "Experience" and "Circles."

Emerson was one of the most influential philosophers and writers in the nineteenth century United States. He exercised a tremendous influence on his contemporary philosophers and writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman, and he continues to influence the writers across the world. Renowned intellectuals such as William James and Nietzsche admit Emerson's influence on their ideology.

The American Scholar and *The Divinity School Address*, dated 1837 and 1838, respectively are his most popular lectures. *Essays, First Series* (1841) and *Second Series* (1844), *Poems* (1847), *Representative Men* (1850), *The Conduct of Life* (1860), and *English Traits* (1865) are some of his most well-known works. He was suffering from pneumonia and he breathed his last on April 27, 1882.

10.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- enable you to understand the content of the essay, "The Over-Soul"
- familiarize you with Emerson and his philosophy
- make you aware of American Transcendentalism
- enable you to understand Emerson's spiritual ideas as expressed in the essay, "The Over-Soul"

10.2 Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The Over Soul"

10.2.1 Ralph Waldo Emerson as an Essayist:

One of the greatest American essayists, Ralph Waldo Emerson was primarily a philosophical thinker and a transcendentalist. He led the American Transcendentalist Movement. He gave many talks and wrote many essays on a variety of topics. His essays can be called orations or treatises. Emerson shines as a great transcendentalist in essays like "The Over-Soul",

“Self - Reliance” and “The Poet”. Some of the repeated subjects in Emerson’s essays are Christianity, spirituality, philosophy, education, morality, power and unity.

Emerson’s essay writing style is philosophical. Though not very well-constructed, his essays are rich in noble and sublime thought. Although his essays are marked by loose sentences without proper syntax, they sparkle with his wise ideas. He is a thinker, an orator and an intellectual. Gandhi appreciated the Indian thought and wisdom found in his essays.

His prose style is marked by its aphoristic conciseness and epigrammatic brevity. The subtlety of expression adds a poetic beauty and render the essays remarkably impressive. Although his prose is often criticized as didactic and harsh, it is highly poetic with recurring themes and images.

Matthew Arnold, a great critic, appreciated the significance of essays by Emerson as the most important literary output in prose.” Most critics often compare Emerson with Francis Bacon, the father of the English essay. Emerson’s essays are similar to Bacon’s ‘dispersed meditations.’ Emerson’s use of aphorisms, epigrams and anti-theses remind us of Bacon’s prose style. For example:

1. “All things are double, one against another.”
2. “Trust thyself.”
3. “Life is a train of moods like a string of beads.”
4. “Books are lamps to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is.”
5. “The drop is a small ocean.”

Emerson’s essays abound in rhetorical devices like inversion, repetition and interrogation; and his sentences are remarkable for their poetic beauty, artistic subtlety, vivid force and impressive diction. Varied images, ranging from the lofty sun and stars to the insignificant weed and fly, can be found in his essays. He employed a plethora of stylistic devices such as figures of speech, aphorisms, epithets, anti-theses, analogy and rhetorical devices. Emerson's essays are marked by a remarkable clarity of expression.

10.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Essay, “The Over-Soul”

Published in 1841 in *Essays: First Series*, “The Over-Soul” explores the connection between God and the soul, a theme Emerson first discussed in *Nature*. Interestingly, many critics regard “*The Over-Soul*” as the classical statement of his spiritual ideology.

In the first three paragraphs of the essay, “The Over-Soul”, Emerson gives a general introduction, setting the stage for the explanation of the concept of the Over-Soul. In the following paragraphs up to ten, Emerson gives a clear definition of the Over-Soul as a universal spirit which can be experienced only through morality. In the next few paragraphs, the writer explores the connection between the Over-Soul and the society, followed by an explanation of how the Over-Soul is experienced by the humans. The essay ends with an explanation of how the Over-Soul is manifested in individual human beings.

While the human soul is the central theme, the essay analyses several crucial connections: (a) the relationship between God and the human soul (b) the relationship between two human souls (c) the relationship between the soul and the personal ego. Although the essay presents and dwells in detail upon the ideas from the Western thought, like Plutarch, Plato, the impact of the Vedas and the Eastern religions, is explicit. The following ideas are discussed in the essay: (1) human soul is vast, eternal and beautiful (2) our conscious ego is small, ephemeral and limited when compared with the human soul, and the ego is often mistaken for the real self (3) the souls of all humans are connected.

Emerson insists that humans contain all of nature and all of the universe within themselves. Whatever is within us corresponds to what is outside us. Thus, the essay, “The Over-Soul” is the declaration of Emerson’s Transcendentalist idea that all humans are one. We are all made up of cells and tissues; thus, we are all a part of nature. After death, all of us return to dust and become a part of the earth.

10.2.3 A Critical Analysis of the Essay:

The essay, "The Over-Soul", was published in Emerson's collection, *Essays*, in the year 1841. It opens with two poetic epigraphs. The first epigraph is an extract from "Psychozoia, or, the Life of Soul"(1647), published by Henry More, an English philosopher. More asserts that morality is innate in humans. All humans are born with a sense of morality that influences their behaviour. However, today More’s idea is criticized for its disregard of the effect of the environment and nurturing on an individual. Emerson uses this abstract from More as it is addressed to the soul that resides within each of us and the soul of the God. In More’s views, all the different human souls emanate from one soul of the God, that Emerson refers to as "the eternal One." This extract from More introduces the central theme of the essay- the theme of the

one and the many. There could not be the one, without the many; there could not be the many, without the one.

Emerson claims that the Over-Soul is the Supreme Being that connects all individual human souls. It acts a source of all force or energy for every human. "When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love." Emerson acknowledges the futility of any attempt to describe the Over-Soul in words because, in order to understand this Supreme Soul, one has to surrender and experience it oneself. All humans are aware of its existence. For instance, all humans are always conscious of a universal beauty that is eternal, that "belongs to ages than to mortal life." A verse composed by Shakespeare, a quote by Plato, or a teaching of the Christ transcends all the boundaries of time and space and makes its divinity felt in the present times. A human soul can connect intimately with and directly experience the Over-Soul by ascending to a state of higher virtue.

Asserting that there exists a "spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man", Emerson assures the universal accessibility of God, who actually resides within every human soul which is a spark of the Supreme Over-Soul. "Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One." Thus, Emerson insists that as every human being has a soul which reflects the soul of God; every soul reflects many other souls present in the world, and thus consolidates his theme of the one and the many.

Emerson emphasizes the need for morality. Language cannot describe the Over-Soul. "My words do not carry its august sense; they fall short and cold." It can be directly felt and experienced through morality. Moral values help us understand the strength and the power of the Supreme force, the Over-Soul, which is manifested through our moral actions.

Emerson clarifies that in spite of the difficulty of the task, he will attempt to define and explain the concept of the Over-Soul, and also "report what hints" he has experienced confirming the existence of this transcendental force. He acknowledges that the Over-Soul cannot be comprehended through words, and strives to define the Over-Soul by stating what the Over-Soul is not. Emerson writes, "My words do not carry its august sense; they fall short and cold. . . All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ . . . is not a function . . . is not a faculty . . . is not the intellect or the will . . ." The Over-Soul is not any of the mentioned identities, yet it utilizes all of these faculties for various objectives. "Language cannot paint it with his colors."

Emerson suggests that the human society has two major concerns: the limitations of time and place, which in turn limit human existence. He holds a strong conviction that the Over-Soul "abolishes" these dual concerns by transcending time and place. Humans rely on their physical abilities, instead of their spiritual capacities. This over-dependence has so engulfed the human mind that our intuition remains unused. He maintains that the love of beauty rises above the limitations of time and place. The definitions and perceptions of beauty vary with time and place; however, every human being seeks what is perceived beautiful. The objects of beauty are mortal but the human desire for beauty is immortal.

Humans attain an understanding and appreciation of the truth through mind, not by physical means. The better we understand the spirit that binds the entire world together, the closer we draw towards the Over-Soul. This insight is called by Emerson, "the law of moral and of mental gain". Our relationship with this power is based on our behaviour. When humans embrace the existence of such Supreme Over-Soul, they become moralistic in thought and action.

The theme of duality becomes vivid in two things: Emerson's clarification of what defines and what does not define the Over-Soul, and in his justification of the strife of the Over-Soul with human faculties. Emerson demonstrates how the Over-Soul which surpasses all the physical oppositions and rise Supreme: ". . . the soul's scale is one; the scale of the senses and the understanding is another. Before the revelations of the soul, Time, Space and Nature shrink away."

The author explains that just as all individual human souls are united by the Over-Soul, the society too is united by the Over-Soul. This unity of the society expresses itself in the common human nature. When we talk of common nature, we do not imply any kind of social relationship but we mean an impersonal connection among all humans, a connection with Over-Soul, the God. He elaborates on how people are united by the Over-Soul and how this Supreme force is manifests in human society. "In all conversation between two persons, tacit reference is made as to a third party, to a common nature. That third party is not social; it is impersonal; is God." The moment we recognize the Over-Soul's presence in other people and in the society, we tend to act nobly. This awareness leads us to moral actions.

Every human being has his own individual soul within himself and this individual soul is an integral element of the Over-soul, the soul of all people. All humans are aware of this Over-

soul, the soul of God, when speaking with one another; however, we do not refer to this common connection may be because language cannot describe the identity of this over-soul. All humans, whether great or low, are always conscious of this Over-Soul and the bond with other human souls. In our interactions with others, the soul serves as the connecting channel we are always aware of but we do not mention it in words as it defies all definitions.

Another favourite idea with Emerson is "Self-Reliance." In "The Over-Soul", Emerson talks about self-reliance and urges us to "act entirely," with little regard to what the society thinks about our behaviour. He encourages us to act out our thoughts freely, without worrying about social demands for consistency or normalcy. God does exist in each one of us but the social pressures motivate us to act unnaturally, other than how God would want us to behave. Emerson argues that this difference leads to a conflict between human souls and the Over-Soul.

Emerson, next, describes how the Over-Soul manifests itself through revelation. Although people consider fortune-telling as revelation, it is actually a sin. Humans must live in and experience the present. God will not give information about the future. Humans should embrace "the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature." Revelation is actually an "influx of the Divine mind into our mind". He uses the singular word "mind" to refer to the mind of the humans, treating it as one entity, uniting the entire humanity as one identity. Revelation is apparent across the religions of the world, such as Methodism, Calvinism, Moravianism and others. Regardless of their conflicting ideologies, the various religions of the world, illustrate the Over-Soul's Revelation, whereby "the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul". When any human soul unites with the Over-Soul at the time of revelation, the individual experiences a new truth or performs a great virtue. Such sublime occasions lead to a clear understanding and appreciation of the Over-Soul.

Such revelations enable us to understand each other as well because when we unite with the Over-Soul, we unite with other souls too. The souls of other humans can be perceived, and thus, we trust some and not others, depending on their nature, even at times when we have no knowledge or familiarity with them. Emerson writes, "We are all discerners of spirits."

The Over-Soul never uses words to answer human questions about what happens to the soul after death. Like the disciples of the Christ, we should only act and maintain through actions, instead of words, the God's divine plan. Questions pertaining to the spiritual future are futile because the response would require a language beyond human comprehension. "These

questions which we lust to ask about the future, are a confession of sin. God has no answer to them. No answer in words can reply to a question of things." Here, the author's argument reflects his independent thought. According to him, humans should not question about their spiritual future but only "work and live, work and live," to ensure immortality.

Moreover, humans should not bother about others' actions as well. Every individual is responsible for his actions and salvation. Emerson differs with the Calvinist view that God has already chosen human souls for salvation even before their birth, and that man is born sinful and salvation depends on God, not human actions. Furthermore, Emerson points out that the human soul which has united with the Over-Soul enjoys an intimate relationship with God, lives in the present moment, does not yearn for admiration, and thus experiences a revelation. "But the soul that ascends to worship the great God, is plain and true; has no rose-color, no fine friends, no chivalry, no adventures; does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience of the common day."

Such a strong relationship with God is attainable by all humans, so we should identify the Over-Soul that resides within each one of us. Such an awareness is not guaranteed by any established system of religion, but it is an individual effort and experience. Thus, Emerson concludes criticizing the established religion, which survives on authority instead of faith. One must have a strong faith in one's own soul and the Over-Soul to unite with the Over-Soul.

Towards the end of the essay, Emerson highlights the significance of the individual character. He affirms that the individual who enjoys an intimacy with the Over-Soul, gets influenced by the Over-Soul and thus develops a virtuous character and performs moral deeds: "If he has found his centre, the Deity will shine through him, through all the disguises of ignorance, of ungenial temperament, of unfavorable circumstance." Emerson's depiction of God as a bright light that illuminates in individual human beings refers to the Bible: "The Lord is my light and my salvation . . ." Interestingly, through the course of the essay, Emerson also distinguishes proper learning from the improper one. According to him, the poet and the scholar, while presenting views based on his own experience, speaks "from within"; however, the poet or the scholar, who copies others' ideas, speaks "from without." he adds that any poem with a message that transcends time and age, blesses us with a divine sense that connects us with the divine spirit. Emerson was a staunch democratic. He strongly believed in the right of every human being to be rewarded with immortality for their honesty.

10.2.4 Let Us Sum Up:

“The Over-Soul” is one of the finest expressions of Emerson’s ideology of faith. In this essay, Emerson outlines his belief in God. According to him, God resides with everyone and we can interact and connect with God, without being a member of any religious place or without the help of any religious authority. He strongly believed that God pervades the entire universe. Everything is a microcosm of the whole universe. He, thus, preaches that every man and woman have a Supreme Force, which he calls the Over-Soul. Our consciousness of the Over-Soul in us and others brings us closer to God and motivates us to become better human beings.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this Unit, you are expected to:

- have acquired a comprehensive understanding of the essay, “The Over-Soul”
- have gained knowledge about Emerson and his philosophy
- have grown familiar with the Emerson’s Transcendentalist ideas
- have become acquainted with Emerson’s spiritual ideas as explicated in the essay, “The Over-Soul”

10.4 Glossary

Sod: A patch of soil covered with grass

Mean: Little

Droll: Amusing

Plato (c. 427-347 B.C.): A Greek philosopher

Zeno (335-263 B.C.): A Greek philosopher

Arrian: A Greek historian

Swedenborg, Emanuel (1688-1772): A Swedish philosopher

Socrates (d. 399 B.C.): A Greek philosopher

Plotinus (205-270): A Roman philosopher

Moravian: Eighteenth- century religious sect

Quietist: Seventeenth-century religious sect
Herbert, George (1593-1633): An English metaphysical poet
Pope, Alexander (1688-1744): An English poet and translator
Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804): A German philosopher
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772-1834): A British poet and critic
Locke, John (1632-1704): An English philosopher
Homer (eighth century B.C.): A Greek poet
Chaucer, Geoffrey (d. 1400): An English poet
Spenser, Edmund (1552-99): An English poet
Milton, John (1608-74): An English poet

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson was a great _____.
 - (a) American essayist
 - (b) British poet
 - (c) American playwright
 - (d) British satirist
2. The essay, "The Over-Soul" was first published in _____.
 - (a) The Dial
 - (b) Nature
 - (c) Essays
 - (d) The Transcendental
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson is called the father of _____.
 - (a) Calvinism
 - (b) American Transcendentalism
 - (c) Spiritualism
 - (d) Philosophy
4. A famous treatise by Emerson is _____.

- (a) Self-government
 - (b) Self-Declaration
 - (c) Self-Reliance
 - (d) Self-Sufficiency
5. Which essay is called America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence."
_____.
- (a) The Over-Soul
 - (b) Self-Reliance
 - (c) The American Scholar
 - (d) The Dial
6. "The Over-Soul" is a statement of Emerson's _____ ideology.
- (a) Economic
 - (b) Social
 - (c) Cultural
 - (d) Spiritual
7. According to Emerson, the Over-Soul manifests itself through _____.
- (a) Intuition
 - (b) Revelation
 - (c) Union
 - (d) Cooperation
8. The Over-Soul defies all definitions through _____.
- (a) Action
 - (b) Custom
 - (c) Art
 - (d) Language
9. What are the two physical limitations that restrict human existence.
- (a) Art and beauty
 - (b) Place and time
 - (c) God and society
 - (d) Individual and over-soul
10. The consciousness of the Over-Soul leads to _____.

- (a) Immorality
- (b) Morality
- (c) Immortality
- (d) Mortality

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on Ralph Waldo Emerson.
2. Discuss Emerson's Transcendental philosophy.
3. Comment on Emerson's essay writing style.
4. Explain Emerson's concept of morality.
5. Examine the idea of duality as a repeated theme in Emerson's "The Over-Soul"

10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the major themes discussed in the essay, "The Over-Soul".
2. Explain the main ideas expressed by Emerson in the essay, "The Over-Soul".
3. Elaborate on Emerson's concept of Over-Soul.

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Aldridge, Alfred Owen. *Early American Literature: A Comparatist Approach*. New Delhi: Princeton University, 1982.
2. Matthews, Brander. *An Introduction to the Study of American Literature*. New Delhi: Palala Press, 2016.

Unit – 11: The Crack-Up

Structure

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 F. Scott Fitzgerald

11.2.1 Life, Career and Death

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11.0 Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896 – 1940) was a prominent American writer who wrote short stories, essays and novels in the 20th century. He has penned down about four fully completed novels and about more than 150 short stories in his lifetime. However, despite such a huge literary oeuvre, he is well-known for his internationally acclaimed novel that lasted the test of the time *The Great Gatsby* (1925). *The Great Gatsby* is broadly considered as ‘the Great American Novel’ today.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is known for his depiction of the Jazz Age that has been considered around the period of 1920s in his works, especially the description was found apt in his widely acclaimed novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). An interesting description of this time period can be felt by reading his words, when he beautifully describes the Jazz Age by saying ‘it was an age of miracles, it was an age of arts, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire’. In addition, Fitzgerald has also been considered a member of the 1920s the “Lost generation”. The four fully completed novels written by Fitzgerald are entitled as *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), *The Great Gatsby* (1925), *Tender is the Night* (1934). The

fifth one novel entitled *The Love of the Last Tycoon* that was left unfinished owing to the demise of Fitzgerald of the heart attack. He has also sold rights of his stories and novels to the Hollywood Studios and made a handsome amount out of it.

