

REV-00

SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL



MA ENGLISH

MEN 102 : ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

w.e.f Academic Session: 2023-24



CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA

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Techno City, 9th Mile, Baridua, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya, 793101

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University of Science and Technology Meghalaya

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Edited by: RICHA SARMA

Ms Maitrayee Sarma

Dr Mehsina Sabnam

Dr Sukanya Kashyap

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UNIT 1.1 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: THE CANTERBURY TALES

UNIT STRUCTURE

Learning objectives

Introduction

About the poet

Background of The Canterbury Tales

The Canterbury Tales

Let Us Sum Up

Further Reading

Answers to Check Your Progress

Model Questions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Know about the prominent medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer.
- Understand the background of the poem ‘The Canterbury Tales’

INTRODUCTION

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories, written in verse form by the medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Though it is an unfinished work, it conveys a lot about the medieval social setting and beliefs. Geoffrey Chaucer was not only a poet but an author and a civil servant as well. However he got his fame for the work ‘The Canterbury Tales’.

ABOUT THE POET

Geoffrey Chaucer is a medieval English poet. He is also called the ‘father of English literature’ or the ‘father of English poetry’. Other than his famous poem ‘The Canterbury Tales’, he also became renowned for his scientific and astronomical work ‘A Treatise on the Astrolabe’, which he wrote for his son. His other works include: ‘The Book of The Duchess’, an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster; ‘Anelida and Arcite’, ‘The House of Fame’, ‘The Parliament of Fowles’, ‘The Legend of Good Women’ and ‘Troilus and Criseyde’.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
a. What is the name of the elegy written by Chaucer?
b. How Chaucer is known as?
c. Where the pilgrims were going to?

BACKGROUND: THE CANTERBURY TALES

The life of Chaucer can be divided into three stages depending on the influence of the places that he had visited- The French Period, The Italian Period and The English Period. The Canterbury Tales is the creation of the English period. In this poem, Chaucer attempts to show the English society of his time. Chaucer started to write the poem in around 1387, when his wife passed away and he continued to work on the poem till his own death. Chaucer was inspired by the system of the pilgrims to visit Canterbury, to see the holy tomb of St. Thomas in large groups. In such long journeys, the pilgrims used to tell stories for relaxation. Chaucer tried to tell such stories through the poem.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

The poem 'The Canterbury Tales' begins with a prologue. The prologue introduces the readers with a group of pilgrims who gather to start their journey to Canterbury. These pilgrims are selected from different walks of life. Chaucer describes each of the pilgrims in such a manner that the difference in their profession and identity can be vivid. There are total 31 pilgrims including the narrator and the host. There are - the friar, the monk, the knight, the priest, the summoner, the pardoner, the parson, the squire, the franklin, the merchant, the miller, the wife of Bath, the doctor of medicine, the cook, the sergeant of law, the reeve, the prioress and so on. The prologue of the poem stands as an introduction to not just the characters but also the poet's whole literary scheme. Chaucer planned to tell stories through the poem but he did not take the whole responsibility as the narrator of the poem. He assigned four tales to each of the pilgrim. The group of the pilgrims decide to participate in a story-telling competition. They all agreed to tell two tales on their way to Canterbury and again two tales on their way back. The best story teller was promised a free meal at the Tabard Inn by the host Harry Bailly.

The poem then begins with the story told by the Knight. Then the other members also tell their stories. As it remained an unfinished work, Chaucer could only write twenty-four stories though his plan was to make a collection of around hundred twenty stories. The poem runs in 17000 lines.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- d. How many pilgrims were there in 'The Canterbury Tales'?
- e. How many stories are written by Chaucer in the poem?

LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit you have learnt about the famous medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. You have also understood the background of The Canterbury Tales and the poet's scheme to write a collection of stories in verse.

FURTHER READING

Dutta, Kalyannath. Some Aspects of The History of English Literature. Debi Book Concern, 2011

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. 'The Book of The Duchess'
- b. 'Father of English poetry'
- c. Canterbury, to see the holy tomb of St. Thomas.
- d. 31
- e. 24

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Geoffrey Chaucer as a medieval poet.
2. Write a note on the scheme of the poet for the poem 'The Canterbury Tales'.

UNIT 1.2: EDMUND SPENSER: SONNET 75

UNIT STRUCTURE

Learning objectives

About the poet

Sonnet 75

Summary and analysis

Let Us Sum Up

Further Reading

Answers to Check Your Progress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Learn about the poet, Edmund Spenser and his contribution to literature.
- Understand what the sonnet 75 is about.

ABOUT THE POET

EDMUND SPENSER

Edmund Spenser was born in the sixteenth century. He is considered to be one of the greatest English poets. His most famous work is *The Faerie Queen*. Spenser's poems were not very traditional to his age. They reflect individuality which makes his works different from his predecessors. Due to this quality, Spenser is also regarded as one of the premier craftsmen of nascent Modern English verse.

His works include: A Theatre for Worldlings, The Shepheardes Calender, The Faerie Queene, Complaints, Containing Sundrie Small Poems of the Worlds Vanitie, Amoretti and Epithalamion, Astrophel, Prothalamion and so on.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. What is the most popular work of Edmund Spenser?

SONNET 75

Amoretti LXXV: One Day I Wrote her Name

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

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

"Sonnet 75" is also called "Amoretti 75". The Sonnet was published in 1595 as part of *Amoretti*, a cycle of 89 [sonnets](#) that recounted Spenser's courtship and marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem explores the power of poetry to immortalize its subjects, that the wife of the poet, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem also showcases Spenser's unique stanza and sonnet style, which is later named as the Spenserian Stanza. He first perfected this particular stanza in his poem 'The Faerie Queene'.