The most common theme that can be traced in most of Fitzgerald's work is 'the promise and failure of the American Dream'. In addition, other recurring themes such as society and class, romantic idealism and wealth and materialism can also be found in his works.

The book titled *The Crack-Up* (1945) was published posthumously post 1940 by his dear friend Edmund Wilson from new Directions press, which was a compilation of the essays and unpublished letters and notes by F. Scott Fitzgerald. This revealing and intensely autobiographical book brings to the fore the abrupt decline of Fitzgerald from the dazzling success to the empty desolation and his positive recovery from such a drastic change. The essay collection chronicles his mental breakdown, writer's block and his struggle with a huge debt owing to the financial constraints after being widely known as a severe alcoholic while failing to achieve the success that he achieved in his early years. The book also includes many letters that Fitzgerald wrote to his friend Edmund Wilson and several other letters that were addressed to his daughter Scottie.

However, Fitzgerald has published three known essays namely "The Crack-Up", "Pasting it Together" and "Handle with Care" that were first published in the Esquire magazine in the consecutive months three months from February, March and April, 1936. Hence, the chapter discusses Fitzgerald's one essay entitled "The Crack-Up," which is a personal account of his experiences with alcoholism, depression and his wife Zelda's bipolar disorder disease. It should be noted the term bipolar disorder was not yet discovered when Zelda was struggling with this mental illness.

11.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with American literature
- enable you to understand comprehend American prose style of the Eighteenth century
- make you critically appreciate the American prose in general and essays written by Fitzgerald in particular

- enable you to master the deeper understanding of the American literary works, the prominent literary figures and their contribution in the development of varied genres, here, American prose (essays)
- understand and appreciate the contribution of F. Scott Fitzgerald as a versatile American writer by critically reading his celebrated essay *The Crack-Up*, which was later made a part of the essay compilation titled *The Crack-Up* (1945)

11.2 F. Scott Fitzgerald

11.2.1 Life, Career and Death:

Francis Scott key Fitzgerald was born in September 1896 in St. Paul Minnesota. He was born to Edward and Mary. Edward came from Maryland and carried his Old South values along. Mary MaQuillan, who is sometimes called Mollie, his mother belonged to an Irish immigrant family who later acquired the wealth as a wholesale grocer in St. Paul. Fitzgerald has a Catholic Christian family. Edward Fitzgerald changed quite a few jobs such as that of a furniture manufacturer, salesman and in 1908 returned to St. Paul with his family. They were settled down here comfortably and survived on Mary Fitzgerald's inheritance. Fitzgerald was twelve years old when they returned. He attended the St. Paul Academy, where at the age of thirteen his first ever written work was published in print in his school's newspaper. It was a detective story.

Fitzgerald was enrolled in the Newman School between 1911 and 1913. It was a Catholic prep school based in New Jersey. It was in this school that he met Father Sigourney Fay. He motivated him to follow his goals that lead to individual success and accomplishment. Despite being a fellow of the Princeton class of 1917, he did not pursue the opportunity for his literary apprenticeship. He, instead, penned the scripts and lyrics for the famous Princeton Triangle Club musicals and was a regularly writing for two magazines, namely the Princeton Tiger humor magazine and the Nassau Literary magazine. Interestingly, his college mates were many but the known names are John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson. He was unfortunately kept on the academic probation where the chances of him completing the graduation were unlikely. Hence, he joined the army in the year 1917 where he was soon commissioned on the post of a second lieutenant in the infantry. During his time in the army, he felt assured of his early demise, which made him hastily complete his novel titled *The Romantic Egoist*. The novel initially was rejected

by Charles Scribner's Sons, however, it was appreciated for the original concept. Thus, Fitzgerald was requested to resubmit the manuscript after the revision or needed editing.

He was assigned a duty in the Camp Sheridan in Alabama in June 1918. It was here that he met and fell in love with his future wife Zelda Sayre. She was the youngest daughter of the Supreme Court Judge of Alabama. Zelda was barely eighteen years old when they fell in love. This love affair gave an added hope to Fitzgerald and he began to hope that now he will be able to make his name as a novelist. However, his hopes were turned out when his novel was rejected for the second time from Scribners. Though, his posting was cancelled when he was about to be overseas as the war ended and he was discharged from his duties in 1919. He immediately moved to New York City to pursue prosperity and marry the love of his life Zelda. When Fitzgerald took a lot of time to attain the fortune as expected by himself and his beloved Zelda, after a while, reluctant to wait any longer, Zelda broke the engagement as she was not interested in surviving on the minimum salary.

Fitzgerald returned to St. Paul in 1919 to rewrite 'This Side of Paradise' that describes the professional aspirations and love frustrations of the main character Amory Blaine. Fortunately, it was selected by the Scribners this time and described as 'a quest novel' by Fitzgerald himself. He soon began his career as a story writer for different magazines with an aim to earn more money by writing popular fiction. His a few stories include "The Offshore Pirate" and "Bernice Bobs Her hair", "May Day" and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" which were published in magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post and The Smart Set. He received an immediate success with his novel This Side of Paradise (1920) that led to his instantaneous wedding with Zelda Sayre. Fitzgerald aimed at creating a solid literary reputation as a writer, however, he could not successfully do so as it collided with his popular image as a playboy that affected the proper and unbiased assessment of his literary work.

Soon followed Fitzgerald's many literary works including his second novel entitled The Beautiful and Damned. Soon their first child was born who was named Francis Scott Fitzgerald. He continued writing short stories to manage his finances and also tried his hand at writing plays. During this time, his alcohol intake increased and he became infamous as an alcoholic. Zelda was also a drunkard but not as much as Fitzgerald was. His reputation as an alcoholic created his image as an irresponsible writer.

The publication of *The Great Gatsby* (1925) brought him in the limelight. The novel helped him in attaining fame as a serious writer since he had made use of intricate structure and controlled point of view as a narration technique. In addition, this novel has become a chief representative of the Jazz Age in the America. However, despite getting good critical acclaim, this great novel did bring initial disappointment to Fitzgerald as it was not received well by the readers after the publication. It was still accepted to be played on the stage and movie though and it took care of his financial constraints.

Zelda was, in the meantime, struggling with the mental illness as Fitzgerald was managing through their lavish lifestyle and debt by earning through writing. She was getting worst with every passing day. She soon suffered her first severe mental breakdown and they both suffered the estrangement in their family life. These were unsettled times for Fitzgerald as he was not able to juggle between his problematic family life with a wife who is a mental patient, his own struggle with extreme distress and almost total abundance of his work. He was still managing to earn enough money, however, owing to his incapability to manage his finances well, he was spending it all faster than he was earning it.

The troublesome period of two years between 1936 and 1937 is generally considered as “the crack-up” period of his life, taken from the title of a famous essay that he wrote in the year 1936. He was sick, high on alcohol, under a huge financial debt while not being able to write commercial stories, Fitzgerald actually lived in hotels near North Carolina, and Zelda was admitted in the nearby hospital in 1936. On the other hand, Fitzgerald also failed in securing a home for his daughter Scottie. She was sent off to the boarding school at the age of thirteen and later Obedts turned out to be her surrogate family in the absence of her both the parents. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald tried to play a concerned father via distant mail and attempted to oversee her educational expenses and social beliefs from a far.

After the recurring failures in his personal and professional lives, Fitzgerald died believing himself a huge failure. It has been believed that the heavy alcoholism might have played a key role in his early death. He suffered a heart attack in Hollywood, California that eventually took his life in December, 1940 at the age of only 44 years. He could not complete his fifth novel *The Last Tycoon*.

Check your Progress

1. When was Fitzgerald born?

2. Mention a novel written by him.

11.2.2 *The Crack-Up:*

The Crack-Up is a collection of essays that is taken from his three autobiographical essays namely “The Crack-Up”, “Pasting it Together”, and “Handle with Care” that were published in the *Esquire* magazine in the consecutive months of February, march and April of 1936. The current chapter is a detailed analysis of his one essay titled “The Crack-Up” that was an autobiographical account and experience with depression, alcoholism, debt, his mental struggle and his wife Zelda’s bipolar disorder.

The essay is a detailed account and examination of the mental breakdown that Fitzgerald had encountered and the reasons that caused it and took it to the severe level. He had had a life filled with success and failures as a recurring phenomenon, he abruptly reconsiders the reasons of the success that he has been desiring and his future aspirations of what he exactly needs in this essay. The essay is a way of self-introspection for the author to re-analyse past, present and future while examining his ways of leading life. Fitzgerald himself had a severe mental break down. However, for him, it was a process of losing all the preconceived notions, his old beliefs with a stark realization that all the things he had been practicing, people in around him including many other aspects of life that he once adored were actually espoused from others at various instances at different points in life. The essay begins on a striking and introspective note,

Of course all life is a process of breaking down, but the blows that do the dramatic side of the work-the big sudden blows that come, or seem to come from outside-the ones you remember and blame things on and, in moments of weakness, tell your friends about, don’t show their effect all at once. There is another sort of blow that comes from within – that you don’t feel until it’s too late to do anything about it, until you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again. The first sort of breakage seems to happen quick-the second kind happens almost without your knowing it but it realized suddenly indeed.

It was a feeling as if he had found his long-lost self. This new self with a new and refreshing perspective made him realize that these mundane things that were once of a vital importance to him, actually hold no true significance any more. They are not worth chasing or repenting over. The entire episode was cathartic and revealing for him. He had finally begun to realize the things that are the most important for a living being, which is his own self. Nothing else in the world matters. Eventually he attained the true revelation that came as an absolute conclusiveness that he actually no longer loves anything or anyone as he once used to, hence, he was under no obligation to even pretend that he did. This severe process of a mental breakdown brought him to a point that he began to see his transformation into a cold-hearted man who will not anything for anyone anymore, unless for himself. This was a huge internal change that he went through all by himself when his wife was also battling with the bipolar disorder (back then the name of the mental illness was not yet coined, hence, these sicknesses are simply called the mental break down or mental illness). Back then both, Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda went through such turbulent emotional upheaval all by themselves, when they themselves were not aware of what was happening to their internal world.

As the essay continues, Fitzgerald himself writes that, he could manage to identify the key cause of his mental illness, which was a lack of the original and true self. The hidden or covered self that his illness brought to the fore had no apparent notions of success. Instead, he found himself bound to the common societal expectations of ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘what’ into elaboration such as “how to do, what to say?” for as long as he remembered. His own self was missing. What he actually desired was never discussed. In addition, the name, fame and money that he strove to achieve his whole life did neither bring him any good nor profit and yet he was assiduously struggling to achieve it for years.

Fitzgerald also realized that he had been enduring these pains and hardships while entangling himself in the web of the societal norms because he aimed at achieving “another man(s) . . . sense of the ‘good life’”. This is such a deep and layered statement. Isn’t it true that every one of us has been in this race of life running, not to accomplish our own happiness, but the happiness that others have already defined for us and we are destined to chase it? How pathetic does that sound? The human shallowness, superficiality and hollowness in his life goals were certainly impossible for him to attain in this life time as a common man. He had earned and gathered a lot of money but he did not attain the happiness. Because he thought that only money

will bring him the happiness and fulfill all that he lacked or missed in his life but unfortunately, he turned out to be absolutely wrong. His such incorrect notions actually came to the sore during his most troublesome period of life. He realized that what actually weighed him down was that burden of other's perception of happiness that has nothing to do with his self or soul. It was this burden that drained out all the energy out of him and led him toward a severe mental breakdown. He reached to a point where it was difficult to understand that it was him who is solely responsible for this broken self and mental breakdown. However, amid such darkness the only hopeful thing that he could still hold onto was his own hard-working self, a persona that could actually take the credit for keeping him going, yet it never was developed in a non-self-profiting way.

Eventually after a longer period of self-isolation, Fitzgerald was determined to leave behind such loathsome old values that were pulling him behind and not letting him move ahead. He firmly decided to detached himself from all of them. He mindfully began to engineer a "clean break" and abandoned all the old efforts that never benefited him in any ways. He, in that very moment, decided to move ahead in the life as a hard working man but this time mindfully considering what will bring him an added advantage and what will unnecessarily weigh him down. However, on one hand he forsook the superficial and shallow requisites but on the other hand he ended up adopting an absolutely selfish lifestyle, which will eventually cause him more distress. Nevertheless, it can be said that Fitzgerald's introspection unveiled a rare process that is found in people. A situation when they are able to detach themselves from the insignificant and easily attainable tasks by just redefining their values.

In addition, he compared himself. His broken self to a cracked plate by saying that the "cracked plate should be retained in the pantry . . . It can never again be warmed on the stove nor shuffled with the other plates in the dishpan." How deeply Fitzgerald put that as the cracked plate needs to be isolated for its own good since it is of no use now, similarly a broken person should also be isolated and given the time and support to heal. However, the fact should also be considered that as the plate can never be used again, so will be the persona of the broke person since it loses its values in the process. He directly mentions that he himself represents a cracked plate and is going through the change in his nature as a damaged person. Such influential and moving analogy actually demonstrates Fitzgerald's newly discovered isolation and the internal process of a drastic change exactly like a plate. In addition, he gave the essay a dramatic

undertone that can be traced in this line taken from the essay. He states this while requesting an assistance from a doctor that “I might have asked some of it from her, neatly wrapped and ready for home cooking and digestion, but I could never have got it – not if I’d waited around for a thousand hours with the tin cup of self-pity.”

Thus, the essay *The Crack-Up* is a detailed description of the nearly candid introspection by the author himself, here, Fitzgerald by citing various personal instances from a few hard years of his short life, such as of mental breakdown, in addition to discussing the pain of seeing his wife in the same suffering of a bipolar disorder and the possibility that he might have got some symptoms from her. In addition, the essay gives a painful personal touch to the experiences that Fitzgerald had in his life that were to a great extent mentioned candidly. The essay, hence, has a personal touch. It could be the reason why it has widely been considered an autobiographical essay. *The Crack-Up* not only represents the vulnerable self of Fitzgerald but it also showcases his indecisive persona that ultimately manages to find comfort by putting all that he had been feeling in himself and into his writing. That could be the reason they say that writing could be healing, too.

Check your Progress:

1. Who is the narrator in the essay?

11.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s works received more attention after his death. The boost in his popularity posthumously was unfortunate since he dies considering himself a failure but this newly received fame continues even today across the world. The essay *The Crack Up* is a deeply introspective essay that is taken from the book *The Crack Up* that is a compilation of the three autobiographical essays by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The three essays were first published consecutively in the *Esquire* magazine from February to April of 1936. The book *The Crack Up* was a collection Fitzgerald’s essays that were compiled posthumously by his friend Edmund Wilson in the year 1945. It should be noted that this book has made a major contribution in raising Fitzgerald’s popularity abated. These essays in the book represents the most vulnerable personal of Fitzgerald at the personal and professional fronts.

The Crack Up essay is considered as almost an unfiltered account of Fitzgerald’s contemplative inner examination. He mindfully mentions his aspirations, the chosen career path,

and all of the experiences – good and bad through his career at length in the essay. The essay looks at the notion of cracking up as something related to one's deeper inner world. In addition, he goes on to analyse his ways of leading the life and how did he end up ruining it by not being able to juggle well between the struggle, success and some failures. His outer world had also deeply affected his insides. He was absolutely shaken by the professional failures that he had to endure and the feeling of nothingness and void that he had been feeling all along has been described excellently by citing apt examples. As he says that “in a real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day”.

Fitzgerald writes that the ‘cracking’ inside may begin right at the time when apparently everything seem to be going well, in his words “When things are going well”. One may not even realize that stirring change until very late when everything around may begin to fall apart. The metaphorical representation of “cracking” is deep and layered. However, Fitzgerald has managed to explain these feelings and emotions of a broken and shaken person subtly by taking multiple instances from his own life. This was the time when he was made aware of his wife Zelda's lasting mental illness, which can be termed as a bipolar disorder today, but psychology had not made such progress back then. Zelda was his wife and the love of his life. It was a hard truth from him to come to accept and digest. However, there is no direct reference found in the essay of Zelda's mental illness. In addition, he was also encountering writer's block at this time, hence, he was at the low in his professional career. Owing to the writer's block, he was not able to write, thus, he was in financial constraints. On the other hand, his daughter was also long put in the boarding school. So, he had no one around who he could call the family. Such extremely distressed circumstances also began to affect his own mental health. He began to question his values, aspirations and societal expectations that he had long been chasing aimlessly. Everything began to fall apart for him. His inner world was shaken and the outside world had no one he could rely upon. He was a drunkard but during these times his alcoholic habits were reaching the sky. This was also affecting his physical health.

In addition, an interesting aspect should also require consideration that the critical reaction received on these essays at that time was poor, to put it politely. It was not the time when issues such as mental illness or psychological disorder were discussed in public. Fitzgerald's editor at the Scribner's Publication house was not much in the favour of bringing out the essays in a compiled form. Therefore, the essays were compiled by Edmund and published

from New Direction's press posthumously as a book titled *The Crack Up*. Further, the critical review received from the renowned literary figures of that time like Earnest Hemingway and John Dos Passos were not positive. They, instead, felt that it was a weakness on the part of Fitzgerald that is visible in his writing, which shouldn't have been written since the essays reflect the fact that not everything in Fitzgerald's life was all puppies and sunshine.

It is a painful truth to accept that even during such a short life span of only 44 years, such a talented writer like Fitzgerald left the world may be too early. His *The Crack Up* book explains the excellent oeuvre of his literary excellence.

Check your Progress:

1. What are the names of the essays that were published with The Crack Up essays?

2. What was the name of the magazine where these essays were first published?

11.2.4 Themes:

Fitzgerald's style of writing was generally clear, colourful, lyrical and witty that the readers could relate well. He mostly discussed love and success in his works. Critics were generally not very happy with his style of writing, precisely around the theme of love and success. To them he responded that "It was my material, and it was all I had to deal with." The central theme that can be found as a recurring one in most of his works is related to aspiration and the idealism, something which he considered as a defining characteristic to an American character. Loss is another key theme that can easily be traced in his works. In addition, Fitzgerald is often associated with the Jazz Age. He writes about the age in his "Echoes of the Jazz Age" as "it was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire".

The troublesome period of two years between 1936 and 1937 is generally considered as "the crack-up" period of his life, taken from the title of a famous essay that he wrote in the year 1936. He was sick, high on alcohol, under a huge financial debt while not being able to write commercial stories, Fitzgerald actually lived in hotels near North Carolina, and Zelda was admitted in the nearby hospital in 1936. On the other hand, Fitzgerald also failed in securing a home, proper education and family life for his daughter Scottie. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald attempted to become a concerned father via mail and endeavored to manage her educational

expenditures from a far. Hence, his works represented his own turbulent life and real struggles that he had been struggling with even in his own broken and unstable family.

He has earned international acclaim for his depiction of the Jazz Age (the 1920s in the USA), precisely in his most celebrated novel *The Great Gatsby*. His this novel and other works mainly convey the sense of hope that America promised to the youth and the following disappointment that was felt by the youth upon not getting the wishes fulfilled by the America. This is the main theme that can often be traced in his most works, the promise and failure of the American Dream. Other more common themes found in his works include materialism and wealth, society and class, as well as romantic idealism. Such was the case with his own life. He lived a life any American youth might wish to live that was filled with aspirations, dreams, wealth, high standards of life, alcohol, complex personal life, unsettled family life, earning and losing money.

Check your Progress:

1. What are the common themes in Fitzgerald's writings?

11.2.5 Conclusion:

Fitzgerald has excellently represented his life instances through thick and thin, the zigzagged road towards up – the success and down – failure. Unfortunately, he lived only for 44 years on this planet but it was made worth living with the abundance of his literary works about 4 novels, more than one hundred and fifty short stories, essays and even plays. His literary oeuvre was a mixer of popular writing, personal experiences, especially his autobiographical writings in his essays and small number of novels, including *The Great Gatsby* that has been considered a Great American Novel till the date. He left less yet considerably enough literary works that could not only relate to the reading audience but also lasted the test of time in his short life span. Despite dying thinking himself a failure, he gained the popularity posthumously that is an unfortunate instance we can notice about F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Crack Up essays have played a key role in establishing his literary image over the period. The essays are considered key non-fiction writings that discussed the burning issues of mental breakdown, extreme distress, mood swings, and many other types of troubles with the mental state of a person since back then the psychological terms were not yet coined. Hence, his writings were not considered of much of the importance at the time of initial publication but as psychological sciences advanced, it was

understood that he was one of the important literary figure who began the trend to discuss one's vulnerable mental state with the common public put there, hence, initiated a trait to consider mental illness as something normal and part of the human life. The Crack Up essay can be considered a significant example of his candid style of writing that was not actually much appreciated by the then literary figures but is considered a significant write-up even today.

Check your Progress:

1. When did Fitzgerald die?

11.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- be familiar with the American literature
- understand and comprehend American essays of the nineteenth century
- critically appreciate the American fiction and non-fiction in general and essays written by Fitzgerald in particular
- master the deeper understanding of the American literary works, the prominent literary figures and their contribution in the development of varied genres, here, American prose (essays)
- understand and appreciate the contribution of Fitzgerald as a versatile writer of the American literature by critically reading his celebrated essays included in *The Crack-Up*

11.4 Glossary

The Crack-Up	: The title of the book that also has an essay of the similar title, here, the title of the essay that was first published in the Esquire magazine
Autobiographical	: Narrative based on the real-life instances of the author, written by the author himself
Biographical	: An account written on person's life by another person

Bipolar disorder	: A disorder associated with episodes of mood swings ranging from depressive lows to manic highs
Mental illness	: It is also called mental health disorders, refers to wide range of mental health conditions
Alcoholism	: It is an inability to control drinking habits due to both the physical and emotional dependence on alcohol
Metaphorical	: Characteristic of or relating to metaphor, figurative
Prominent	: Leading, eminent
Breakage	: The act of breaking

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Where was Fitzgerald born?
2. What background did his mother come from?
3. What is the name of Fitzgerald's famous novel?
4. When did he publish his first ever written work?
5. What was the genre of that work?
6. When *The Crack Up* essay did first published?
7. Where it was first published?
8. When did the book *The Crack Up* published?
9. Who published that compilation?
10. What was the name of Fitzgerald's wife?

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss *The Crack Up* essay as an autobiographical essay.
2. 'Fitzgerald can be considered a representative figure of his era.' Elaborate the answer with the help of the essay.
3. Write a detailed note on how the essay represents the political and social condition of that era.
4. Write a brief description of his personal and professional life.
5. How has Fitzgerald contributed in normalizing the mental illness amid the commoners in the era when it was not so normal? Discuss the answer with suitable examples from the text.

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Draw a character sketch of F. Scott Fitzgerald with the help of the details provided in the chapter.
2. Discuss at length the notion of ‘self-revelation’ presented in the essay The Crack-Up essay.
3. Was Fitzgerald’s writing inspired from his life experiences? How? Write an answer by citing examples from the essay.

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. “The Crack-up,” “Pasting It Together,” and “Handle with Care.” In *My Lost City: personal essays, 1920-1940*. Ed. James L. W. West III. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
2. Fitzgerald, F. Scott (1945). *The Crack-Up* (1st ed.). New Directions.
3. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. “The Crack Up”. Retrieved from
4. Grenberg, Bruce L. “Fitzgerald’s ‘Crack-up’ Essays Revisited: Fictions of the Self, Mirrors for a Nation.” In *F. Scott Fitzgerald: new perspectives*. 251-215.

Unit - 12: Notes of a Native Son by James Baldwin

I learned in New Jersey that to be a Negro meant, precisely, that one was never looked at but was simply at the mercy of the reflexes the color of one's skin caused in other people.

– James Baldwin

Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

12.2 Notes of a Native Son

12.2.1 About the Essayist: James Baldwin

12.2.2 Notes of a Native Son: as a book

12.2.3 Notes of a Native Son: As an Essay

12.2.4 Major themes

12.3 Learning Outcomes

12.4 Glossary

12.5 Sample Questions

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

12.0 Introduction

Notes of a Native Son is a collection of ten essays by the American essayist James Arthur Baldwin (1924-1987), published in 1953 and won the National Book Award for Essays in 1955. These essays describe the experiences and observations of the blacks in general and James Baldwin and his family in particular as being black with poverty, stereotypes, backwardness, and struggle for liberty and equality in both American and European racist societies. The eponymous essay narrates the story of the father and son relationship. The essay begins with the death of his father on 29th July 1943. But the funeral takes place after three-four days due to the outbreak of the deadliest riots in Harlem. And when the funeral was taken place, it was the nineteenth birthday of James on 2nd August. The essay is about loss, hope, sadness, happiness, oppression, enslavement, struggle, psychology, behaviors, and struggle.

12.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to introduce one of the important essayists of American literature, James Baldwin. In this essay, students will be informed about the major themes of the life, experiences, and struggle of the African American community and also the people of color in American Society. James Baldwin also mentioned in this essay how the Japanese were racially stereotyped as "yellow-bellied Japs" (96). The most important aspect of this essay is to avoid violence, hate, and bitterness in life while facing any problem or struggling for justice.

12.2 Notes of a Native Son

12.2.1 About the Essayist: James Baldwin

James Baldwin was a novelist, activist, essayist, poet, and dramatist. He was born on 2 August 1924 out of wedlock to Emma Jones in the Harlem Hospital, New York City. He never knew who his biological father which might have certainly affected his relationship with his father which is reflected in this essay. He died of stomach cancer in Paris on 1 December 1987. He has written poems, novels, essays, and plays. *Go tell It on the Mountain* is his first novel published in 1953 which became one of the top 100 selling novels in the USA. His other novels include *Giovanni's Room* (1956), *Another Country* (1962), *Tell Me How Long Train's Been Gone* (1968), and *Just Above My Head* (1979). *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) is a collection of essays, wherein there is an eponymous essay that is discussed in this unit. Harold Bloom in his *Bloom's Modern Critical Views JAMES BALDWIN* (2007) writes, "Whatever the ultimate canonical judgment upon James Baldwin's fiction may prove to be, his nonfictional work has permanent status in American literature" (1). He wanted to write about society, but he thought that writing his own experience would be much better, to begin with. Thus we find that most of his writing has a personal touch, especially his *Notes of a Native Son*. He writes,

that the question of color, especially in this country, operates to hide the graver question of the self. That is precisely why what we like to call "the Negro problem" is so tenacious in American life and so dangerous. But my own experience proves to me that the connection between American whites and blacks is far deeper and more passionate than

any of us like to think... The questions that one asks oneself begin, at last, to illuminate the world, and become one's key to the experience of others. One can only face in others what one can face in oneself. On this confrontation depends the measure of our wisdom and compassion. This energy is all that one finds in the rubble of vanished civilizations, and the only hope for ours. (qtd. in Henry Louis Gates, Jr 2007:14).

"James Baldwin is one of the most talented American essayists since Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882). His first three volumes—*Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), and *The Fire Next Time* (1963)—won popularity hardly equaled by any other essayist in modern times...Like his nineteenth-century counterpart, his most valuable contributions are in the realms of pragmatism and prophecy rather than logic and rationality. Like Emerson, too, his major thrust is not to impart abstract or concrete knowledge, but to provoke humane thought and announce eternal truths intended to elevate the consciousness of the reader from animal passion to spiritual or philosophical contemplation". (Ford 23)

He started disliking Christianity because of the Christian expectations in the guise of Uncle Tom. "...at the early age of seventeen he had rejected the Christian church (the storefront variety) and its basic practices, after having been a practicing preacher for more than three years, he admits that its early influences had, in all probability, saved him from the corrupting power of the worst elements of his environment and a sordid life worse than death" (Ford 37). James Baldwin was also highly influenced by the Nation of Islam movement regarding the teaching of Islam and black nationalism. "Later he discovered in the Black Muslim religion a superiority over Christianity as practiced by the so-called Christian churches. He found that Elijah Muhammad, national leader of the Muslims" 'had been able to do what generations of welfare workers and committees and resolutions and reports and housing projects and playgrounds had failed to do: to heal and redeem drunkards and junkies, to convert people who have come out of prison and make men chaste and women virtuous, and to invest both the male and the female with a pride and a serenity that hang about them like an unfailing light'. In all these things, according to Baldwin, the Christian church has been a spectacular failure." (Ford 38). But somehow he was misled by certain misunderstandings that were spread in the US about the Muslims or Islam that it discourages the "intermarriages" (38). Nick Aron Ford notes that to Baldwin Muslim and "their religion forbids the concept of integration among whites and blacks;

therefore, he could not accept their doctrine as the best guide to the promotion of acceptable human relations". (38).

Baldwin wanted to give the message that hate and violence are not the solutions to the problem. He wanted an inclusive society in America irrespective of color and beliefs. Therefore, we often find that Baldwin did not blindly criticize all whites for racism.

12.2.2 Notes of a Native Son: as a book

This is a collection of essays. One of the most influential and widely read books in American literature. The book discusses the core racial issues that existed in both American and European society. The essays narrate the incidents mostly derived from the life incidents of James Baldwin and his family. Thus, it is also considered autobiographical nonfiction. The book is written around the rise of the civil rights movement in America – where African Americans are denied basic civil rights. Many African Americans, like James Baldwin, traveled to Europe where they find that Europeans are better than Americans because there are no clearcut segregation on the racial ground. There are ten essays in the book. It is divided into three sections. The first part includes "Everybody's Protest Novel", "Many Thousands Gone", and "Carmen Jones: The Dark is Light enough". The second part included three essays, "The Harlem Ghetto", "Journey to Atlanta", and "Notes of a Native Son". The last part included four essays; "Encounter on a Seine: Black Meets brown", "A Question of Identity", "Equal in Paris", and "Stranger in the Village". This unit focuses on an eponymous essay from this book.

12.2.3 Notes of a Native Son: As an Essay

"Negroes are Americans and their destiny is the country's destiny. They have no other experience besides their experience on this continent and it is an experience that cannot be rejected, which yet remains to be embraced. If, as I believe, no American Negro exists who does not have his private Bigger Thomas living in the skull, then what most significantly fails to be illuminated here is the paradoxical adjustment which is perpetually made, the Negro being compelled to accept the fact that this dark and dangerous and unloved stranger is part of himself forever. Only this recognition sets him in any wise free and it is this, this necessary ability to contain and even, in the most honorable sense of the word, to exploit the 'nigger', which lends to Negro life its high element of the ironic and which causes

the most well-meaning of their American critics to make such exhilarating errors when attempting to understand them”.

— James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

This essay is about his father who died coincidentally on the birth of his third daughter and his funeral took place on the nineteenth birth anniversary of James Baldwin. Moreover, before his funeral in Orleans and Harlem racial riots erupted. Baldwin writes, “As we drove him to the graveyard, the spoils of injustice, anarchy, discontent, and hatred were all around us. It seemed to me that God himself had devised, to mark my father’s end, the most sustained and brutally dissonant of codas. And it seemed to me, too, that the violence which rose all about us as my father left the world had been devised as a corrective for the pride of his eldest son. I had declined to believe in that apocalypse that had been central to my father’s vision; very well, life seemed to be saying, here is something that will certainly pass for an apocalypse until the real thing comes along. I had inclined to be contemptuous of my father for the conditions of his life, for the conditions of our lives. When his life had ended I began to wonder about that life and also, in a new way, to be apprehensive about my own” (84).

The contrasting realities at the beginning of this essay symbolize the realities of the black being in a happy and sad place and the status of their life as black in America. On one hand, there was the death of his father and on the other hand, there was also the birth of the last child of his father. The end of hope and the beginning of new hope. Closeness and departure, happiness and sorrow. The essay also narrates the complicated relation of father and son – not as a Freudian Oedipus complex but as a natural American life where relatives are meeting with their loved ones after a long pause due to their engagements in other activities. But as a father who is harsh and angry towards his family which is poverty ridden. Similar James hardly remembers when he has spoken to his father last time or had a good conversation with him. He was already terrified by his fatherly figure because his father was short-tempered. He shared many incidents of his life as a son of the first generation of liberated slaves in America. The essay is loaded with both introspective and retrospective and internal and external criticism of family and society.

One of the important features of his essay is the honesty and lucidity of the father-son relationship. How both were clear with their aspirations and interests. Baldwin did not like his father and expressed the same in this essay. For him, this hatred would certainly help him not build a close relationship with him and also not get to be too much mourned on his departure.

For James, his father was not a “revolutionary nor he was to be praised for all his ignorance, harshness” but “he gave him a suggestion that not to trust the white”. This is because of the dark reality that generations were facing in the racial society. He never trusted Baldwin's white teacher who helped his family in difficult times too. He warned Baldwin, "he became more explicit and warned me that my white friends in high school were not my friends and that I would see, when I was older, how white people would do anything to keep a Negro down. Some of them could be nice, he admitted, but none of them were to be trusted and most of them were not even nice. The best thing was to have as little to do with them as possible.” (89). James notes that his father claimed to be very “proud of his blackness but it had also been the cause of much humiliation and it had fixed bleak boundaries to his life”. His father tried to show that he lived with his kids and family but he was not able to do so because of the way he was treated in society – which certainly must have affected his behavior as angry and arrogant. James observed, "He was not a young man when we were growing up and he had already suffered many kinds of ruin; in his outrageously demanding and protective way he loved his children, who were black like him and menaced, like him; and all these things sometimes showed in his face when he tried, never to my knowledge with any success, to establish contact with any of us” (85-86).

James’ aunt was also traveling with him to visit his father in the hospital. While traveling she has been cursing and criticizing James for not paying attention and being serious on the eve of his father’s last breath. Throughout the journey, he was smoking and hardly paying any attention to where he is going, what would be the situation of his father, etc. On the other hand, his aunt was weeping and worried for his brother, and the moment she reached the hospital she started crying more loudly. Baldwin further said that this reaction of his aunt did not mean that she loved his father. He knew that his father's relatives were often quarreling with him including his aunt. But later he realized that those quarrels must be the thing that kept them bound very close and stood with each other during the difficult times. He left after visiting his father and the next morning doctor declared his father dead.

Baldwin did not like his father because of his furious anger and bitterness – which later Baldwin realized that it is because of the chronic reason of racism that grew and nurtured his father’s personality in such a way. Moreover, Baldwin was also afraid of inheriting this tendency and behavior which was certainly paranoid and killed his father both internally and physically. The racist treatment of black can also be seen in the fear of being exploited and discriminated

against even when some white tried to help the black as is reflected in the white teacher's approach and concern to help Baldwin in the theater activities. His father's frightening behavior never let him become close to his friend circle or in the family although he tries his best to be an impressive gentleman. His father was born in and has witnessed slavery in New Orleans "one of the wicked cities".

James like his father and all other African Americans face racial discrimination throughout his life. He writes, "I knew about Jim Crow but I had never experienced it... It was the same story all over New Jersey, in bars, bowling alleys, diners, and places to live. I was always being forced to leave, silently, or with mutual imprecations. I very shortly became notorious and children giggled behind me when I passed and their elders whispered or shouted—they believed that I was mad"(90). He has been facing humiliation throughout his life being black everywhere workplace, transport, restaurant, etc. He describes one of the melodramatic incidents of his life at the hotel, "I do not know how long I waited and I rather wonder, until today, what I could have looked like. Whatever I looked like, I frightened the waitress who shortly appeared, and the moment she appeared all of my fury flowed towards her. I hated her for her white face, and her great, astounded, frightened eyes. I felt that if she found a black man so frightening I would make her fright worthwhile. She did not ask me what I wanted, but repeated, as though she had learned it somewhere, 'We don't serve Negroes here.'" "She did not say it with the blunt, derisive hostility to which I had grown so accustomed, but, rather, with a note of apology in her voice, and fear. This made me colder and more murderous than ever. I felt I had to do something with my hands. I wanted her to come close enough for me to get her neck between my hands. So I pretended not to have understood her, hoping to draw her closer. And she did step a very short step closer, with her pencil poised incongruously over her pad, and repeated the formula: '... don't serve Negroes here'" (91-92).

When Baldwin was living in New Jersey, he went to a restaurant that informally stated that "... don't serve Negroes here" (93), and this reality is expressed through the serving people in the restaurant. When he visited a restaurant with his white friend in New Jersey after watching the movie *This Land Is Mine*, he found the same expression on the faces of the servants in the restaurant. The waitress informed his friend that they don't serve the Nigro. They went to another restaurant but he received the same impression and treatment. He got angry and threw a mug in the direction of a white waitress who said that "... don't serve Negroes here" (92).