The poet is the narrator in the poem who says that once he wrote the name of his beloved in the sand on the sea-shore, but the waves rolled in and erased it. Therefore, he wrote it second time, but again it was erased by the tide. The beloved of the poet told him that he is very silly and prideful to make such futile attempts to make a mortal being last forever. She accepts that she, being a mortal, must die one day and just the way the ocean has erased her name again and again, everything about her will disappear one day. However, the poet does not agree saying that his poetry will keep her alive forever. In this way, the poet believes, he can preserve his love forever.

The particular sonnet is about poetry itself. It deals with the power of art and how art can immortalize anything that faces decay. The poet, Spenser, here understands that death is inevitable to all but he trusts that poetry can immortalize the admirable name of his beloved forever so that even after her death, she does not disappear with all her traces.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- b. What is the other name of 'Sonnet 75'?**
- c. What is the name of the stanza perfected by Edmund Spenser?**

LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you have learnt about Edmund Spenser. You have also understood what the sonnet 75 is all about. You have read here the central theme of the sonnet and about the unique structure it has.

FURTHER READING

Dutta, Kalyannath. Some Aspects of The History of English Literature. Debi Book Concern, 2011

ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. The Faerie Queen.
- b. "Amoretti 75".
- c. Spenserian Stanza.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Edmund Spenser as a poet.
2. Critically analyse the poem 'Sonnet 75'.

PAPER CODE: MEN 102

PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

UNIT 2: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SONNET 30, 65, 116

**JOHN DONNE: THE GOOD MORROW; VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING
MOURNING**

**UNIT 2: ELIZABETHAN POETRY: SELECT WORKS OF WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE AND JOHN DONNE**

UNIT STRUCTURE

Learning Objectives

Introduction

Shakespeare's sonnets

John Donne and Metaphysical Poetry

Let Us Sum Up

Model Questions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Form an idea of the forms of poetry that were in vogue during the Elizabethan Age, and what made it unique from earlier forms
- Understand the features of the metaphysical school of poetry through close analysis of select works of John Donne, particularly his poems *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* and *The Good Morrow*
- Form an idea of the important elements of the Shakespearan sonnet, through a close study of Sonnets 30, 65 and 116

INTRODUCTION

Although stylistically disparate, John Donne and William Shakespeare were both part of what is known as the Elizabethan Age of English history. The Elizabethan Age, strictly speaking, refers to the reign of the period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I who ruled for a period of almost 50 years from 1558-1603. However, the term Elizabethan is also often used loosely to refer to the 16th and 17th centuries, including the time following the monarch's death. This was a period of relative peace that followed an extended period of political instability and religious conflict between the Protestants and the Catholics. The Elizabethan Age was also marked by rapid development of English commerce, maritime power and an emerging English nationalist consciousness marked by intellectual coherence and social order. The relative tranquillity of this period allowed for rapid growth in new forms of arts and culture, and one such new form was the English sonnet. In this unit, we will explore important poetic strains- the Shakespearan sonnet and John Donne's metaphysical poetry, together which will provide a complete picture of emerging trends in English poetry

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is a man who needs no introduction in English literary studies. William was the eldest son of John Shakespeare as glover and dealer in other commodities such as barley, timber and wood. He may have gone to the grammar school at Stratford run by the borough where he may have learnt to read, write and speak Latin and some of the classical poets. Shakespeare certainly did not go to the University. Instead at the age of 18, in November or December 1582 he married Anne Hathway of Shottery only two miles away from Stratford, and soon began his career as a dramatist. Today, Shakespeare is primarily known for his rich dramas, however he was also a prolific poet and left a big collection of poetry.

What is a sonnet?

A sonnet is a lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. Literally meaning a “little song”, the sonnet form is believed to have been developed by the 14th century Italian poet Francesco Petrarch. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two sections: an octave (eight lines) rhyming ABBAABBAB followed by a sestet (six lines) rhyming CDECDE or CDCDCD. The standard subject for these poems were usually the hopes and pains of unrequited love. The Elizabethan poet and politician Thomas Wyatt was the first to introduce the form of the sonnet in the English language. The Petrarchan form was also later employed by later poets like John Milton (see “When I Consider How My Light is Spent”) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (see “How do I Love Thee”). Developed to accommodate the lyrical turns of phrases of the Italian language, the Petrarchan sonnet had to be modified in order to create similar effects in the English language, and as a result of such effects we see the emergence of what we now understand as the English sonnet.

Tudor poet Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, and a close associate of Thomas Wyatt, is credited to have introduced the form of the English sonnet, even though the form is now more

commonly known as the Shakespearan sonnet, after its more famous practitioner. This sonnet form is divided into three quatrains (of four lines each), and a concluding couplet, which follows the rhyming pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Another formal intervention was introduced by noted Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser in what is now known as the Spenserian sonnet, which follows the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. Besides formal variations, English poets also expanded the scope of the themes covered in the sonnets, which were previously limited to romance, but under more ambitious practitioners like John Donne and John Milton, the sonnet came to speak also of religion, nation and other matters of serious concern. In a comparative analysis of the Petrarchan and English sonnets, Abrams and Harpham have noted the following: “The rhyme pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet has on the whole favoured a statement of a problem, a situation, or incident in the octave, with a resolution in the sestet. The English form sometimes uses a similar division of material but often presents instead a repetition-with-variation of a statement in each of the three quatrain; in either case, the final couplet in the English sonnet usually imposes an epigrammatic turn at the end.” Another trend in English poetry that followed the example of Petrarch, was the development of sonnet sequences or sonnet cycles, which was a series of sonnets linked together with a common theme, which was usually the exploration of varied aspects of a relationship between lovers. Sidney’s “Astrophel and Stella” (1580) and Spenser’s “Amoretti”(1595) are two of the most well-known examples of sonnet sequences in English poetry.