This sudden anger and violent behavior of Baldwin was natural as he was going through racial discrimination which traumatized his psyche despite his ability to pay for the services to which he was to avail. But his black color was the thing that created the difference and constantly haunted his life that he was not accepted in this society. The blacks were struggling in the American racist society to get acknowledged that they are also human beings and this struggle often generated unconscious anger and violence against such inhuman treatment. This could also be one of the reasons why his father has also grown up or nurtured such a personality of bitterness – and that bitterness was in such a bold way that it often inflicted on his own family. Baldwin's this emotional fury and violent act symbolize the reality of the dual life of being black in a racist society, “peaceful” and “violent”. He felt murderous that either he will kill her or crush all these white faces or be killed by them. Baldwin felt sorry for his white friend because of his sudden reaction of throwing a mug and creating the mess at the restaurant "Dine America" but this was another subconscious state of mind when Baldwin wrote this essay about the Blacks. It was his last night in New Jersey before he left for his sibling's birthday and father's funeral. His white friend misguided the police and helped him to escape their clutches after the violent incident and shouted from the back "run."

The names of both the movie "about the German occupation of France, starring Maureen O'Hara and Charles Laughton and called *This Land Is Mine*" and the "American Diner" (91) were ironic because both reflect his state of mind and existence in the society which disown him and somewhere in the corner of mind he still tried to reclaim the land of his own.

He reached Harlem. He was police everywhere. Harlem is “inflicted by waiting” which was loaded with dual significance: waiting for more violence, riots, catastrophe, or waiting for the end of slavery, the beginning of freedom, equality, and treating humans as humans.

Although the death took place four days later the funeral did not take place because of the ongoing racial riots. Baldwin recalls the memories of his father – a conversation that he had with him in the Church. His father wanted him to become clergy in Church and serve God, which Baldwin did not like. His father said that he and his family shall serve the Lord. But Baldwin did not like this profession and his ambitions.

He also recalls some other memories including his aunt who used to fight with his father and now she is the only person who is weeping at the corpus. Some of his father's friends sang a song that he liked. The preacher makes a sermon and asks people to forgive the departed soul.

Baldwin narrates another story of his nineteenth birthday – after his father's funeral, he joins a birthday party. His friends also joined and help him in finding suitable cloth for his birthday i.e., a black shirt. His confusion to find suitable cloth signifies his dilemma for what to do after his father's death, and his and his newborn siblings' birth date. And he chooses to join those happy events after attending the funeral to flow with the ebbs and flows of human life.

While Baldwin went to a birthday party Downtown, Harlem – he found that white and black army personnel were busy fighting. The reason for their fight was the honor of the black women who were found with the white policemen. The rumor spread that the black army men were shot in the back while protecting the black women's honor. This led to the riots and looting in Harlem. No one knows what was the reality – whether the black woman was exploited by the white policemen or it was just a rumor. Baldwin laments the helpless situation of the black which led them to riots and also an obvious fear of retaliation and destruction of ghettos since the white – oppressors are strategic and blacks are emotional. Baldwin suggests that riots are not the solution to the problem rather these such incidents will bring more catastrophe to the long future of the black lives in America.

In the concluding section of this essay, Baldwin tried to give the message that hatred and violence are not the solutions to the problem. While anger could be natural as far as perpetrated against the injustice.

12.2.4 Major themes:

One of the major themes of this essay is happiness and sorrow, reality and honesty, Non-violence, violence, hatred, African- American relations, and anger. Hatred alone can not lead to the solution of the problem. "Many people believe that racism is solely a form of hatred and that in racist societies white people exist in a relationship of alienation and hatred to racially oppressed peoples. However, in *Notes of a Native Son* Baldwin contends that intimacy is, in fact, also a part of racism, and that intimacy and hatred often coexist. One of Baldwin's major arguments is that, rather than being a superfluous or compartmentalized group, African Americans are a fundamental part of American history, culture, society, and identity. The United States would not exist as it does today without African Americans, and it does not make sense to think of white America without simultaneously thinking of black people. White and black Americans thus have an inextricable connection that in some ways resembles a kinship relation. Baldwin writes: 'It is not simply the relationship of oppressed to the oppressor, of master to

slave, nor is it motivated merely by hatred; it is also, literally and morally, a blood relationship, perhaps the most profound reality of the American experience, and we cannot begin to unlock it until we accept how very much it contains the force and anguish and terror of love”ⁱ. Another theme that dominates the essay is the sense of belonging and inheritance. “Baldwin explores the idea of inheritance in an immediate, personal context through the essays about family and, in particular, his father. Baldwin's difficult relationship with his father is parallel with his difficult relationship with America, even though these two relationships are also very different. Baldwin's highly charged connections to both his country and his father make it hard for him to access the feelings of rootedness, assurance, and identity that are associated with national belonging and familial heritage. He argues that people's 'origins... contain the key—could we but find it—to all that we later become'. Just as Baldwin must make peace with his father posthumously to move forward with his life, the United States must reckon with its history of genocide, slavery, and racism to build a better future”ⁱⁱ.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand African American writing. You should have gained an understanding of James Baldwin as an essayist apart from being able to critically appreciate the prescribed essay.

12.4 Glossary

The African Americans:

The African Americans refer to the people (those how enslaved) and their descendants mostly from the Sub-Saharan African countries to the United States. They face slavery as well as racial discrimination during the formative years of the US. Although slavery was abolished in 1833 the incidents of racial discrimination are witnessed even today in American Society. The history of African Americans in the US is a history of pain, suffering, discrimination, and struggle for equality and justice. They were denied social, civil, economic, and political rights. Gradually they started appearing in every prominent space of American life including the first African

American president in the form of Barak Hussain Obama in 2008. They have enormously contributed to every social, cultural, literary, and political life of the United States.

The Nation of Islam:

The Nation of Islam was a movement and an organization founded in 1930 to liberate Blacks from the clutches of Slavery and Racism in America. It also promoted unity, humanity, and equality through the line of Islamic teachings among the slaves in America. Since Islam did not believe in race, caste, sect, and other social hierarchies – it attracted a handful of African Americans and many well-known personalities embraced this faith and were influenced by its teaching including James Baldwin. One of the prominent members of this movement were Wallace D. Fard Muhammad, Noble Drew Ali, Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, et al. This movement was also gaining prominence as resistance to racism in the guise of religion particularly, a Christian faith. The Christian values failed to eradicate slavery and racism in its early days in America which led to the huge conversion of slaves to Islam. There were many revolutionary principles to this nation of Islam for American society. “Elijah also encouraged his followers to drop their “slave” names in favor of Muslim names or, in most cases, an ‘X’, signifying that they had lost their identities in slavery and did not know their true names” (Britannica).

The Civil Rights Movement:

American Civil Rights movement was a century-long struggle against the institution of slavery, racial discrimination, segregation, etc. in the Southern United States during the 1950s and 60s.

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What was the father of James Baldwin?

- (a) Emma
- (b) Jones
- (c) Arthur
- (d) He did know

2. Where was James Baldwin born?

- (a) In an old house in Orleans

- (b) In a hospital in New York
 - (c) In a hospital in Harlem
 - (d) He did not know the place
3. James Baldwin died of stomach cancer in Paris on _____.
- (a) 1 December 1987
 - (b) 10 December 1987
 - (c) 1 January 1987
 - (d) 10 January 1987
4. Which of the following is the correct date of birth of James Baldwin?
- (a) August 2, 1926
 - (b) August 2, 1923
 - (c) August 2, 1925
 - (d) August 2, 1924
5. Why was the burial of his father delayed?
- (a) Because James did not reach on time
 - (b) Because his aunt did not reach on time
 - (c) Doctor denied to hand over the body
 - (d) Because there were racial riots erupted in Harlem
6. One of the reasons why James did not like his father was _____.
- (a) His anger
 - (b) His short-temperedness
 - (c) He was harsh to his family
 - (d) All of the above
7. Who took James to the 'Dine America' restaurant?
- (a) His Aunt
 - (b) His girlfriend
 - (c) His white friend
 - (d) He
8. He watched the movie based on the German occupation of France, starring Maureen O'Hara and Charles Laughton. What was the movie's name?
- (a) *This Land Is Mine*

- (b) *No One belongs here*
- (c) *No Man's Land*
- (d) *None of the Above*

9. The book *Notes of a Native Son* is divided into _ sections and _ essays.

- (a) 2 – 10
- (b) 3 – 10
- (c) 3 – 12
- (d) 3 – 8

10. According to Nick Ford which part of Nation of Islam James did not like?

- (a) Inter-racial marriages
- (b) The teaching of Islam
- (c) Racial equality
- (d) All of the above

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the Civil Rights movement in America?
2. What were the issues of African Americans in America?
3. What attracted James Baldwin to the Nation of Islam?

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What were the internal issues James Baldwin faced?
2. Narrate the Character of James Baldwin's father.
3. Narrate the relationship between the father and son and what are the factors that affected their relationship.

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. *Encyclopedia of African-American Literature* by Wilfred D. Samuels, Melvin Burke Donalson, Tracie Guzzio, Loretta Gilchrist 2007
 2. *Go Tell It On The Mountain* by James Baldwin (1953)
 3. *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley (1976)
 4. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley (1965)
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Unit – 13: Origin and Development of the English Essay in China

Structure

13.0 Introduction

13.1 Objectives

13.2 Origin and Development of English Essay in China

13.2.1 Lu Hsun

13.2.2 He-Yin Zhen

13.2.3 Yang Jiang

13.2.4 Qian Zhongshu

13.2.5 Eileen Chang

13.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

13.3 Learning Outcomes

13.4 Glossary

13.5 Sample Questions

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

13.0 Introduction

Currently there are a good number of books written in Chinese and translated into English. Wang Anyi, Yan Lianke, Xu Zechen, and Mo Yan are few of the prominent Chinese whose works have been extensively translated into English. There are also very few Chinese writers or essayists who wrote prose or essay in English language. Lijia Zhang is one such essayist who explained the reasons of writing essays in English in her memoir *Socialism is Great: A Worker's Memoir of the New China* published in 2008 and translated into Italian, Dutch, Portuguese and French. Lu Hsun, He Yin Zhen, Yang Jikang, Qian Zhongshu and Eileen Chang wrote essays in the English language and their contribution in the development of the English essay in China is laudable.

There are other essayists who wrote essays in English. Their contribution is no less than Lu Hsun, Yang Jikang, Qian Zhongshu and Eileen Chang in the development of the English essay in China. Liu Xiaobo was a Chinese essayist, critic, activist and philosopher born in 1955. He is known for his strife and struggle for human rights and to put an end to one party rule in

China through his writing and activities. In 2010 he was awarded Nobel Prize and he was the first Chinese to receive this honor while residing in China. J. G. Ballard is another Chinese writer and was born in Shanghai in 1930. He was an influential novelist, short story writer, satirist and essayist who wrote in English. He was renowned for his *Ballardian* style of writing. His works inspired many movies such as *Crash* and *High-Rise*, and writers such as Terry Dowling, Lee Killough and John Gray.

Check your progress:

1. Who is the writer of the memoir titled *Socialism is Great: A Worker's Memoir of the New China*?

2. Lu Hsun was an essayist of which country?

13.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to make you:

- be familiar with the term, idea and concept of Chinese essay in English.
- be aware about the role of essayists for the development of Chinese essay written in English.
- comprehend different traits of Chinese essays written in English by numerous essayists of China.
- differentiate among personal and feminist approach as adopted by renowned Chinese essayists in English.
- feel at home in drawing a distinction between personal, critical and subjective type of English essay in China.
- be familiar with the notable essayists of China who wrote in English.

13.2 Origin and Development of English Essay in China

13.2.1 Lu Hsun:

Lu Hsun was an influential Chinese novelist, short story writer, social activist and an essayist who is also known as “father of modern Chinese literature.” He was born in 1881 and his pen name was Lu Hsun. His actual name was Chou Shu-jen. He was also a social critic but he is known for inculcation of modern style in short story and personal form of essays. He was also a cultural leader and man of letters of his time. He had a great influence on the embellishment of socio-political and cultural aspects in Chinese society. Modern Chinese literature was influenced by Lu Hsun and his friend after the literary revolution that took place in 1917. Classical form and style was replaced by vernacular writing style and form. Lu Hsun showed his disgust for backwardness in the Chinese society thus: “The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn’t really matter how many of them die of illness. The most important thing, therefore, was to change their spirit, and since at that time, I felt that literature was the best means to this end, I determined to promote a literary movement.”

Lu Hsun attained immediate fame due to his matchless approach and style of vernacular prose and essay writing. He also attempted to launch a literary magazine. Side by side he wrote a series of essays which were published later on with the title *The Selected Essays of Master Lu Xun* and these were mostly written in classical form. During the period between 1919 to 1926, apart from short stories, prose and poetry, he wrote essays on numerous topics which were meant to unearth Chinese psyche and Chinese scene related to all aspects of life. These essays were mainly based on his random thoughts about the aspects he witnessed in daily life. After 1926 he left Peking and joined Communist cause. After 1930 most of his essays were written on miscellaneous aspects which were meant to utilize creative energy to highlight various aspects of human life, culture and psyche.

He was a realistic who had deep knowledge of human psyche, social and cultural norms of his country. Along with realism and imagination, symbolism was also embedded by him as key feature of his style to depict the historical projection of social and cultural life of Chinese people. Along with literary, intellectual and personal essays politics was something that was not kept aside by him. He was an ardent supporter of communism and wanted to replace ways and means of past either at political, social or at cultural levels. For that purpose as much as 26

volumes of essays were written by him in whom he openly attacked the policies of government related to everyday life of individuals. In addition, he raised voice against social evils and illness. “Sanwen”, was the short essay form which Lu Hsun utilized to attain his purpose. He also wrote a book on prose poetry with the name *Wild Grass* (1926). He also wrote essay with the name “On the Demoniac Poets.”

Check your progress:

- Who is known as the “father of modern Chinese literature”?
-
- Who is the author of the literary work *Wild Grass*?
-

13.2.2 He-Yin Zhen:

He-Yin Zhen was yet another influential feminist of China who was born in 1884. She belonged to well-off family and got good education. She married a noted and well known scholar Liu Shiwei in 1903. She founded an association with the name Women's Rights Recovery Association which was meant to liberate women from men oppression. Her writings were greatly under the influence of feminism which was perhaps derived from May Fourth Movement when she was residing with her husband in Japan. The key thing was that she was supported by her husband despite being having a military background. Her essay "On the Question of Women's Labor," which got published in 1907 in *Tianyi* was also meant to explore the exploitation women undergo. The essay contained serious issues related to women labour with special reference to women infanticide, concubinage and prostitution.

At the beginning of the essay, she wrote: "For thousands of years, the world has been dominated by the rule of man. This rule is marked by class distinctions over which men—and men only—exert proprietary rights. To rectify the wrongs, we must first abolish the rule of men and introduce equality among human beings, which means that the world must belong equally to men and women. The goal of equality cannot be achieved except through women's liberation." "On Feminist Antimilitarism" is another important essay by Zhen which was meant to explore women protest against militarism. She used the term antimilitarism to evoke revolutions without military force as these are not only difficult but can also be put down through another military force. She even went on to say that military was the key behind all the atrocities in China as she

wrote, "If we examine the past we see that troops are good for nothing but rape, kidnapping, looting, and murder."

She depicted the sad fate of women who were caught by invaders. Either such women commit suicide or lose their honour, sons, husband and family in the process. To her, all women as a class regardless of their status and background are at risk. Apart from the atrocities women faced at the hands of invaders and military she also focused on other issues such as domestic violence and prostitution which was also forced by men in the society and women are left with no choice. She juxtaposed the role of military invasion and prostitution as "Ever since [Japan] began deploying troops in recent years, the number of prostitutes in the country has been growing by the day."

Another essay of the sequence got published in 1907 with the title "The Feminist Manifesto" by Zhen. In this essay she explored the institution of marriage as a prime source of inequality between men and women. She explored that marriage was considered a source of strength and power on the part of men. The more wives he had, more powerful he was considered. This encouraged men to marry more but it showed inequality as men were allowed to marry many times but woman had to content with single husband. It was depicted as by her in the essay as "Once a woman becomes a man's wife, she remains so for life". This gave rise to the idea that women are dependent on men and she was of the view that women should strive to reverse the situation. She proposed that to begin with, wives should avoid taking the surname of their husband and sons and daughters should be given equal significance. Discrimination should be discouraged at all societal level. She was in favour of closing all brothels and prostitution. Her essays which got published in *Tianyi* with the titles "On the Revenge of Women," "On the Question of Women's Liberation," and "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution," also shed light on the same topic of women suffering and how to liberate them.

Check your progress:

- Who has written the well-known essay "On the Question of Women's Labor"?
-
- What was the purpose of founding Women's Rights Recovery Association?
-

13.2.3 Yang Jiang:

She was born in Beijing in 1911. After graduation in 1932 she got enrolled in Tsinghua University where she met her husband Qian Zhongshu. They got married in 1935. After marriage they went to England for further studies at Oxford University. Later they went to Paris and studied there. They returned to China in 1938. Zhen was a playwright, translator and essayist. Apart from plays and novels she wrote essays. Her first collection of essays, *Six Chapters from My Life 'Downunder*, was published in 1981. *About to Drink Tea* was published in 1987 and *We Three* was published in 2003. *We Three* is about her personal life and marriage. It is about her late husband and her daughters.

It soon became the national best seller. Qian Yuan, her daughter was the one who gave title to this book and also wrote its outline but she died in 1997. Yang did not reveal the death of their daughter Qian Yuan to her husband until he passed away in 1998. After the death of her husband she edited this book. The very opening of the book was catchy and that was the reason that it was the best seller in China. It opened like this: “This is a long dream of ten thousand miles. The scene was so real that it felt like a dream after waking up. But a dream being a dream, is nothing but a dream.” In this book she also explored that “there is no absolute happiness in human life. Happiness always comes with worry and anxiety.”