Shakespeare did not write his sonnets for publication. Thomas Thorpe published them in 1609 without his permission. A 1598 reference within a kind of directory of contemporary wits mentioned Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets" that had been circulating only privately among friends. Two (138 and 144) were published in an anthology in 1599. Based on apparent topical allusions, connections with lines by other authors, and on comparisons with the plays -- some of which make much use of the sonnet format, the sonnets are often roughly dated from 1592 to early in the first decade of the 1600s, with most probably written in the early years. Shakespeare in his sonnets seems to follow the pattern of sonnet cycles as developed by Petrarch, that was mentioned above. Sonnets 1-126 seem to be addressed to an unnamed male friend considerably younger than the poet. At first (1-17) the poet seems driven or commissioned to urge this fellow to marry and breed. But the interpersonal friendship grows in intensity, and separation causes grief. The Young Man belongs to the upper class, is more than handsome, and is somewhat given to wantonness. The gender of this unnamed lover has

been the subject of much speculation. In a few instances, the poet obliquely mentions a rival for either the patronage or the affections of the Young Man, a situation which arouses jealousy, as this poet has "a worthier pen" and "a better spirit." Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to or concern a dark lady (dark in the sense of her hair, her facial features, and her character), and Sonnets 153-154 are fairly free adaptations of two classical Greek poems. Attributing Sonnets 1-126 to a young man and Sonnets 127-152 to a dark lady is somewhat problematical, since in many of the poems the gender of the person addressed is not at all clear. We have no clear mandate to interpret poems invoking "my love" as referring necessarily to a male or to a female, since the term is used to refer to both sexes equally.

SONNET 30, SONNET 65 AND SONNET 115: A CLOSE STUDY

SONNET 30

The text:

*When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.*

Analysis:

In this sonnet Shakespeare speaks about the loss of friends and many things he sought in life which he could not get. Shakespeare cheers up when he remembers his friend. Then he overcomes the hurt caused by his outcast state or depression inflicted by his lack of achievements or loss of friends. However, for a lyric that tells us about the intimate experiences of the poet, its language couched in formal court vocabulary may appear wooden on cogitation is seamless in offering the contradictory aesthetic experience of pain and happiness. In sonnet 30 he sighs the lack of many a thing he sought. The immediate reason for the downcast state in which he finds himself is fall from the favour of goddess Fortuna as well as people around him. Nothing precipitous accounts for the dip in happiness in sonnet 30 but idle memory: 'sessions of sweet silent thought'. He wastes his 'dear' time summoning old thoughts to the court of his mind, the relaxed indulgence in past memories makes him somewhat distant, aloof and offish. Shakespeare wrote the sonnets when he was in his late twenties and early thirties. It appears somewhat strange that he should be overcome by grief for 'precious friends hid in death's dateless night.' We recall that Marlowe, born in the same year as Shakespeare himself and the only contemporary poet Shakespeare alluded to in his plays died in 1593 and his only son Hamnet passed away in August 1596 and Spenser in 1599. Their decease could bring tears to his eyes. The overarching self-possession in sonnet 30 is expressed by the poet's assertion that his eyes are 'unused to flow.' Still the loss remembered in sonnet 30 is so personal in nature and affecting his person that he cannot help crying. The poem ends on a note of acceptance and a hope that the grief he is experiencing will end soon.

SONNET 65

The text:

*Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,*

*When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.*

Analysis:

This sonnet is a meditation upon time. The hardest metals and stones, the vast earth and sea — all submit to time "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea, / But sad mortality o'er-sways their power." "O fearful meditation!" he cries, where can the young man hide that time won't wreak on him the same "siege of batt'ring days"? In the last couplet, the poet searches for a medium through which his beloved could be immortalized by defeating the sad mortality and the fearful destructive giant i.e. time. Finally, he discovers that it is verse that can serve as a miracle in fulfilling the intense desire of the poet. Then, he feels great happiness, joy and he gets very much excited for being able to find out the proper way to make his dear friend and the sweet memories alive forever through his writings. His grief, worries, despair that made him suffered in the past have suddenly vanished while he has succeeded to immortalize his beloved and the memories of their lives that expected since many years back in the past.

SONNET 116

The text:

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark*

*That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.*

Analysis:

Despite the confessional tone in this sonnet, there is no direct reference to the youth as we find in Sonnet 30 and Sonnet 65. The general context, however, makes it clear that the poet's temporary alienation refers to the youth's inconstancy and betrayal, not the poet's, although coming as it does on the heels of the previous sonnet, the poet may be trying to convince himself again that "Now" he loves the youth "best." Sonnet 116, then, seems a meditative attempt to define love, independent of reciprocity, fidelity, and eternal beauty: "Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks / Within his bending sickle's compass come." After all his uncertainties and apologies, Sonnet 116 leaves little doubt that the poet is in love with love.

The sonnet begins without the poet's apparent acknowledgment of the compelling quality of the emotional union of "true minds". As Helen Vendler has observed, "This famous almost 'impersonal' sonnet on the marriage of true minds has usually been read as a definition of true love." The poetic language leaves the sort of love described somewhat indeterminate; "The 'marriage of true minds' like the 'power to hurt' is troublesomely vague open to a variety of interpretations." Interpretations include the potential for religious imagery and the love being for God, "Lines one and two echo the Anglican marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer." The concept of the marriage of true minds is thought to be a highly Christian; according to Erne, "The mental picture thus called up in our minds of the bride and bridegroom standing up front in a church is even reinforced by the insistence on the word alter/altar in the following line." The couplet of Sonnet 116 Shakespeare went about explaining in the inverse. He says the opposite of what it would be natural to say about love. For instance, instead of

writing something to the effect of 'I have written and men have loved', according to Nelson, Shakespeare chose to write, "I never writ, nor no man ever loved." By restating his authority as poet and moral watch almost in a sacramental manner on the theme of love, by the use of a paradox, Shakespeare rejects that he may be wrong in stating that true love is immortal: the fact that he has indeed written a lot to the point of having reached sonnet 116 on the theme of love and acquired fame for that is self evident that the opposite cannot be true, that is: what he says cannot be an error Men too have indeed loved as love is ingrained in poetry and only lyric poets can testify of men's faculty of experiencing true love.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Briefly discuss the development of the sonnet form in the English language. How is it different from the Petrarchan sonnet?
2. When were Shakespeare's sonnets published? Who were they addressed to?
3. Discuss the exploration of grief in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 and Sonnet 65
4. How does Shakespeare explore love and marriage in Sonnet 116?

Introduction

John Donne (1572-1631) was born and brought up a Roman Catholic, and though he later argued himself into the Anglican position and ended his life as Dean of St. Paul's, his training as a Catholic in an age of religious polemic, together with the scholastic element that was still part of the university education of his day, helped to determine the set of his mind. In English literary studies, Donne is most visibly associated with the tradition of metaphysical poetry. The term metaphysical poets was first used for John Donne by John Dryden in the text "Discourse Concerning Satire" (1693) wherein he wrote that Donne's poetry "affects the metaphysics". In Dryden's conceptualization, metaphysics meant the use of the terminology and arcane arguments of medieval philosophers. Another century later, Samuel Johnson coined the term "metaphysical poets" and clubbed Donne together with contemporaries Abraham Cowley and John Cleveland, as a movement that was marked with dense intellectual articulation, and which lacked artistic integrity. Most importantly, the metaphysical poets, including Donne, were against the lyricism of contemporary Elizabethan poets and their focus on an idealized view of human nature and of sexual love.

What is metaphysical poetry?

The word 'metaphysical' applies in an obvious sense to Donne's poetry insofar as he regularly speaks of the world of souls and spirits-the world beyond the physical. But more importantly, the term metaphysical poetry alludes to the concept of metaphysical conceit/ wit which is an extended metaphor that makes an outstretched comparison between a person's spiritual faculties and a physical object in the world. Drawing metaphors from distinct, tangible objects and contemporary forms of knowledge like cartography, lends to Donne's poetry a certain newness even as his subject remains conventional. Stock Petrarchan images of contemporary sonneteers are replaced by fresh metaphors and images which really betoken new ways of thinking and imagination. Metaphysical conceit does bear a certain philosophical weight in its practice. If love animates the length and breadth of the mortal and immortal world, it is only natural that evidence of love be found and deduced from a broad range of phenomena. In a poet

like Donne, this conceit becomes the lover's way of inhabiting his mortal world. The images that are used as metaphors have an internal, a more permanent life.

The form of Donne's poetry is modelled on actual speech, with frequent use of give-and-take arguments between lovers, friends, or between man and God, or within oneself. His poems also make use of irony and a cynical tone that capture the heterogenous nature of human relationships. He also makes frequent references to religious experiences, and plays with language through puns and paradoxes. These formal elements will be explored further in the close reading of select poems.

The Good Morrow: Analysis

The text:

*I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,

Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.
And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.*

*My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp north, without declining west?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.*

Analysis:

The Good-Morrow was published in his 1633 collection *Songs and Sonnets*. Written while Donne was a student at Lincoln's Inn, the poem is one of his earliest works and is thematically considered to be the "first" work in *Songs and Sonnets*. Although referred to as a sonnet, the work does not follow the most common rhyming scheme of such works—a 14-line poem, consisting of an eight-line stanza followed by a six-line conclusion—but is instead 21 lines long, divided into three stanzas. The poem describes the experience of being in love as a new morning or waking up to a new life. This sonnet is a good example of Donne's interpretation of courtly love, wherein both lovers assume mutually significant positions. It arrives at this inextricable mutuality in cartographic terms—whereby the flat maps which only represent one half of the earth in a sphere—are better in the coming together of the two lovers as two perfect hemispheres of a single sphere. The two hemispheres begin to look like as a single sphere, each partaking of the other hemisphere in its newly recognized completeness.

The title of the poem hints that the circumstance of the poem, is one of the morning after a night of love-making. The lover speaks in terms of the soul- 'good morrow to our waking souls'-while the bodies seem to have consummated sexually. The sexual experience does form the core of this mutuality. However, the act of 'knowing' of the self and "becoming one', apparently, happens post- requital. In Donne, this space is often constructed in the awkward gap that follows sex - this gap otherwise being filled by the discourse of guilt in Christian discourse. As the lovers appear in the poem they are merely looking at each other's faces wondering what they did 'till they loved.

The fixed gaze of the each in the other's eye becomes for the lovers a stratagem of resistance against their own mortality. Mortality becomes merely a fact of the body against the new unity that they 'wake upto' - their 'waking souls' holding the promise of permanence. The experience

of reciprocation is reinforced as indispensable to love, in emphasising the equality of the degree of reciprocation - 'so alike'. The 'equal mutuality' is for the two lovers to judge by the intensity and absorption of their experience

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

The text:

*As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:*

*So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.*

*Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.*

*Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.*

*But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.*

*Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.*

*If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.*

*And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.*

*Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.*

Analysis:

This poem was written for Donne's wife, Anne, in either 1611 or 1612. It was penned before he left on a trip to Europe. It was not published until after his death, appearing in the collection *Songs and Sonnets*. Donne has also structured this piece with a consistent pattern of rhyme, following the scheme of abab. In regards to meter, Donne chose to use iambic tetrameter. This means that each line contains four sets of two beats. Generally, the first of these is unstressed, and the second is stressed. The poem begins with the speaker describing the death of a virtuous man. He goes to the afterlife peacefully, so much so that his friends are not sure if he is dead or not. Donne compares this kind of peaceful parting to the way he and his wife will separate.