At the age of 96 she shook the world with one of her brilliant collection of essays, *Reaching the Brink of Life*. It was published in 2007 and its title was derived from the collection of her husband's essay *Marginalias on the Marginalias of Life*. It was philosophical as well as the most personal piece of work by Yang. The book can be segmented into two parts: the first part is about Life, death and afterlife mostly in the form of self dialogue. The second part is about family life and its anecdotes as a fragment of life. In addition, her writings especially essays were focused on discourse related to self, personal life, social values, identity and subjectivity. Due to these qualities she was deemed as the best prose stylist of her time and common readers got inspired by her personal story.

13.2.4 Qian Zhongshu:

He was a renowned Chinese scholar, writer and essayist who was born in 1910. He was well known for his wit and erudition in his writing especially in his essays. His non-fictional works such as essays, articles and letters contain huge amount of quotations and maxims from

both Chinese as well as from western languages such as French, English, Latin, German, Spanish and Italian. One of his major contributions was in assisting the digitization of Chinese classic literature. During his stay in Shanghai between 1941 and 1945, which was a period of Japanese occupation and hence chaotic, he wrote and published most of his works. *Written in the Margins of Life* which was a collection of short essays got published during that period in 1941.

Seven Pieces Patched Together, a collection of seven articles or essays based on literary criticism which were written and revised over the years got published in 1984. This collection of essays was translated by Duncan Campbell with the title *Patchwork: Seven Essays on Art and Literature*. This collection of essay contained his most famous and celebrated essay "Lin Shu's Translation." *Limited Views* which he started writing in 1980s was published in mid 1990s. It was an extensive collection of notes, articles, and essays about literary history, semiotics, classical Chinese literature and poetics. As he was familiar with western culture and traditions so he compared Chinese texts with western bringing to light renowned likeness as well as key differences among them. In this regard he was of the opinion that "It is a monumental work of modern scholarship that evinces the author's great learning and his effort to bring the ancient and the modern, Chinese and Western, into mutual illumination." Qian Zhongshu left lots of his essays, articles and notes unpublished which got published after his death in 1998.

The name of this book was *Collection of Qian Zhengzhou's English Essays* merely to give the readers a treat to enjoy his style as an essayist. In this collection there are articles, essays, reviews, speeches and one of his thesis entitled "China in the English Literature of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." The thesis is about half the book as it is of 200 pages. The first part of the book was written in 1930s and the second part was written in 1980s hence its quality varies. Though, it spreads over a half of century it is not disintegrated or fragmented. Qian Zhongshu's brilliance lies in having in-depth knowledge and understanding of both Chinese and Western life which is prominent in this collection of essays.

Rea commented about his stature and writing in these words: "Worldly and multilingual, he chose to live in China and write in Chinese. This is not to romanticize Qian as an *apolitical* author or, conversely, a patriot. The point is rather that he sustained an extraordinary degree of creative independence from his immediate circumstances. In Qian's works, then, we find one China that rarely makes headlines." This collection of essay emphasizes the fact that Qian

Zhongshu was a keen observer and a real scholar. Another concept about this collection of essay was that, due to its depth, all the readers can not have similar interest in all part of the book which he himself raised in these words “while professional students know more and more about their subject, the general public cares for it less and less. The subject ceases to be a part of humane cultural interest.”

Check your progress:

- Who is the writer of *Written in the Margins of Life*?
-
- What is *Limited Views* published in the mid 1990s?
-

13.2.5 Eileen Chang:

She was born on 30th September 1920. She is also known as Chang Ai-ling or sometime called as Zhong Ailing. She was also familiar with her pen name which was Liang Jing. She was born in China and started her writing in America. She was a novelist, screenwriter and essayists. She is one of the most influential figures in Chinese history who had advocated feminism. She was gaining literary prominence when Japanese were occupying Shanghai and it was the period between 1943 and 1945. But once communists were in power in China she fled away and remained off sight till she was rediscovered in 1970s and 1980s in Taiwan, Mainland China and Hong Kong. The main contribution of Chang was being realistic and modern writer. She contributed a narrative of wartime which was derived from national salvation and revolution. She gained prominence due to her projection of modern history in which she had juxtaposed accounts of historical reality along with the domain of domesticity.

In addition, her style and subject matters were heavily influenced by environ and context which was in and around her. Apart from her short stories and novellas her collection of essays appeared in 1945 and the title of her collection was *Written on Water*. After the appearance of this collection of essay, her literary ecology and maturity was deemed among literary critic far head of her age. Nicole Huang described her stature in the preface of her collection of essay *Written on Water* as "The essay form became a means for Eileen Chang constantly to redefine the boundaries between life and work, the domestic and the historic, and meticulously to weave a rich private life together with the concerns of a public intellectual." Side by side she was

experimenting with new literary and essayist language and it was much evident from another collection of her essay named "writing of one's own." As regard her style and narrative she was not only influenced by western European writers and essayists but also from local Chinese domain.

About her literary style one of the critics is of the view that "For a writer, the outstanding presence of style is the most powerful illustration of the vitality of his work. And the name of the author's style is a rare honour. Eileen Chang has such an honour; her work is called Ai Zhang's body." It was assumed and associated the concept of war and revolution in wartime essays and writing but she rejected the presence of both these elements in her writing especially in her essays. Betrayal was a recurrent theme or idea that was frequent in her later work and it was at its apex in her essay "A Return to the Frontier" which got published in 1963. It was worth mentioning that her narrative and writing style was heavily influenced by the personal tragedies and betrayals that she had in her life but later on her writing style got matured and out of personal grim. And it was due to that maturity and grandness she is acknowledged as one of the four greatest female literary genius of Chinese history along with Shi Pingmei, Lu Bicheng and Xiao Hong.

In the 1970s, she inspired a number of young women writers of Taiwan and there emerged a school of thought which was known as "Chang School Writers." "Whispers" is yet another significant collection of her essays. Professor Dominic Cheung once said, "Had it not been for the political division between the Nationalist and Communist Chinese, she would have almost certainly won a Nobel Prize." The subject matter she had explored in her essays includes war, urban life, autobiographical reflection, art and literature. Her style in essays was meditative, humorous and vibrant. She caught the attention of the readers due to chatty tone and ironic humor. In her collection of essays *Written on Water* she depicted modern urban life style through the depiction of Shanghai, its food, culture, life style and social patter.

Check your progress:

- What is *Written on Water*?

-
- Who was the inspiration behind the "Chang School Writers"?
-

13.2.6 Let Us Sum Up:

Lu Hsun's writing style was realistic and personal. Despite having political interests his objective was to bring to light social evils, injustice at various layers of society and to replace the traditions and ways of the past in term of political, social and cultural aspects. For that he took aid from realism, imagination and symbolism. Yin Zhen was a feminist in her approach and in her essays she tried to advocate the rights of women and to bring to lights the suffering women undergo in the hand of men, invaders and husbands in their lives. Yong Jikang writings especially, essays were focused on discourse related to self, personal life, social values, identity and subjectivity. Qian Zhongshu approach was satirical and ironic. And in his essays there were large amounts of quotations that were derived from English, Italian, Greek, Latin, French and German. Eileen Chang was another feminist essayist of China who was an ardent supporter of women. Her essays were vibrant, humorous and meditative. In addition, she depicted subjects such as war, urban life, autobiographical reflection, art and literature in her essays.

13.3 Learning Outcome

The origin and development of English essay in China has been discussed in this Unit. After going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- understand Chinese essay in English.
- be familiar with the essayists who contributed to the development of Chinese essay written in English.
- know the features of Chinese essays written in English by numerous essayists of China.
- distinguish personal, critical and subjective type of English essay in China.

13.4 Glossary

Extensively: Comprehensively, at length

Conversely: On the other hand

Memoir: A narrative composed from personal experience

Exclusively: Solely, completely
Comprehend: Understand
Embellishment: Adornment, exaggeration
Renovate: Repair, refurbish, mend
Vernacular: Dialect, colloquial language, lingua franca
Classical: Traditional, conventional
Miscellaneous: Various
Infanticide: The killing of an infant
Impactful: Having a forceful impact
Deploy: Organize, arrange
Juxtapose: Contrast
Anecdote: Tale, story
Erudition: Learning, intellect
Meticulously: Carefully, thoroughly
Recurrent: Frequent

13.5 Sample Questions

13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Chou Shu-jen was the actual name of _____.
 - (a) Lu Hsun
 - (b) He Yin Zhen
 - (c) Eileen Chang
 - (d) None of these
2. Who is known as the “father of modern Chinese literature”?
 - (a) Yin Zhen
 - (b) Eileen Chang
 - (c) Liu Xiaobo
 - (d) Lu Hsun

3. Who founded an association with the name Women's Rights Recovery Association to liberate women from the oppression of men?

- (a) Lu Hsun
- (b) He Yin Zhen
- (c) Eileen Chang
- (d) None of these

4. An influential feminist of China who was born in 1884 was _____.

- (a) Lu Hsun
- (b) He Yin Zhen
- (c) Eileen Chang
- (d) None of these

5. Yang Jikang met her husband whom she married in 1935 at _____.

- (a) Oxford University
- (b) Cambridge University
- (c) Tsinghua University
- (d) None of these

6. Who gave name to “We Three” which got published in 2003?

- (a) Lu Hsun
- (b) He Yin Zhen
- (c) Eileen Chang
- (d) Qian Yuan

7. Qian Yuan, who died in 1997, was the daughter of _____.

- (a) Yong Jikang
- (b) He Yin Zhen
- (c) Eileen Chang
- (d) None of these

8. The title of which collection of essays was derived from the collection of her husband's essay “Marginalia to Life.”

- (a) Reaching the Brink of Life
- (b) “Six Chapters from My Life 'Downunder”

-
- (c) “About to Drink Tea”
(d) All of these
9. Who wrote the collection of short essays “Written in the Margins of Life”?
- (a) Yang Jikang
(b) Eileen Chang
(c) Qian Zhongshu
(d) None of these
10. “Collection of Qian Zhengzhou’s English Essay” written by Qian Zhongshu consisted of _____.
- (a) Articles
(b) Review
(c) Essays
(d) All of these

13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Eileen Chang’s role in the development of feministic aspect in Chinese essays written in English?
2. Why is Lu Hsun called the father of modern Chinese literature?
3. What role does He Yin Zhen play in the development of Chinese essay written in the English language?
4. Discuss Yong Jikang as a feminist essayist of China who wrote in English?
5. Enlist few prominent names of Chinese essays which are written in English language.

13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the development of Chinese essay in English.
2. What is the role of Yong Jikang and her husband Qian Zhongshu in the development of Chinese essay in English?
3. How have Chinese essayists projected feminism in their essays and what impact it has on the readers?

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/monika-gaenssbauer-on-contemporary-chinese-essayists/>
2. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Qian_Zhongshu
3. https://medium.com/rediscover-steam/eileen-chang-novelist-essayist-screenwriter_d0a82565bc78

Unit -14: *This Too Is Life* by Lu Hsun

Structure

14.0 Introduction

14.1 Objectives

14.2 *This Too Is Life*

14.2.1 Introduction of the author

14.2.2 Summary of the Essay

14.2.3 Analysis

14.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

14.3 Learning Outcomes

14.4 Glossary

14.5 Sample Questions

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

14.0 Introduction

World Literature consists of masterpieces woven in different languages across the globe that leave a mark on readers and societies. The writings in Chinese literature have caught the interest of many readers worldwide as they echo unique styles and aesthetics that remain unexplored by people outside China for a long time. Contemporary Chinese literature in English is the literature of the moment that encompasses different genres like science fiction, comedy, and historical drama. Through the reading of the chapter, the learner will understand and explore Chinese literature through the writing of Lu Hsun who is considered a pioneer of modern Chinese literature. The learners will know about the author's motives in choosing literature as a weapon of struggle. This will give learners a deeper understanding of Lu Hsun's writings.

14.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are as follows:

- introduction of Lu Hsun as an influential Chinese writer.

-
- familiarity with the writings of Lu Hsun, and their relevance in world literature.
 - understanding of the thought contained in the essay and its critical interpretation.
-

14.2 *This Too Is Life*

14.2.1 Introduction of the Author:

Lu Hsun is the pen name of the famous Chinese writer Lu Xun Shuren. He was born in 1881 and died in 1936. He is regarded as the Father of modern Chinese literature. He was an excellent thinker and political commentator. He also gained success as the chief commander of China's modern cultural revolution and became the most prominent and influential writer in China. His works laid a solid foundation for the development of modern Chinese fiction by promoting thought-provoking criticism of antiquated cultural values and repressive social customs. Lu Hsun excelled as an editor and academician, instilling change among his pupils and the people around him. He rapidly gained fame as a riveting, astute and prolific writer.

Lu Hsun was born into a poor family where it was difficult for them to make ends meet. He lost his father at an early age which left the family in a poor state of affairs. Thanks to his well-educated mother who encouraged him to study as he demonstrated a keen interest in studies and displayed extraordinary skills and intellect early in life. He studied at the Jiangnan Naval Academy in Nanjing, and later in the Medical College at Sendai in Japan. During his studies outside China, he became acquainted with social movements that were shaping the world outside China. He formed anti-imperialist and anti-feudal views in his youth. These views—grounded on comprehensive critical realism during that period—have been reflected in his creative works. He propagated these social movements, which formed the basis of his political and intellectual growth in Chinese society, as literary movements. Thus, he calls for mindfulness among the intelligentsia and stimulates action amongst the oppressed in China to reform and reshape the Chinese society.

After much dedication to his cause to bring change in society, he decided to publish a literary magazine in 1906. His early attempts in this regard were futile. He also joined the anti-Qing revolutionary party in 1908. He along with Guang Fu Hui remained actively involved with this group which led to the end of the Qing Dynasty after the Revolution of 1911. Later, Lu Hsun

was displeased with the results of the Revolution he stood for, as the people of China suffered amidst imperialist intervention and oppressive semi-colonial mindset and conditions even after the Qing was deposed. Lu Hsun pondered, though with uncertainty, as to how he could best utilise his study of Chinese culture and political awareness to bring change into Chinese society.

In his early life, Lu Hsun was a revolutionary democrat, who later changed into a communist. In 1928, he developed an interest in the ideas propagated by Marx-Lenin and translated many works concerning Marxist literary theory. He was considered a Marxist in the latter half of his life because of his association with communists in numerous anti-imperialist and anti-fascist initiatives. Lu propagated a belief in a united front by the CCP and the Kuomintang against the forces of Japanese imperialism. Lu pursued to write passionately about the struggle against Japanese aggression until he succumbed to death from tuberculosis in 1936.

With some encouragement from peers, Hsun created history in modern Chinese literature by publishing one of his best stories, *A Madman's Diary*, which was his “declaration of war” against China's feudal society in the May 1918 issue of *New Youth* magazine. The success of his first work was followed up with a succession of stories like *The True Story of Ah Q* and *The New Year's Sacrifice*, which traverse and sharply attacked grim reality in the dark old society. In 1923, Lu published an anthology titled *A Call to Arms* (1923) which became his most celebrated and recognised work. His writing *Wandering and Old Tales Retold* (1926) became treasures within the Chinese people's literary heritage. These two works represent the best achievement of Chinese fiction at that time. His short stories are greatly commended for their significant value, the introduction of fiction writing, and profound thinking. Besides, Lu relies heavily on Chinese culture-bound images in his stories, which are of great importance in cross-cultural communication.

Some famous writings by Lu Hsun that shaped modern Chinese literature are *Diary of a Madman* (1918), *Kong Yiji* (1918), *Medicine* (1919), *Tomorrow* (1920), *An Incident* (1920), *The Story of Hair* (1920), *A Storm in a Teacup* (1920), *Hometown* (1921), *The True Story of Ah Q* (1921). He has numerous essays to his name that show his writing style which is a commentary on society and life. A few notable ones are “My Views on Chastity” (1918), “What Is Required to Be a Father Today” (1919), and “Knowledge Is a Crime” (1919). Although Lu Hsun never demarcated his writings as “revolutionary literature,” he did comment, no mistrustfulness in

characteristic dry self-parody: “As soon as a writer turns left, all his past works are immediately ennobled too, so that even his childhood blubbery join the ranks of revolutionary literature.” Needless to say, Lu Xun’s compositions are revolutionary in as much as they stretched the expressive limits of the Chinese language during his times into hitherto uncharted suggestive terrain. This achievement is explicit in his 1927 collection of experimental prose compositions named *Wild Grass*, whose individual pieces were first published in 1924–1926. Lu Hsun as a man, not just as a writer, loomed so large in the consciousness and knowledge of his age, that his death in 1936 was both an event of great public significance and a bitter loss to many who were familiar with him.

Check your progress:

1. Where does Lu Xun come from?

2. Why is he called the “Father of modern Chinese literature”?

3. Which are the famous works of Lu Xun?

14.2.2 Summary of the Essay:

Lu Hsun is considered one the greatest modern Chinese writers. During the last months before his death, he decides to make the most of his remaining days by writing two essays for generations to come that reflect upon the thoughts of a dying man. This essay is one of the two written essays titled *This Too Is Life*. In the essay, the writer reveals his experience with the simple things in life that remain unnoticed or unrecognised by a healthy or sick man. He expresses that it is only the man who is recovering from illness who can experience the subtle realities of everyday life. He further writes about his experience during his work-days that he never felt physically tired and therefore could not find differences between the swivel-chair and reclining chair. To elaborate on the above statement the writer cites the example of his relative’s son who was unhappy and worn out physically and succumbed to death as a result of working hard for a whole year as an apprentice in a factory.

The writer says that as many people are “tired out of work” he was “tired out of illness”. He writes that it is not the manual labour that tires the person but the state of not doing anything

i.e., during illness, taking complete rest can also wear out a person where one feels “the absence of all desire”, which is considered as the first step towards the ultimate death. He found life in doing things but later on equally feels alive in enjoying things he thought to be insignificant. The feeling of nothingness, of not doing anything can also be tiring sometimes. Here, the author is making readers aware of having a purpose to work. He writes it was only during his recuperation from a certain illness that he became tired of looking at walls, that he felt the need to rest, unlike his working days when his brain was occupied with work that he never felt the need to rest. On the contrary, he also writes about the amount of joy one experiences by conscious feeling, the stretching of one’s limbs, a huge yawn, and sometimes comforting yourself in a position where each muscle of the body is relaxed to its core. The writer is an ardent reader and expresses his thoughts through his writings. He talks about the time when he was ill and it gave him time to contemplate to share his views on illness. This piece of writing, which was written in several parts, was mistaken by the readers as his favour for an illness that he now pledges to write “more is to follow.”

In another incident, he mentions how not giving up during the illness and enjoying the little things around oneself is life too. One doesn’t need to be healthy to experience life to its fullest as even healthy and sick people tend to fail to enjoy every moment as they are not living consciously. The writer focuses on conscious living in all stages of life, “Because I want to live. Understand that? This, too, is life. I want to take a look round.” In looking at the world outside his room, the writer feels there is more to life and he should not give up on life due to illness. He writes that the moment you decide to live, everything seems ‘substantial’ and worth living if you can relate to things around yourself.

He contemplates the presence of walls and piles of books that form a part of our lives but we tend to ignore them or rank them lower than drinking tea or other daily chores. He says, “We notice rare blossoms, not the branches and leaves.” Similarly, biographers celebrate the idiosyncrasies of the persons that enchant the readers without making them realise the sober aspect of these figures. It is an accepted reality that we do not glance at any normal event. He voices that most of the time we tend to forget the whole and focus on a single thing that takes away the essence of living. He writes about the Chinese way of looking at things as “the whole.”

He notices the changes around him even if it is the addition of magazines and the change in events through the articles published in these magazines. One of the interesting topics he comes across is the analogy of melon and country, how people are expected to be patriotic all the time. He addresses the political non-seriousness in China and the inappropriate comparison of fruit and country. He also takes a jibe at the hypocritical nature of the leaders who insist people do a task in a certain manner but fail to do it themselves.

The last paragraph of the essay clearly outlines his political outlook on contemporary China and against the strict rules laid down by the government in Shanghai. He realises that one needs to find a balance between patriotism and life. One cannot be patriotic if he/she abandons happy things in life and only works on resistance. Extending the same argument, he states that a soldier's daily life cannot be heroic every day but a real soldier is made when he enjoys life as a whole not in isolation. One cannot enjoy life by just doing one thing. Life is supposed to be enjoyed as a whole, not in parts. He rightly points out that consciously enjoying even the simplest and most insignificant things in life is life too.

Check your progress:

1. Why does Lu choose to write essays on his death-bed?

2. Why is it an important essay in contemporary times?

3. Why does the author emphasise enjoying little things in life?

14.2.3 Analysis:

Lu Hsun's essays contain complex structures, comparisons, use of native Chinese techniques, rhetorical questions, and an outlook of change that make the essays difficult to read. According to the 'Art of the Personal Essay', Hsun used the classical Chinese technique where nothing is written in an uncomplicated manner. This essay does not follow any particular form or thought. Hsun had simply incorporated his views on illness, work, exhaustion, comfort, and life without coherence of thoughts in an implicit manner. His writings are compelling that stir the emotions of people to think beyond the ordinary and break the established notions about various themes discussed in the essay. This essay was inspired by the author's moments of recuperation

from a prolonged illness when he discovered the pleasure of looking at ordinary things. He made use of figurative language in the text to question the faculties of the human mind.

Hsun opens the essay by juxtaposing the duality of exhaustion and rest, the fearfulness of exhaustion being a workaholic.

He writes that humans while enjoying the blissfulness of taking rest and enjoying simple things in life, the blissfulness for many of them cease to exist as they miss out on being productive and active in life which makes them feel more alive.

He emphasizes that experiencing the comforts of idleness is equally significant as relentlessly working for hours makes us tired. Though in the moments of inactivity a person feels that life has no purpose if not being productive, the writer shows his contentment towards the bliss that accompanies idleness—this is something he too missed during his working days.

Throughout the essay, the readers enjoy odd metaphors used by Hsun to talk about tiredness and relaxation. For example, in the beginning, he writes, “I used often to boast that did not know what it was to be tired. In front of my desk, there is a swivel-chair, and lying there to chat or skim through the papers was rest. I found no great difference between the two, and often boasted of the fact. Now I know my mistake. I found little difference. After all, I was never tired, because I never did any manual labour.” By this illustration, he brings forth the context that people who have endured suffering will be able to distinguish the difference between the chairs and the comfort of relaxation, and the fear of exhaustion in life.

Hsun’s prolonged illness led him to lose interest in doing anything in life. After three days of extreme illness, he refuses to eat food, drinks only one cup of water, and later refuses to drink that as well. The fasting seems to have a significant effect on his body which he describes as “true weightlessness” where his mind seems more open to sensations. He seems to have heightened colour intensity, and often hallucinations. He realises the importance of fasting in his life which gives him a superhuman feeling in a similar manner as he realises the significance of taking rest while working. He writes, “I did not brood over death, but neither did I feel alive.” This, he called ‘absence of all desire,’ is the first step towards death. He clearly explains to readers his state of mind. He is confused as he writes contrasting sentences which show his lack of will as he is heading toward death. The author, through the above-mentioned instances, points out that even if a person is physically alive, he starts to die when he loses the will to live.

Through the essay, the writer brings forth an important observation of experiencing life as a whole and enjoying every bit of it. He refers to the Chinese way of life where they look at everything as a whole. He writes, “We notice rare blossoms but not the branches and leaves.” He questions human logic of noticing things in parts only not as a whole. He writes if it weren’t for branches and leaves we would not have experienced blossoms. Thus, there is a need to address significant and insignificant situations to live life to its fullest. Further, he elaborates by citing the example of regular/familiar things that form the basis of our existence as non-significant, “We tend to despise these things (the familiar pile of books and the unbound pictures beside them and the familiar walls) though they are one part of life, ranking them lower than drinking tea or even counting them as nothing.” We deprive ourselves of things that might give us strength and contentment to live life better. Instead, we label them as insignificant. He questions the previously held premises and urges readers to think, question, and learn from life to realise its full potential. Throughout the essay, he employs the questioning technique to increase the understanding of readers on various themes he has dealt with in the essay.

Lu elaborates on an example of a poet, Li Bai, where his biographer focussed on this writer becoming “tipsy” while writing poetry. Lu puts across the absurdity of this by saying “a man who spends all his time getting tipsy will certainly not live very long.” He questions the focus of the biography on a paltry thing when there were more important things to his life than drinking.

In another interesting analogy, Lu Hsun brings into play the fable of the blind man and the elephant. Due to his appalling condition, the blind man mistakes the elephant’s foot for a pillar. Lu suggests the deceptive nature of our lives if the person doesn’t look at the whole. The text displays Hsun’s prolificacy in incorporating a fable, which originated from India, to spice up his essay.

In the last part of the essay, he shares his views on the imposed idea of nationalism on citizens, “we should think of our country now carved up like a melon.” In a poignant mood, he shares how being adventurous or courageous is the only way to live life to the fullest. He takes a critical stand on those who fail to look at the whole beyond a certain picture that is shown to them by people in power. He writes about a soldier and says “a soldier's daily life is not entirely

heroic; but when the whole of it is bound up with heroism, you have a real soldier.” He appeals to the readers to use logic and reason when making decisions and enjoy life as a whole.

Through the use of brilliant rhetoric, Lu Xun questions the logic of how people view life as only foregrounding the high moments and neglecting the small or uneasy moments. Lu suggests the need for good and bad times in life to experience life as a whole.

Check your progress:

1. What is the main idea of the essay?

2. What kind of language does the writer use in the essay?

3. What are the different analogies used by the writer in the essay?

14.2.4 Let Us Sum Up:

The essay gives an idea about Lu Hsun’s writings as a significant contributor to modern writings in China because of their complex form, non-coherence, and far-fetched comparisons. In the essay, Lu Hsun urges the readers to drop the false notions about life and live life as a whole. He reflects upon the political condition of China through his personal experience in various situations. The essay is rooted in Chinese culture and juxtaposed with the then-current political situation in China. The author is trying to show that life is not only about the most exciting parts but the quiet and calm parts as well by giving examples of seeing things as a whole. Lu Hsun uses reasoning to show the reader that there is more to life. He wants the reader to be able to see things as a whole, not just the things that draw our attention most. He wants readers to understand his point of view by speaking of the little things that make life great and substantial.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be acquainted with the rise of modern English writings in China through the works of Lu Hsun. The learner knows about a different style of writing and the contribution of the key writer through the essay titled *This too is life*. The learner

can understand the reasons for the acceptance and popularity of Lu Hsun's writings in China. After studying the essay, the learner must have developed a good understanding of *This too is Life*.

14.4 Glossary

Antiquated:	Old-fashioned or out of date
Notoriety:	Ill fame or bad reputation
Languished:	To become weak or lose strength
Plodded:	Struggled
Juggernauts:	Series of activities undertaken to achieve the desired goal
Traverse:	To act against
Profound:	Very deep
Swivel-chair:	Rotating chair for office use
Apprentice:	A trainee, an intern
Superfluous:	Useless
Glimmer:	A flash of light
Substantial:	Existing in real, true
Peculiarities:	Distinctive characteristic
Dregs:	The worst or lowest part of something
Canonized:	Glorified
Collapsed:	Fell apart.
Succumbed:	To give in, to die
Idiosyncrasies:	A distinctive was of a particular individual
Poignant:	Keen

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions:

-
1. When was Lu Hsun born?
 - (a) 1980
 - (b) 1881
 - (c) 1896
 - (d) 1936
 2. Who is known as the father of modern Chinese literature?
 - (a) Mo Yan
 - (b) Cixin Lui
 - (c) Lu Hsun
 - (d) Can Xue
 3. The first work published by Lu Hsun is
 - (a) *Diary of a Madman*
 - (b) *A Storm in a Teacup*
 - (c) *The Flight to the Moon*
 - (d) *Wandering and Old Tales Retold*
 4. What message is the writer conveying to the readers
 - (a) to work hard
 - (b) to slow down
 - (c) enjoy simple things in life
 - (d) fear of missing out on the active, productive parts of life
 5. Which animal is the writer talking about in the essay?
 - (a) Tiger
 - (b) Lion
 - (c) Elephant
 - (d) Monkey
 6. Who experiences subtle things in life, according to the writer?
 - (a) A healthy man
 - (b) A sick man
 - (c) A man recovering from a serious illness
 - (d) None of the above

-
7. Which two examples the writer cites that one overlooks when he/she is healthy?
 - (a) The fearlessness of exhaustion
 - (b) The comfort of rest
 - (c) All of the above
 - (d) None of the above
 8. Why was the writer unable to see the difference between his desk chair and reclining chair?
 - (a) He was lost
 - (b) He was tired
 - (c) He was never tired
 - (d) There was no difference between the two
 9. What is “the absence of all desire” according to Lu Hsun?
 - (a) It is the first step toward salvation
 - (b) It is the first step toward death
 - (c) It is the first of life
 - (d) It is living a life of free will
 10. When was the time when the writer started enjoying little things in life?
 - (a) During his recovery from illness
 - (b) When he was healthy
 - (c) When he was workaholic
 - (d) He never enjoyed little things in life

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the theme of the essay “That too is life” by Lu Hsun?
2. What message the writer is giving to his readers through this essay?
3. What are Lu Hsun’s thoughts about life as he is dying of illness?
4. What is the right way to lead life according to the writer?
5. Write a short note on the use of language in the essay.

14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the writer’s view on productivity in life.
2. Discuss the title of the essay “That too is life” by Lu Hsun.
3. How does the writer suggest experiencing life better through the essay?

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Cheng, Eileen J. *Literary Remains Death, Trauma, and Lu Xun's Refusal to Mourn*. University of Hawaii Press, 2013.
2. Hockx, Michel. *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937*. Brill, 2003.
3. Holm, David. "Lu Xun in the Period of 1936 to 1949: The making of a Chinese Gorki." In Leo Ou-fan Lee. ed., *Lu Xun and His Legacy*. University of California Press, 1985.
4. Ou-fan Lee, Leo. *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*. Foreign Language Publications, 1989.
5. Xun, Lu. *Silent China; Selected Writings of Lu Xun*. OUP, 1973.
6. --- *A Brief History of Chinese fiction*. The Foreign language Press, 2009.
7. --- *Collection of Lu Xun's Essays*. Bai Hua literature and Art Publishing House, 2015.
8. --- *Selected Essays of Master Lu Xun*. Simon & Schuster, 2014.
9. --- *The Complete Stories of Lu Xun*. Indiana University Press, 1981.

Unit – 15: Origin and Development of the English Essay in Nigeria

Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 Origin and Development of the English Essay in Nigeria

15.2.1 The History of Nigerian English Essay

15.2.2 Nigerian Encounter with the Arabic Language

15.2.3 Nigerian Encounter with the English Language

15.2.4 Generations of Nigerian Literature-in-English

15.2.5 Nigerian English Essay

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

15.0 Introduction

The history of Nigerian Literature-In-English (NLE) predates the history of the political entity whose independence from British Colonial Rule or British Indirect Rule was a national celebration from the northern to the southern parts of the Nigerian Federation. Creative activities in oral forms of folk songs and folk dance, folk myths and folk legends, folk tales and folk dramas, folk incantatory chants, and folk poems were part of the cultural lives of Nigerians before their encounter with foreigners including Portuguese who were the first to invade Nigeria before the English took over the colonial helm of activities. Some of the creative activities which formed part of Pre-Colonial Nigeria were activities from the cultural systems such as Alekwu Cultural System whose Alekwu Poetry in Nigeria's Middle Belt; Ashim Cultural System whose Ashim Poetry and Masquerade Dance also in Nigeria's Middle Belt and Ifa Cultural system with Gelede and other creative arts from southwestern Nigeria make up part of the corpus that Nigeria reminisces of in contemporary writings. The three genres of Literature including poetry, drama,

and prose developed from the ways of life of Pre-Colonial Nigerians through colonialism and postcolonialism at the threshold of breaking away from the grip of postcoloniality of power.

Although Arabic culture had gotten to Nigeria through written and oral literature around the 14th century, the 17th century witnessed some translations from Arabic into the Hausa Language of Northern Nigeria. Written Nigerian Literature of the 19th century created an avenue where the printing of religious texts and some basic texts for reading and arithmetic helped Nigerians who were being exposed to the English Language to learn and use them for various activities. It is from this backdrop that this study in its three parts brings to bear a historiogenesis of Nigerian Literature-in-English (NLE) as we have it in its multiple genres and sub-genres across modal, formal, and thematic foci. The first part of our study discusses the history of Nigerian English Essay (NEE) in Nigeria. While the second examines generations of NLE, the third is on Nigerian English Essay (NEE). The unfolding of our study shall bring to bear some of the figures that have been characteristically artistic as decipherable in their works across the three genres of poetry, drama, and prose especially the essay as a sub-genre of prose.

15.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- account for the history of English essay in Nigeria.
- discuss the encounter of Nigeria with the Arabic language.
- explain the Nigerian encounter with the English language.
- examine the generations of Nigerian literature in English.
- discuss the development of Nigerian English essay.

15.2 Origin and Development of the English Essay in Nigeria

15.2.1 The History of Nigerian English Essay:

Creative writing experienced a shift from writing on stones, rocks, walls, tree barks, and earthen vessels before printing was invented. Nigeria began printing in the 1850s through the

community newspapers that Christian missionaries used as tools to introduce and initiate members into Christianity. In 1846, the first printing press was established in Calabar by Rev. Hope Waddell (1804-1895 CE) of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission. The English Rev. Henry Townsend (1815-1886 CE) established what is known from 1859 as the first indigenous newspaper called “IweIrohin” after establishing a CMS Press in 1854 (Odorume 3). The first person known to have written in the English language from Nigeria is aptly captured in *Morning Yet On Creation Day* by the Father of Nigerian and African Literature, Chinua Achebe (1930-2013 CE) as follows:

We do have enough examples of writers who have performed the feat of writing effectively in a second language. And I am not thinking of the obvious names like Conrad. It would be more germane to our subject to choose African examples.

The first name that comes to my mind is Olaudah Equiano, better known as Gustavus Vassa, the African. Equiano was an Ibo, I believe from the village of Iseke in the Orlu division of Eastern Nigeria. He was sold as a slave at a very early age and transported to America. Later he bought his freedom and lived in England. In 1789 he published his life story, a beautifully written document which, among other things, set down for the Europe of his time something of the life and habit of his people in Africa, in an attempt to counteract the lies and slander invented by some Europeans to justify the slave trade (98).

The next known Nigerian who published is Isaac Babalola Thomas (1888-1963 CE) whose work titled: “Igbesi-Aiye Emi Segilola” was written in the 1800s but remained unpublished until 1930. Isaac Babalola Thomas was a journalist, newspaper editor, and writer who wrote *Life History of Herbert Macaulay*, *Black African Story*, and other works including essays. He was the Proprietor-Editor of the bilingual newspaper, *Akede Eko* in 1928 in English-Yoruba wherein he first published “Igbesi-Aiye Emi Segilola” from 1929-1930 in a serial. He wrote an introductory essay about how the work emerged from the local Yoruba culture that had encountered a foreign culture.

The establishment of “IweIrohin fun AwonEgba” which translates to “The Newspaper for the Egba People”, was published fortnightly and sold for 120 cowries. Its initial publications were in the Yoruba Language before English publications were made primarily for the education

of the people through basic education in the English Language, Spelling, Mathematics, Geography, and Religion. It was also used to spread pieces of information about the new religion called Christianity and share Post Office News, and make advertisements for vacancies for stewards, house boys, housemaids, and clerks whose services were demanded by whites who were living and dominating the land (4-5). After being engulfed in a crisis that led to its closure in 1867, the newspaper whose founding IweIrohin influenced in 1863 known as Anglo African Newspaper (the first Nigerian Newspaper in English) by a West Indian Immigrant called Robert Campbell continue the trail blaze as the second newspaper in Nigeria. The Anglo African Newspaper was sold for 3 pence and had a wider coverage including Nigeria and some international news. It was broadcasting through its pages until 1865 when it closed up (5).