Rather than throwing an emotional fit, as a shallow couple would, they “melt” from one another.

This poem is noted for Donne’s use of a metaphysical conceit. Donne consoles the beloved departure - forbidding her from mourning his using an otherwise banal, rugged object, a pair of compasses. This, an otherwise un-love-like object, transmutes into a perfect metaphor for their parting, and the state of their love. Couldn't the lover simply be cracking a joke, to dispel the morose mood at the parting? Such a possibility is surely tenable, but what lends to this joke gravity is its persistence even after the stanzaic space of the four lines is exhausted. The lover pursues the image, and the subsequent stanzas see an elaborate and logically infallible maturation of the metaphor. While talking about the compass in the second stanza mentioned above, the lover is actually explaining their refined love to the beloved. The casuistry of the lines is impeccable and what may have been a joke, does make for intuition of a certain degree of 'sincerity'.

LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you learnt about two major developments in English poetry- the Shakespearan sonnet and John Donne’s metaphysical poetry. You read an introduction to Shakespeare’s sonnet, the basic form and structure of the poems. You also closely read three of his sonnets and were given an informed opinion of the major themes explored in these poems. You were also introduced to metaphysical poetry through a close analysis of poems of John Donne.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the main elements of metaphysical poetry.
2. What is metaphysical conceit? Discuss with examples
3. How does John Donne play with the tradition of courtly love? Discuss with references to his poems

PAPER CODE: MEN 102

PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

UNIT 3.2: PARADISE LOST BOOK I (*LINE 1-150*)

Unit 3.1 Paradise Lost (Book 1) (Lines 1-150)

Unit Structure

Learning Objectives

Introduction

John Milton (1608-1674)

Paradise Lost

Let us sum up

Further Reading

Answer to check your progress

Learning Objectives

After reading unit 3 you will be able to:

- Talk about the poet, Milton
 - Discuss and appreciate Paradise Lost
 - Analyse his style of writing
 - To get acquainted with Milton's puritanical bend of mind.
-

Introduction

Paradise Lost is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th-century English poet John Milton (1608–1674). The first version, published in 1667, consists of ten books with over ten thousand lines of verse. A second edition followed in 1674, arranged into twelve books (in the manner of Virgil's Aeneid) with minor revisions throughout. It is considered to be Milton's masterpiece, and it helped solidify his reputation as one of the greatest English poets of all time. The poem concerns the biblical story of the fall of man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Milton first published his seminal epic poem, Paradise Lost, in 1667. A “Revised and Augmented” version, which is the one read more widely today, was published in 1674, with this following introduction. In it, Milton explains why he has chosen to compose his long poem in English heroic verse without the use of rhyme, following the models of Homer and Virgil. Milton argues that rhyme is particularly unnecessary in longer poems, and that its unquestioned use by his peers, “carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worst than they would have expressed them.” Milton sees an inflexible application of rhyme and meter as in danger of becoming rote and mathematical, and he defends the liberty he found in releasing his poem from rhyme’s limitations.

Check your progress

What makes Paradise Lost an epic poem?

What is the writing style that Milton has adopted in this poem?

John Milton (1608-1674)

John Milton (9 December 1608 – 8 November 1674) was an English poet and intellectual. His 1667 epic poem *Paradise Lost*, written in blank verse and including over ten chapters, was written in a time of immense religious flux and political upheaval. It addressed the fall of man, including the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and God's expulsion of them from the Garden of Eden. *Paradise Lost* elevated Milton's reputation as one of history's greatest poets.[1][2] He also served as a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under its Council of State and later under Oliver Cromwell.

Milton is described as the "greatest English author" by biographer William Hayley,[3] and he remains generally regarded "as one of the preeminent writers in the English language",[4] though critical reception has oscillated in the centuries since his death, often on account of his republicanism. Samuel Johnson praised *Paradise Lost* as "a poem which ... with respect to design may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind", though he (a Tory) described Milton's politics as those of an "acrimonious and surly republican".[5] Milton was revered by poets such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Hardy.

Milton's poetry was slow to see the light of day, at least under his name. His first published poem was "On Shakespeare" (1630), anonymously included in the Second Folio edition of William Shakespeare's plays in 1632. An annotated copy of the First Folio has been suggested to contain marginal notes by Milton.[54] Milton collected his work in 1645 *Poems* in the midst of the excitement attending the possibility of establishing a new English government. The anonymous edition of *Comus* was published in 1637, and the publication of *Lycidas* in 1638 in *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago* was signed J. M. Otherwise. The 1645 collection was the only poetry of his to see print until *Paradise Lost* appeared in 1667.

Paradise Lost, Book 1, Lines 1 to 150

Lines 1–26: The Prologue and Invocation

Milton opens *Paradise Lost* by formally declaring his poem's subject: humankind's first act of disobedience toward God, and the consequences that followed from it. The act is Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the first line, Milton refers to the outcome of Adam and Eve's sin as the "fruit" of the forbidden tree, punning on the actual apple and the figurative fruits of their actions. Milton asserts that this original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

Summary: Lines 1–26: The Prologue and Invocation

Milton opens *Paradise Lost* by formally declaring his poem's subject: humankind's first act of disobedience toward God, and the consequences that followed from it. The act is Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the first line, Milton refers to the outcome of Adam and Eve's sin as the "fruit" of the forbidden tree, punning on the actual apple and the figurative fruits of their actions. Milton asserts that this original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

Milton's speaker invokes the muse, a mystical source of poetic inspiration, to sing about these subjects through him, but he makes it clear that he refers to a different muse from the muses who traditionally inspired classical poets by specifying that his muse inspired Moses to receive the Ten Commandments and write Genesis. Milton's muse is the Holy Spirit, which inspired the Christian Bible, not one of the nine classical muses who reside on Mount Helicon—the "Aonian mount" of I.15. He says that his poem, like his muse, will fly above those of the Classical poets and accomplish things never attempted before, because his source of inspiration is greater than theirs. Then he invokes the Holy Spirit, asking it to fill him with knowledge of the beginning of the world, because the Holy Spirit was the active force in creating the universe.