Lagos Times and *Gold Coast Advertisers* came up in Lagos in 1880; *The Eagle* and *Lagos Critic* was founded in 1883. The reactions, irritations, and agitations of Nigerians against colonialism were expressed in the pages of the newspapers that were the media through which Nigerian cries were being heard. It was in 1914, the year of the amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Colony of Lagos that Nigerian Lawyer Kitosi Ajasa founded the *Nigerian Pioneer*. Trained in England, his acceptance of the English style of life did not make him achieve much impact through his newspaper because his ideas were foreign and in support of the foreign ways of the English that the people were not at home with. About seven years after the amalgamation, Ernest Okoli founded *The African Messenger* (1921) which was African in scope. In 1925, Chief Herbert Macaulay founded the *Daily Times* 1926 wherein *The African Messenger* was bought and its name changed to *The Nigerian Daily Times* by the Yoruba Adeyemo Alakija with the English Richard Barrow who retained Ernest Okoli as its Chief Editor (5).

The establishment of *the West African Pilot* by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937 expressed the plight of agriculturalists including rural farmers of food crops, the problem of unemployment, and the issue of market women who were buying and selling in marketplaces (5). *The West African Pilot* influenced political participation by raising political awareness among the masses and the need to become an independent nation-state. Agreeing with Ugwuegede, V. O. Akoleowo explains political participation as “the activities through which members of society share in the selection of political leaders and public policy formulation, both of which determine

the allocation of societal opportunities and resources” (Akoleowo 249). The *West African Pilot* did provide a platform for political participation that galvanized Nigeria’s Independence on 1st October 1960 and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first President of the nation-state.

15.2.2 Nigerian Encounter with the Arabic Language:

The encounter of Nigerians with the Arabic language was heralded by the Islamic conquest of North Africa which led to further journeys to other parts of Africa including West Africa. Trade links were established and the desire to spread Islam made incursions into African soils where Quranic education became entrenched especially in Northern Nigeria and in states such as Borno which formed part of the old Kanem-Borno Empire and other parts of Northern Nigeria including the states of Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto (Ayuba 193) whose natives gradually accepted Islamic and Arabic culture as a way of life. Indigenous Hausa culture became interwoven with Arabic and Islamic culture after 1804 (194). Some of the horrendous encounters during the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade left many injured and wounded with scars for generations of Africans living through throes and woes.

In addition to the religious expansion, some of the effects of Arabic and Islamic presence have been political, social, legal, commercial, educational, and diplomatic (195-197). The education of northerners along Arabic and Islamic lines made it possible for translations to be achieved from Arabic to Hausa. Although western education began in Southwestern Nigeria, oriental education through Arabic culture started in Northern Nigeria. The influence of the English language also affected the northern part of Nigeria such that in addition to Hausa-Fulani and many other languages including Igala, Idoma, Eggon, Mada, Gwandara, Migili, Tiv, Tarok, Ngas, and multiple other ethnic groups intermingled with the English language.

15.2.3 Nigerian Encounter with the English Language:

The people of Nigeria encountered the English language through the years of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, and imperialism. While Portuguese explorers had traveled up to Benin, the Berlin Conference of 1884-1886 partitioned Africa into chunks to be administered by powers whose expressions of anthropic skepticism left many scarred through conflicts of cultures. The English got Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia. The French got Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, and some other countries who were pained and agonised by the French system of Assimilation and Association. It was the

encounter with the English that made Nigeria an Anglophone country where English is the lingua franca and writers are writing what is considered Literature-In-English or Nigerian Literature in English.

Schools and religious centers were spaces through which the English educational model of training and bringing up a child to participate in societal issues was done. Methodist and CMS Grammar Schools that were established in the 1840s did not disregard the teaching of the young in local languages. The methodology of colonial pedagogy did not continue in indigenous languages but in English. The development of the English language has made indigenous tongues second languages for an increasing population in the country. Nigerian Literature-in-English continued from the colonial school system whose structure acquired learning possible such that the plural works of many Nigerians in Africa and around the globe have been majorly in English apart from some Nigerian Literature-in-French and other foreign languages. Continuous efforts by writers have explained literature for generations in Nigerian history.

15.2.4 Generations of Nigerian Literature-In-English:

Nigerian Literature-In-English has grown through no less than three generations from their encounter with the English language. While the writings of Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa) and Isaac Babalola Thomas are pioneers in Nigeria, a crop of writers arose through decades of Nigerian history whose works are important for discursive examinations so that coming to terms with the development of literature in Nigeria shall help them to see through the lenses of Nigerian writers writing in the English language. Nigerian creative works reveal:

Nigerian writers' postcolonial project of writing back to the metropolitan centre through their recuperation of historical/ cultural artefacts that prove to the ex-colonial masters that they have a past and a culture predating the colonial intervention in Nigerian history. Also given the influence of the oral tradition on Nigerian literature, Nigerian writers intuitively serve as "recorders" of their historical moments in literary form like the ancient griots in African cultures who preserve the history of their peoples through storytelling, poetry, and music (Adeniji 122).

(a) First Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English:

The First Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English includes a body of works written by a c group of writers whose literary activities promised a postcolonial future where the problems of language are addressed through and in-between literary works of all genres

including poetry, drama, and prose. From the writings of Olaudah Equiano and Isaac Babalola Thomas, through the journalistic writings of different newspapers whose activities were geared towards the liberation of Nigerians and Africans from western domination and degradation of their being, many writers such as Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo, and Wole Soyinka rose to counteract western worldviews because we are living in a world that could not and cannot be seen from only a single lens with a single sense explaining the essence of human and other-human existence. Nigerian writers were at the forefront of rewriting the narratives that Eurocentric scholars deployed to decimate Africa and other colonised territories. The publication of poems, plays, and novels were not forgetful of the sub-genre of prose known as an essay with its forms, themes, and styles. Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* (1963) foreshadowed Nigerian works still clamouring for the rebirth of Africa.

African renaissance writings included essayistic novels and novelistic essays in addition to essays canvassing African ideals that would counteract Eurocentric narratives that have defined Africa in stereotypical terms. Chinua Achebe had encountered Eurocentric texts such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which made him write *Things Fall Apart* and other works portraying an Africa that is not dehumanised. In his collection of essays titled: *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-1987*, Chinua Achebe speaks for an African Literature-In-English that is true to Africa and strives towards transformative art and not art for art's sake. In his *Nigerian Literature: Issues Then and Now*, Abiodun Adeniji begins his introduction as follows:

Chinua Achebe fired the first salvo at the bastion of "art for art's sake" when he legislates that the African writer has to re-educate his people that their past did not begin when the first white man intruded into their communal space (*Hopes and Impediments* 30). It is with this educative function in mind that his prescription that the novelist (writers, in short) must be a teacher makes a lot of sense. He declares: "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them" (30).

Chinua Achebe led the First Generation of Nigerian writers whose works are still vibrantly affecting paradigm shifts from Eurocentric thoughts that have been indoctrinated into many Nigerians since the colonial era until now when the ills of post-coloniality stare them in the face that their steps are lost in search of solutions to myriads of challenges. Chinua Achebe is popularly known as the Father of African Literature while Wole Soyinka is known as the first African Nobel Laureate in Literature whose essays in *Interventions* call on all to reconnect to that which is African and truly human.

(b) Second Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English:

The Second Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English includes the creative works of talented writers who emerged after the First Generation of Nigerian Writers have tirelessly produced a body of works whose identity was, is, and would remain African and truly human. While the First Generation of Nigerian Writers emerged after the Second World War (1937-1945 CE), the Second Generation of Nigerian Writers appeared after the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970 CE) which is also known as the Biafran War of Independence led by Chukwuemeka Odimegwu-Ojukwu (1933-2011 CE) who was born at Zungeru, the capital of the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria from 1902-1916 CE). The scars of the Civil War created lachrymal writings across genres that still characterize Nigerian Literature-In-English.

Some of the influential writers of the Second Generation include Zulu Sofola, Mabel Segun, Femi Osofisan (OkimbaLanko), NiyiOsundare, Olu Obafemi, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotosho, Isidore Okpewho, and Festus Iyayi who died at Lokoja in 2013 on his way to Abuja on behalf of ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities) that has been experiencing recurrent strikes like the 2022 ASUU Strike since February until now (July). The realist portraits of Nigerian life through the plots of the Second Generation of Nigerian writers continue to inspire criticism and activism against the socio-political ambience of corruption and underdevelopment. Abiodun Adeniji cites NiyiOsundare's *The Eye of the Earth* as a potent twin thesis to Achebe's thesis on art thus:

Niyi Osundare advances Achebe's thesis on the pedagogical role of art in society when he says: "For in the intricate dialectics of human living, looking back is looking forward; the visionary artist is not only a rememberer, he is also a reminder" (xiii). In other words, the African creative writer is not just a recorder ("rememberer") of historical moments in verse,

prose, and drama, but also a reminder of the consequences of past actions or inactions in the present moment and a prophet of his people's future based on his knowledge of the events gone and those on-going. Achebe and Osundare are just a few examples of Nigerian writers and critics who have insisted that African writers must engage with the big socio-political issues of their day if they are to be relevant to their immediate societies and generations to come (122).

(c) Third Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English:

The Third Generation of Nigerian Literature-In-English includes the creative writings of contemporary Nigerian writers who are spread across Nigeria, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Americas. This generation of Nigerian writers continues the legacies of the Second Generation who continued the legacies of the First Generation of Nigerian Writers respectively. The challenges bedeviling the nation-state, the continent, and the globe have found expressions through their numerous works. While there are increasing numbers of texts in indigenous Nigerian languages including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Idoma, Eggon, Tiv, Mada, Efik, Benin, and Esan for example, the increasing number of texts in French are media through which Nigerian aches are heard as vociferously as they are heard through Nigerian Literature-In-English.

Some of the writers of the Third Generation who have been writing, according to Taye Awoyemi-Arayela, since the nineties (34) include Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe, Olugbenga Hansen-Ayoola, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Helon Habila, Bunmi-Julius Adeoye, Remi Raji, Joe Ushie, OmotadeAdegbindin, AkachiAdimora-Ezeigbo, Bose Ayeni-Tsevende and a host of contemporary writers writing and publishing around the world. Their works are Nigerian and African; their Africanity is humane in its globality as the truly global includes all the humane across different parts of the globe. The different contributions of writers across continents that bear the character of Nigeria are part of the body of works that are truly Nigerian even if the accident of spatial presence made their writings and publications be actualised in other spaces and places other than Nigeria.

15.2.5 Nigerian English Essay:

Nigerian English essay as a sub-genre of Nigerian English prose originated and developed through the centuries of English Language Acquisition in the Niger Area whose natives were living as independent African nations before the English colonialists brought them together as one through the tragic misadventure of British Indirect Rule System in Nigeria. The

work of Olaudah Equiano and Isaac Babalola Thomas are essayistic novels and pure essays through the journalistic writings of the second of the two Patriarchs of Nigerian Literature-In-English. Their writings were inspired and triggered by their experiences of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism, and Imperialism. Their publications were after the colonial encounter but before the emergence of Nigeria as a post-colony.

The contribution of newspaper founders, editors, critics, and journalistic essayists before Nigeria's Independence contributed to cultural and socio-political developments whose fruits are still imbued in Independent Nigeria. The themes that dominated the essays before 1960 were nation-building, liberation, and self-determination amongst other themes. Before 1st October 1960, the violence of the First World War (1914-1918 CE) and the Second World War (1937-1945 CE) affected Nigerians whose participation in the wars created heartbreaks whose facts appeared in literary works of the First Generation Nigerian Writers. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970 CE) disrupted socio-political activities and left many Nigerians mangled and killed. To write an essay in contemporary time takes them back to what Chinua Achebe spoke and wrote in *Morning Yet On Creation Day* as follows:

The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience (100).

15.3 Learning Outcomes

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

- account for the history of Nigerian English essay since the acquisition of the English language as a second language in Nigeria.
- discuss the Arabic Language as an oriental influence in language development in Nigeria.
- discuss English Language as a western influence in Nigerian linguistic development.

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- appraise the contributions of newspapers to the development of Nigerian English Essay.
 - examine the three generations of Nigerian Literature-In-English.
 - show the commitment of contemporary Nigerian writers to Nigerian English Essay as a sub-genre of Nigerian English Prose.
-

15.4 Glossary

Incantatory: Singing to raise spirits or to create magical results

Gelede: A festival of masks performed especially by Egbado Yoruba communities in Nigeria

Corpus: Collection, aggregation

Reminisce: Remembrance, recall, recollect

Indigenous: Native, original

Germane: Relevant

Cowries: Highly polished usually brightly coloured shells used as money by populations in Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

Galvanize: Stimulate

Incursion: Invasion, raid

Horrendous: Awful, terrible

Salvo: Bombardment

Bastion: Supporter, fortress

Lachrymal: Lament, moan

15.5 Sample Questions

15.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The first printing press in Nigeria was established in _____ city.

(a) Lagos

(b) Abuja

-
- (c) Calabar (d) Jos
2. CMS Press was established by _____.
- (a) Rev Hope Waddell (b) Rev Henry Townsend
(c) Herbert Macaulay (d) Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
3. The first Nigerian known to have written in the English language is _____.
- (a) Olauda Equiano (b) Gustavus Vassa
(c) A and B (d) Isaac Babalola Thomas
4. The first Nigerian newspaper in English is _____.
- (a) West African Pilot (b) Anglo African Newspaper
(c) Nigerian Pioneer (d) Lagos Times
5. *Nigerian Pioneer* was founded by _____.
- (a) Kitosi Ajasa (b) Robert Campbell
(c) Ernest Okoli (d) Adeyemo Alakija
6. Who is the Father of Nigerian literature?
- (a) Amos Tutuola (b) Chinua Achebe
(c) Flora Nwapa (d) Ben Okri
7. *Morning Yet On Creation Day* was written by _____.
- (a) Chinua Achebe (b) Wole Soyinka
(c) Helon Habila (d) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
8. The first Nigerian and African to win a Nobel Laureate is _____.
- (a) John Maxwell Coetzee (b) Nadine Gordimer
(c) Nawal El Saadawi (d) Wole Soyinka
9. _____ is the writer of *The Eye of the Earth*.
- (a) Tanure Ojaide (b) Niyi Osundare
(c) Remi Raji (d) Buchi Emecheta
10. _____ is a third generation Nigerian writer.
- (a) Christopher Okigbo (b) Femi Osofisan
(c) Nkiru Nzegwu (d) Omotade Adegbindin

15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. List 5 pre-independent Nigerian newspapers.

-
2. Who is the Proprietor-Editor of the bilingual newspaper *Akede-Eko*?
 3. Identify 5 subjects taught in Nigeria during the colonial era.
 4. List 3 First Generation Nigerian Writers.
 5. Briefly discuss how Nigerian writers of Essays should deploy the English Language for an international audience.

15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Narrate the history of Nigerian English Essay.
2. Account for the contributions of the Second Generation of Nigerian Writers.
3. Is there a link between the first and third generations of Nigerian Writers? If YES, in what way? If NO, discuss.

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1952. Print.
2. ---. *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-1987*. London: Heinemann, 1988. Print.
3. ---. *Morning Yet On Creation Day*. London: Heinemann, 1975. Print.
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Unit – 16: Why Do I Fast by Wole Soyinka

Structure

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16.0 Introduction

“Why do I fast” is a fascinating essay by Nigerian Nobel prize laureate, poet, novelist, and dramatist, Wole Soyinka. It was written during the Nigerian civil war between 1967-69 when he was forcefully incarcerated in prison. The piece memorializes and explains his hunger strike in prison. Soyinka satirizes the post-independent Nigerian society which is characterized by repression and oppression. He displays his show of courage and determination in the face of all the aridity. The basic tenet of “Why Do I Fast” is the concept of feeling the sacrifice you have made for your beliefs or for someone you love. Soyinka writes about fasting while in prison, and the thin line between pain and pleasure. His fasting becomes interesting and creates a self-satisfaction that detests food after a while; through denial, he seems to expose his more essential inner core, exquisite energy sustained by nothing.

Before we delve into the life of Soyinka and the essay itself, it is necessary to have a brief historical background of Nigeria and the Nigerian Civil war, during which Soyinka was

imprisoned for his involvement and during which he wrote the essay “Why Do I Fast?” among many. The Nigerian Civil War, also called Nigerian-Biafran War, was between Nigeria’s federal government and the breakaway state of Biafra from 1967 to 1970. After Nigeria became independent in 1960, the new country sought to combine groups divided by ethnicity and religion- a process that led to tensions that culminated in two military coups from which the leaders of the country’s Northern Region emerged triumphant. When the Northern coup resulted in the murder of military and civilian members of the Igbo (Ibo) people in 1967, they declared their homeland, the Eastern region, independent. It was now known as the Republic of Biafra, and Odumegwu Ojukwu was its leader. Despite recognition by some African states and tacit support from such countries as France and Israel, the Nigerian FMG (Federal Military Government) would not allow the oil-rich east to secede.

In the increasingly despicable war that ensued, the FMG, with its superior forces, ruthlessly drove back the Biafran fighters. Appalling hardship ensured for the civilian population of Biafra: massacres were reported as the FMG’s soldiers advanced, and famine was everywhere after the Nigerian government blockaded Biafra and banned aid from the Red Cross. As the world sat on its hands and ignored the developing humanitarian disaster, hundreds of thousands died of malnutrition before Biafran resistance was eliminated in 1970. The republic of Biafra revoked its existence after its officers surrendered in January 1970. It is estimated that during the Nigerian Civil War more than one million people died in battle, as a result of ethnic cleansing, or because of starvation claiming the vast majority of lives.

16.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- know who Wole Soyinka is and his literary writings
- have a brief knowledge about his country of origin
- know the subject matter of his essay “Why do I Fast?”
- create a link between the writer, his country, and the essay
- identify and discuss style in the essay
- discuss the underlying themes in the essay

16.2 *Why Do I Fast*

16.2.1 About the Author:

Wole Soyinka was born as Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde Soyinka to Yoruba parents. He is a Nigerian playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist in the English Language. In 1986, he became the first Nigerian and black African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature for “In a wide cultural perspective and with poetic overtones fashioning the drama of existence”. This also made him the first Saharan African to be honoured in the category. Soyinka was born into a Yoruba family in Abeokuta. In 1954, he attended Government College Ibadan after which he attended University College Ibadan and the University of Leeds in England. Upon completion, he worked with the Royal Court Theatre in London. He went on to write plays that were produced in both countries, in theatres, and on the radio. He was intensively active in Nigeria’s political history and its campaign for independence from British colonial rule. In 1965, he seized the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service studio and broadcast a demand for the cancellation of the Western Nigeria Regional Elections. In 1967, during the Nigerian Civil War, he was arrested by the federal government of General Yakubu Gowon and put in solitary confinement for two years, for volunteering to be a non-government mediating actor.

Soyinka has been a strong critic of successive Nigerian (and African at large) governments, especially the country’s many military dictators, as well as other political tyrannies, including the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. Much of his writing has been concerned with “the oppressive boot and the irrelevance of the colour of the foot that wears it.” During the regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–98), Soyinka escaped from Nigeria on a motorcycle via the “NADECO Route.” Abacha later proclaimed a death sentence against him “in absentia.” With civilian rule restored to Nigeria in 1999, Soyinka returned to his nation. In December 2020, Soyinka described 2020 as the most challenging year in the nation’s history. He said: “With the turbulence that characterised the year 2020, and as activities wind down, the mood has been repugnant and very negative. I don’t want to sound pessimistic but this is one of the most pessimistic years I have known in this nation and it wasn’t just because of COVID-19. Natural disasters had happened elsewhere, but how have you managed to take such in their strides?”

In Nigeria , Soyinka was a Professor of Comparative literature (1975 to 1999) at the Obafemi Awolowo University , then called the University of Ifè . With civilian rule restored in Nigeria in 1999, he was made Professor Emeritus. While in the United States, he first taught at Cornell University as Goldwin Smith Professor for African Studies and Theatre Arts from 1988 to 1991 and then at Emory University, where in 1996 he was appointed Robert W. Woodruff Professor of the Arts. Soyinka has been a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and has served as Scholar-in-Residence at NYU's Institute of African American Affairs and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. He has also taught at the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard, and Yale. Soyinka was also a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Duke University in 2008.

In December 2017, Soyinka was awarded the Europe Theatre Prize in the "Special Prize" category awarded to someone who has "contributed to the realization of cultural events that promote understanding and the exchange of knowledge between peoples".

16.2.2 Civil war, Imprisonment, and his Essays:

After becoming Chair of Drama at the University of Ibadan, Soyinka became more politically active. Following the military coup of January 1966, he secretly and unofficially met with the military governor Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu in the Southeastern town of Enugu (August 1967), to try to avert the Nigerian civil war. As a result, he had to go into hiding. He was imprisoned for 22 months as civil war ensued between the federal government of Nigeria and the Biafrans. Though refused materials such as books, pens, and paper, he still wrote a significant body of poems and notes criticising the Nigerian government while in prison.

Despite his imprisonment, his play ‘The Lion and The Jewel’ was produced in Accra, Ghana, in September 1967. In November that year, ‘The Trials of Brother Jero’ and ‘The Strong Breed’ were produced in the Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York City. Soyinka also published a collection of his poetry, *Idanre and Other Poems*, which was inspired by his visit to the sanctuary of the Yorùbá deity Ogun, whom he regards as his "companion" deity, kindred spirit, and protector. In 1968, the Negro Ensemble Company in New York produced Kongi's Harvest. While still imprisoned, Soyinka translated from Yoruba a fantastical novel by his compatriot D. O. Fagunwa, entitled ‘The Forest of a Thousand Demons: A Hunter's Saga.’

16.2.3 Summary of the Essay:

The self-meditating soliloquy starts with a rhetorical question by the protagonist, who is Soyinka himself, asking “Why do I fast?”. He answers the question by himself, indicating that he initially thought that fasting is for the sensual. He also fears that he might be doing so out of self-indulgence. He indicates that in every situation of fasting, it is necessary to separate willpower and compelled fasting. The writer has read about the “sensation of freezing to death”, a state wherein the body becomes insusceptible to pain and hunger but he has never really felt such. However, he gets to experience that start when “the body seizes to feel pain, sinks blissfully into sleep. Rest”. For three days, you may struggle with fasting or hunger-strike for the first three days but after this, one becomes used to it and the thought of food itself is banished from the mind. When he first decides to fast, he thinks of the first meal in mind, craves it, and orders it. When it's brought, he meditates on the taste of the food and salivates. On the other hand, he also meditates on the satisfaction to be derived from the food and the rest that will ensue. In this state, he waits for a protest that emanates within him, and because of this, he covers the food and refuses to eat. Even though the taste of the food cannot die, a taste he has known for a long time, he will not eat because the taste is a choice and since he has been restricted from his choice, taste becomes non-existent. He laments that his existence has been crippled on and that to take pleasures in some particular areas of life and not life as a whole is self-betrayal, something he promises never to do so again.

After two days of fasting, the desire to eat resurfaces and he ignores it and reaffirms that food cannot tempt him. However, he realizes that the walls of his stomach are falling off due to a lack of vital feeding. He ponders on taking vitamin pills but immediately dismisses the possibility. He again contemplates taking orange juice but again he dismisses this option because orange juice is more like food, so he finally settles on taking a glass of water every day. He takes it within intervals and ensures that he never exceeds that glass of water a day. As the fasting continues, there is significant weight loss and he can feel the slightest wind blow him off so easily. His body, like an onion, becomes to peel off more and more. By the fourth day, his will is no longer in the fasting; it becomes an exciting show as he awaits that stage wherein he either gives up or dies from the fasting. He starts hating even the glass of water and reduces how he drinks it. Some days, he does not even drink it.

During the day, as he does not eat or do any entertaining exercise, he restricts himself to watching light notes in the air and when he shuts his eyes, a new universe of varied colors step in. After an extreme fast, this illusion of stars in the eyes also occurs even when the eyes are open. When places become so quiet, the mind drifts into a transcendental mood, “wiping out environment, reality, fragmenting slowly until it becomes one with specks of dust in the ether”. Sunset to him becomes worst as the sounds go mute and the colours multiply, increasing a depressing illusion in his mind. He is satisfied as he watches himself waste away, a satisfaction that also ensues from the pain and fear of other people. The warden is concerned, ‘The Grand Seer’ comes to beg him to stop, but he keeps assuring them that he is fine even though they tell him that he looks like a skeleton. With their growing concern, he begins to detest the glass of water more, and as he needs no food and water, soon, he will need no air.

Hallucinating becomes a part and parcel of his life during the fasting period and one night he sees worldly objects in the heavens and he follows beyond that into another space through a tiny passage wherein he sees a human body but in a heavenly state. In this state, he feels a lot of happiness and love. On day ten of his fasting, a beam of light flashes into his cell and gets him back to consciousness from hallucinating, and the weakness and pain increase, even though he knows that death may come, he refuses to think about death and instead thinks of it as “the end of a course of action.” At this stage, he writes a prayerful poem in the form of an incantation, calling strength to his flesh, strength to his voice to speak the truth more and finally he prays for his hate that evil may die. On the eleventh day of his fast, no one came but he knows the goaler peeped in his cell, saw him but was too frightened. The next day, they stormed his cell questioning and threatening. He wedged himself on the wall, trying to pretend to be strong. He was concerned by the presence of ‘The Grand Seer’ among many people who came to see him but he was not moved. He concludes that like him, they as a country are a people of nothing.

16.2.4 Analysis:

While carrying the reader along a dire and frightful fasting ordeal, Soyinka demarcates a thin line between enjoyment and pain. The style and mood of the essay are constructed to command the readers’ attention and to carry the reader along throughout the conflict with Soyinka. He begins with a question, “Why Do I Fast?” which he uses to win the readers’ attention as he goes on to answer the question and the reader, out of curiosity follows

scrupulously to see his motive for fasting. The foundational reason for fasting as postulated by Soyinka is the concept of feeling the sacrifice you have to make for your beliefs or a loved one or even for your country. In answering the question why do I fast, he uses ambiguity to demonstrate both perspectives. That is, whether fasting is for self-edification or the purgation of a nation. He states in the second line of the write-up that “I have settled that in terms of continuing conflict”. If we take into consideration the fact that his imprisonment resulted from a war, then we can unanimously agree that his fasting was because of his love for his country. However, considering that it may be an act of self-indulgence, then the fasting may be excessive self-love.

Once one is settled on his objectives of fasting, whether for one’s self or course, at first it may be challenging but soon one starts deriving pleasure from the fasting as is Soyinka. Through denial, he seems to expose his more essential inner core, exquisite energy sustained by nothing: “the body achieves, of course, true weightlessness”. In the face of nothingness, we see a great zeal in Soyinka. His endurance in the face of aridity is a call for the people of the Nigerian postcolonial state to endure long-suffering for the course of their nation and trying to find individual pleasure in the face of a crisis rocking a nation is a betrayal of the national course. He proves to us that we eat to live but we do not live to eat. In living, we live to fight, and a righteous course is not that which gratifies individuals but a nation or a people.

The spiritual undertone that characterizes parts of the essay by drawing our attention to a blooded fanged and cannibalistic sunset, tells of the evil that characterizes the war period and how desperate the leaders can go to protect their selfish interests even against human blood. Sunset there may also indicate the torture and pain that endured at the end of the conflict.

Despite the pain and the evil, Soyinka proves to us that there are people who still care; the jailer and the Grand Seer prove this point so remarkably, even though Soyinka seems to note to us that when you are completely sold out to a course, you ignore any emotional attachment just as he has done by not considering their love.

16.2.5 Style in “Why Do I Fast?”:

As earlier noted, Soyinka’s style in ‘Why Do I Fast’ draws the reader closer to the essay as he soliloquizes the wrangles within him. He predominantly uses the soliloquy throughout the essay. As defined, a soliloquy is a technique, most commonly used in drama but uncommonly

used by Soyinka in ‘Why Do I Fast’. Because the essay includes poetic inclusion, it can also be considered a form of dramatic monologue. Albeit, a soliloquy is a speech that reveals a character’s internal thoughts, motivation, or plans. Characters usually deliver soliloquies while they are alone. This latter characteristic of a soliloquy aptly applies to *Why Do I Fast* as the meditation and writing go on while the speaker is lying on a hospital bed. Here, characters like our protagonist in the essay seem to be “thinking aloud”. The beautiful thing about the soliloquy is that it reveals the innermost conflict within the speaker and the readers come to share in his plight.

Imagery is also employed in ‘*Why do I fast?*’ Imagery helps to create the representation of ideas in our minds as readers. Imagery stimulates readers’ creativity and adds symbolic beauty and/or artistry to what is being read. Throughout the essay, Soyinka portrays a good number of images to us. For instance, he writes: “the body achieves, of course, true weightlessness. I’m blown about by the lightest breeze, by the lightest lyrical thought or metaphor”(2). The intentional understatement employed by Soyinka here, of being ‘blown by the slightest breeze and not even the ‘slightest wind’ helps build images of his physical emaciation in our mind. He continues with the sequence of images of his physical body, describing that: “the body is like an onion and watches the flesh peel off, layer by layer, layer by layer” (2). From these descriptions, one can immediately see how leafy the protagonist has become due to extreme hunger. One sees as he is being blown as a leaf by the winds.

To say the entire essay is a satire of the Nigerian condition is not an overstatement. Soyinka satirizes the violation of fundamental human rights and the forceful and unremorseful detention of activists by the recurrent military regimes. Nigeria has witnessed more military regimes than any other country in Africa, with a total of five coups. Abacha under whom Soyinka was imprisoned was one of the most villainous of all coup leaders, with his regime also recording a high number of unlawful and forceful detention of activists. By bringing this to the limelight, Soyinka intends to make a change from the practice which did not end with the Abacha’s regime but has dragged on to the contemporary Nigerian society of the 21st century wherein activists and journalists are being arrested every day.

16.2.6 Thematic Construction:

The theme of fasting/hungerstrike:

Fasting is the abstention from food. A hunger strike on the other hand is a method of non-violent resistance in which participants fast as an act of political protest, or to provoke a feeling of guilt in others, usually to achieve a specific goal, such as a policy change. Most hunger strikers like our protagonist will take liquid but not solid food. Fasting, as he ponders upon, is a state of discipline that someone imposes on the flesh, the result being to gain something tangible out of it. It is the same with the hunger strike, a determination not to betray one's self-nature because of food until there is freedom and choice. Fasting or hunger strikes thus become desirable human virtues for individuals and a society that aspires to change.

The theme of patriotism:

Patriotism is the feeling of love, devotion, and a sense of attachment to one's country. This attachment can be a combination of many different feelings, and language relating to one's homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political, or historical aspects. In the essay, *Why Do I Fast*, we see one's show of love for his country. Sacrificing for one's country is regarded as a symbol of love and honor. Death becomes unimaginable when one has decided to render the sacrifice of love to his country and as the writer puts it, it becomes admirable and desirable. The internal conviction is that there has to be a sacrifice to be rendered for the general good of the nation and you see yourself as that perfect sacrifice. Patriotism, indeed as Soyinka portrays, is undying love for a nation even in the face of death.

Theme of determination:

Determination is the fix or firm intention to achieve the desired end. We see this through the protagonist of his essay. Even though he finds himself in a staggering and wavering circumstance, his intentions do not stagger or waver. Someone determined to see the end even if it comes with death.

The theme of oppression and suppression:

Oppression and suppression are two terms usually used interchangeably even though they have some differences. To oppress means to keep someone down by unjust force or authority or generally to put down by force. This is replicated in *Why Do I Fast?* The speaker is forcefully incarcerated in prison because he is an activist. Despite undertaking a hunger strike to the point

of death, his incarcerators still cannot have mercy on him. To suppress which is more common means to put an end to something. Soyinka was imprisoned to put an end to his activism and popular ideologies which good have fueled the conflict more and more. So his imprisonment embodies suppression. The essence of this part is to examine how the mood of the essay reflects the contemporary Nigerian socio-political climate.

16.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- be familiar with Wole Soyinka and his writing style
 - know a little about his background
 - understand the background of this essay and the motivation behind writing this essay
 - create a link between the writer, his country, and the essay
 - discuss the underlying themes in the essay.
-

16.4 Glossary

Repression:	Suppression, Cruelty
Aridity:	Dryness, Waterlessness
Tenet:	Principle, Ideology
Exquisite:	Delicate
Delve:	Look into, Explore
Culminate:	Conclude, End
Despicable:	Dreadful, Appalling
Appalling:	Dreadful
Avert:	Prevent, Ward off
Insusceptible:	Protected
Emanate:	Originate, Emit
Demarcate:	Separate, Distinguish

Scrupulously: Carefully, Meticulously

16.5 Sample Questions

16.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Where is Nigeria located?
2. How is Soyinka related to Nigeria?
3. What are Soyinka's full names?
4. Which of Soyinka's works earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature?
5. In which year did he win the Nobel Prize?
6. Under whose rule as a president was Soyinka imprisoned?
7. What was the cause of his imprisonment?
8. What is the main theme of his essay, "Why Do I Fast?"?
9. From which point of view is it written?
10. Give two reasons why he is fasting.

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who are the two people who sympathize with him during his fasting period?
2. When the speaker says "the body peels off like onions" what figure of speech is that?
3. He takes water and vitamin pills to keep himself alive. true or false.
4. He prefers orange juice to water, true or false.
5. Soyinka uses fasting to mean a hunger strike, true or false.
6. It is poverty and penury in prison that drives him into fasting, true or false.

16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss how the theme of oppression and suppression as seen in this poem reflects itself in your contemporary society.
2. How does the life and society from which the writer comes reflect itself in the essay?
3. Pick out and discuss there elements of good writing that make you think the essay is a successful piece.

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Nigeria. www.hubert.herald.nl. Retrieved 22 July, 2022.
2. The Nobel Prize in Literature 1986 Wole Soyinka. The Nobel Prize. Retrieved 22 July, 2022.
3. *Why Do I Fast* by Wole Soyinka Book Report/Review. <https://studentshare.org/social-science/1513671-stylistic-essay>.

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY

Master of Arts English

II SEMESTER EXAMINATION (May 2018)

Paper : (MAEN201DST) English Essay

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 answers 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. (10x1=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. (5x6=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. (3x10=30 marks)

Part-A

Question : 1:

- i. Who is the author of the essay 'Sir Roger at the Assizes'?
a) Steele b) Addison c) Huxley d) Swift
- ii. The author looks upon Sir Roger's remarks as an example of natural _____.
a) Dramatics b) Criticism c) Delight d) Comment
- iii. The 'Spectator' and 'Tattler' were two eighteenth century _____.
a) Essays b) Novels c) Periodicals d) Dramas
- iv. The chief contributors to the 'Spectator' were _____.
a) Addison and Steele b) Sir Roger and Captain Sentry
c) A.G. Gardiner and Charles Lamb d) E. V. Lucas and Huxley
- v. According to Russell, the purpose of education is _____.
a) Freedom b) Civilization c) Nationalism d) Impartiality
- vi. Who is the father of modern Essay?
a) Montaigne b) Steele c) Bacon d) Joseph Addison
- vii. Who is the patron saint of personal essayists?
a) Montaigne b) Steele c) Bacon d) Wendell Berry
- viii. A hand book to literature was written by _____.
a) Holman and Harman b) Norman Mailer c) McGhee d) Joan Disdain

- ix. Who is called as the father of English Newspaper _____?
- a) Bunyan b) Churchill c) Daniel Defoe d) Lamb
- x. Who is the author of the essay 'The Man in Black'?
- a) Steele b) Addison c) Oliver Goldsmith d) Swift

Part-B

2. Write a brief note on English Essay and its development.
3. Sketch the character of Sir Roger.
4. According to Joseph Addison, what constitutes "the height of good breeding"?
5. Consider "Dream Children" by Charles Lamb as an autobiographical essay.
6. Write a brief note on the author of 'The Man in Black'.
7. 'The Crack Up' presents various psychological impressions of the writer. Discuss.
8. Comment on the significance of the title of the essay, 'The Lantern Bearers'.
9. What is the importance of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, 'Over Soul'?

Part-C

10. Discuss in detail the theme of 'Notes of a Native Son' by James Baldwin.
11. Consider 'The Lantern Bearers' by Stevenson as an autobiographical piece of writing.
12. Write a detailed note on the autobiographical element in 'Why Do I Fast'?
13. Lu Hsun's writings portray the poverty and suffering of common people and unemployed intellectuals. Discuss
14. Comment on the significance of the essay 'Why do I fast'; Write your reflections on why people do it.