Milton's speaker announces that he wants to be inspired with this sacred knowledge because he wants to show his fellow man that the fall of humankind into sin and death was part of God's greater plan, and that God's plan is justified.

Summary: Lines 27–150 Satan and Hell

Immediately after the prologue, Milton raises the question of how Adam and Eve's disobedience occurred and explains that their actions were partly due to a serpent's deception. This serpent is Satan, and the poem joins him and his followers in Hell, where they have just been cast after being defeated by God in Heaven.

Satan lies stunned beside his second-in-command, Beelzebub, in a lake of fire that gives off darkness instead of light. Breaking the awful silence, Satan bemoans their terrible position, but does not repent of his rebellion against God, suggesting that they might gather their forces for another attack. Beelzebub is doubtful; he now believes that God cannot be overpowered. Satan does not fully contradict this assessment, but suggests that they could at least pervert God's good works to evil purposes. The two devils then rise up and, spreading their wings, fly over to the dry land next to the flaming lake. But they can undertake this action only because God has allowed them to loose their chains. All of the devils were formerly angels who chose to follow Satan in his rebellion, and God still intends to turn their evil deeds toward the good.

Once out of the lake, Satan becomes more optimistic about their situation. He calls the rest of the fallen angels, his legions, to join him on land. They immediately obey and, despite their wounds and suffering, fly up to gather on the plain. Milton lists some of the more notable of the angels whose names have been erased from the books of Heaven, noting that later, in the time of man, many of these devils come to be worshipped as gods.

Among these are Moloch, who is later known as a god requiring human sacrifices, and Belial, a lewd and lustful god. Still in war gear, these fallen angels have thousands of banners raised and their shields and spears in hand. Even in defeat, they are an awesome army to behold.

Satan's unrepentant evil nature is unwavering. Even cast down in defeat, he does not consider changing his ways: he insists to his fellow devils that their delight will be in doing evil, not good. In particular, as he explains to Beelzebub, he wishes to pervert God's will and find a way to make evil out of good. It is not easy for Satan to maintain this determination; the battle has just demonstrated God's overwhelming power, and the devils could not even have lifted themselves off the lake of fire unless God had allowed it. God allows it precisely because he intends to turn their evil designs toward a greater good in the end. Satan's envy of the Son's chosen status led him to rebel and consequently to be condemned. His continued envy and search for freedom leads him to believe that he would rather be a king in Hell than a servant in Heaven. Satan's pride has caused him to believe that his own free intellect is as great as God's will. Satan remarks that the mind can make its own Hell out of Heaven, or in his case, its own Heaven out of Hell.

Satan addresses his comrades and acknowledges their shame in falling to the heavenly forces, but urges them to gather in order to consider whether another war is feasible. Instantly, the legions of devils dig into the bowels of the ground, unearthing gold and other minerals. With their inhuman powers they construct a great temple in a short time. It is called Pandemonium (which means “all the demons” in Greek), and the hundreds of thousands of demonic troops gather there to hold a summit. Being spirits, they can easily shrink from huge winged creatures to the smallest size. Compacting themselves, they enter Pandemonium, and the debate begins.

In Book I, Milton presents Satan primarily as a military hero, and the council of devils as a council of war. In doing so, he makes *Paradise Lost* resonate with earlier epics, which all center around military heroes and their exploits. At the same time, Milton presents an implicit critique of a literary culture that glorifies war and warriors. Satan displays all of the virtues of a great warrior such as Achilles or Odysseus. He is courageous, undaunted, refusing to yield in the face of impossible odds, and able to stir his followers to follow him in brave and violent exploits. Milton is clearly aware of what he’s doing in making Satan somewhat appealing in the early chapters. By drawing us into sympathizing with and admiring Satan, Milton forces us to question why we admire martial prowess and pride in literary characters. Ultimately he attempts to show that the Christian virtues of obedience, humility, and forbearance are more important.

Paradise Lost Summary

"Paradise Lost" actually opens from Satan's perspective. Having just been cast out of Heaven for rebellion, Satan finds himself in a lake of fire, where he fumes over his defeat (Book I). He then gathers together all of his fellow fallen angels and they devise a plan. They will take their vengeance on God by tempting God's newest creation, mankind, to sin - and then God, who is the eternal judge, will have no choice but to also destroy his new beloved creation.

Satan convinces the other devils to let him be the one to leave Hell and travel to paradise to tempt mankind. On his way out of Hell, he meets Sin and Death, two personified characters (or characters who are the embodiment of an abstract idea). He learns that he is actually the creator of both - his rebellion yielded Sin, and his lust for sin yielded Death. Sin and Death agree to let him out of Hell if he allows them to feast on mankind after their fall (Book II).

As Satan approaches the earth, Milton shifts his narration to Heaven, where the reader observes God speaking with his Son (in Milton's version, the Son of God is a created angel adopted to be the Son of God; Milton was not a Trinitarian). Since Milton's character God is omnipotent, he can see everything in the past, the present, and the future. He knows that Satan will tempt mankind and decides to let him do so - but to prove his own glory, he will allow humanity an opportunity to repent, so that when humans die, they will enjoy paradise in Heaven instead of suffering in Hell. God asks for someone to volunteer to pay and die for the sins of mankind. The Son of God volunteers (Book III).

Satan, a shapeshifter, takes the form of an angel as he approaches earth. The brightness of the sun reminds him of the glory and happiness his rebellion lost him, and he rages about his punishment but also confesses that he feels no real remorse.

After he sneaks into the paradise designed for mankind, called The Garden of Eden, Satan observes Adam and Eve, the first humans. He learns that they are free to do whatever they please but have one commandment they must not disobey on punishment of death: They may not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan also listens to Eve describe the

backstory of her creation from one of Adam's ribs and her temptation to love her own reflection more than Adam or God.

Further Reading

John Milton is unrivalled—for the music of his verse and the breadth of his learning. In this brisk, topical, and engaging biography, Stephen B. Dobranski brushes the scholarly dust from the portrait of the artist to reveal Milton's essential humanity and his unwavering commitment to ideals—freedom of religion and the right and responsibility of all persons to think for themselves—that are still relevant and necessary in our times.

Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, is considered by many to be English poetry's masterpiece. Samuel Johnson, not one for effusive praise, claimed that from Milton's "books alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned." But Milton's renown rests on more than his artistic achievements. In a time of convulsive political turmoil, he justified the killing of a king, pioneered free speech, and publicly defended divorce. He was, in short, an iconoclast, an independent, even revolutionary, thinker. He was also an imperfect man—acrimonious, sometimes mean. Above all, he understood adversity. Afflicted by blindness, illness, and political imprisonment, Milton always sought to "bear up and steer right onward" through life's hardships.

Dobranski looks beyond Milton's academic standing, beyond his reputation as a dour and devout purist, to reveal the ongoing power of his works and the dauntless courage that he both wrote about and exemplified.

Answer to check your progress

What is Satan's plan in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton?

Why is Satan transformed into a serpent?

Why do Adam and Eve eat the fruit?

Why is Satan cast out of heaven?

Model Questions

Q. Describe the tone of lines 12 - 16.

Q. What does Satan vow to do after being cast out?

Q. With what Literary element does the epic open?

Q. What is the central idea of the poem "*Paradise Lost*"?

PAPER CODE: MEN 102

PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

UNIT 3.2 JOHN DRYDEN: *MAC FLECKNOE*

UNIT 3.2 JOHN DRYDEN: MACFLECKNOE

Unit Structure

Introduction

Learning Objectives

Introduction

John Dryden: About the Author

Explanation of the Poem *Mac Flecknoe*

Themes

Let Us Sum Up

Model Questions

INTRODUCTION

Satire is a genre of the visual, literary, and performing arts, usually in the form of fiction and less frequently non-fiction, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, often with the intent of exposing or shaming the perceived flaws of individuals, corporations, government, or society itself into improvement. Although satire is usually meant to be humorous, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society.

Mac Flecknoe or *Mac Flecknoe: A satyr upon the True-Blue-Protestant Poet* is a verse mock-heroic satire written by John Dryden. It is a direct attack on Thomas Shadwell, a contemporary of Dryden and was written as a result of the disagreement between the two poets over the quality of Ben Jonson's wit. This comic lampoon was both the first English mock-heroic poem and the immediate ancestor of Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*.

JOHN DRYDEN: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Dryden (1631 – 1700) was an English poet, literary critic, translator, and playwright of the Restoration Age in England. He was appointed England's first Poet Laureate of England in

1668. After the Restoration of King Charles II, Dryden quickly established himself as the leading poet and literary critic of his day, he transferred his allegiances to the new government. Along with *Astraea Redux*, Dryden welcomed the new regime with two more panegyrics: *To His Sacred Majesty: A Panegyric on his Coronation* (1662) and *To My Lord Chancellor* (1662). These poems suggest that Dryden was looking to court a possible patron, but he was to instead make a living in writing for publishers, not for the aristocracy, and thus ultimately for the reading public. During his lifetime, Dryden had written several dramatic works and poems. His best known works include *Mac Flecknoe*, *Absolam and Achitophel*, *All for Love*, *Toilus and Cressida*, *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day*, among others.

EXPLANATION OF THE POEM *MAC FLECKNOE*

The play is narrated by the poet (Dryden) in the third-person perspective and is introduced as “A Satire on the True-blue Protestant T.S.,” or Thomas Shadwell. The poet introduces Flecknoe, who like the Roman ruler Augustus, was called to rule when he was young. He rules the peaceful realm of Nonsense now, but is growing old and decides that Fate wants him to settle the business of the State.

Flecknoe ponders which of his sons should succeed him in warring eternally with wit. It will be the one who resembles him most: Shadwell, who even while young in years is mature in dullness. He is “confirm’d in full stupidity” (line 18), and while some of his brothers occasionally grasp meaning, he never has any sense at all. Other people are illuminated by beams of wit, but Shadwell’s “genuine night admits no ray” (line 23). His “fogs” (line 24) clog up the day and his elaborate, histrionic clothing is thoughtless like the thoughtless monarch oaks that solemnly rule over the plain. The proud father deems Shadwell “the last great prophet of tautology” (line 30), not dissimilar to Heywood and Shirley before him. As for Flecknoe, he admits he is just a dunce who paved the way for Shadwell. When he warbled with his lute for King John I of Portugal, he was merely prelude to the day when Shadwell would sail down the river Thames, puffed up and proud with his royal task.

There has never been his like – it is as if a new Arion is sailing. Treble and bass sound out, the name Shadwell resounds from Pissing-Alley and Aston Hall. Little fishes surround the boat, clamoring as they would on morning toast.

St. Andre’s feet never kept equal time like this, nor did Shadwell’s own *Psyche*. Like tautology they collapsed. The jealous Singleton forswears his lute and sword, and will never act

like Villerius again. Flecknoe stops talking for a moment. He weeps for joy of his son, knowing that Shadwell's plays persuade "that for anointed dullness he was made" (line 63).

The narrator then describes that near the walls of London (called Augusta) there once stood a barbican and a watch tower, but now it is just a pile of ruins. There are brothel houses that rise from the rubble; mother-strumpets keep court there. A nursery rises as a birthplace for queens and future heroes; "unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry" (line 76).

Great Fletcher will not wear his boots here, and neither will Jonson in his socks. Simkin finds a nice reception, though, amid this "monument of vanish'd minds" (line 82). This is the well-known place where Flecknoe designs Shadwell's throne. A long time ago, Decker prophesied that a mighty prince shall rule this pile, a prince "born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense" (line 89). The prince's pen will create misers, humorists, and hypocrites, as well as whole families of Raymond and tribes of Bruce.

Empress Fame publishes the account of Shadwell's name. Nations hearing of him meet together. There are no Persian carpets lining the street, only "scatter'd limbs of mangled poets" (line 99). Writers like Heywood, Shirley, and Ogleby lay in the street, but it is mostly Shadwell that clogs it up. Finally, the prince appears in all his majesty, sitting atop a throne of his labors. Flecknoe compares Shadwell to Ascanius, son of Aeneas, who famously sat at his father's right hand and inherited the kingdom. Shadwell's brows are like thick fogs, and dullness swirls about his visage. Shadwell swears he will maintain dullness until his death. He will never make peace with wit and never sign a truce with sense.

The king, having made his own unction of ale, places a mug of it in his son's hand. He conveys the right to rule over his son who had, since a young age, practiced the "righteous lore" (line 124). The king seems to consecrate his son's head, and at that very moment it is as if twelve owls fly off from his left hand. The admiring crowd shouts acclamations.

Then, Flecknoe, his forehead dewy with oblivion, shakes his head and scatters the drops on his son. He stands there in a prophetic mood and declares that Heaven shall bless his son and he shall reign from Ireland to Barbados; there will be no end to his dominion and it will be greater than his father's. Flecknoe pauses to let the people cry "Amen!" He continues, proclaiming admiringly that his son still advances in impudence and ignorance. Others can learn success, but from Flecknoe, Shadwell has learned "pangs without birth, and fruitless industry" (line 148).

Flecknoe tells Shadwell to trust in his own dull nature and when he does, Sir Formal's "oratory will be thine" (line 168) and he will help his quill. He hopes no false friends seduce him by using Ben Jonson's name; it is only his father and Uncle Ogleby whom he should heed. Flecknoe urges Shadwell to remember he is of his blood and Jonson has no part there, for "What share have we in Nature or in Art?" (line 176). Jonson never rails at wit he does not understand, does not have a Prince Nikander or a Psyche, or promise a play and give a farce instead. On oily water he floats while Shadwell sinks.

Flecknoe exhorts his son to remember that this is his place, his way; he gets to add new humors to his plays and indulge in dullness. Shadwell may be a large, bulky man with a huge belly, but his plays never bite or offend. Even though his heart may have venom, it dies the moment it touches his Irish pen.

Shadwell's genius does not lie in iambics but rather in simple anagrams. He should not, Flecknoe counsels, worry about plays; instead, he should focus on acrostics. In those he can be famous and torture words in thousands of ways. If not those, then perhaps songs set to a lute. As Flecknoe speaks, his words fall away because Bruce and Longvil spring their trap: Flecknoe sinks down, leaving his robe behind, and born upward by flatulence, the mantle settles on the son who possesses "double portion of his father's art" (line 217).

THEMES

Wit versus Humour

Dryden is a proponent of wit while he sees Shadwell as someone caught up in extolling the "humours" in poetry. Characters who embodied the humors were one dimensional, inclined to predictability and indicative of a deterministic worldview. They were ruled by their passions and could never change; they were consistent and, according to Dryden, only duplicated "the follies and extravagances of Bedlam." Dryden cared about wit and repartee in comedy and saw humors as akin to farce. They were outdated and did not make for good and meaningful comedy.

Debasing of Poetry and Art

Through the poem, Dryden indirectly accuses Shadwell of debasing poetry and art. Shadwell's dullness, lack of sense, ignorance, impudence, and reliance upon appealing to audience's baser proclivities contribute to the overall debasement of contemporary poetry (at least in Dryden's view). Dryden emphasizes his stance through the gross surroundings in which the coronation of Shadwell takes place.

Nature

In the final section of the poem, Flecknoe exhorts his son not "labour to be dull; But write thy best, and top; and in each line, Sir Formal's oratory will be thine" (lines 166-168). This is important because it shows that Shadwell is not adopting dullness of his own accord, and he doesn't even need to try to do so; rather, he is inherently dull. This is what he was born with, and so he is destined to be a poetaster, and not a poet.

LET US SUM UP

From this Self Learning Material, you came to know about John Dryden and his contribution as a satirical writer. You have learnt about the poem *Mac Flecknoe*, its themes and significance.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is a satire? Discuss the contribution of John Dryden as a satirist.
2. Explain the poem *Mac Flecknoe*.
3. Discuss the themes present in the poem *Macflecknoe*.

PAPER CODE: MEN 102

PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

UNIT 4.1: ALEXANDER POPE: AN EPISTLE TO DOCTOR ARBUTHNOT

UNIT 4.1 ALEXANDER POPE: AN EPISTLE TO DOCTOR ARBUTHNOT

Unit Structure

Objectives

Introduction

Explanation of the Lines

Critical Appreciation

Major Themes of the Poem

Model Questions

Objectives

- To make the learners familiar with the works of Alexander Pope
- To understand how satire was used in poetry, at times to serve moral purpose
- To familiarize them with the themes of the poem.

Introduction

Alexander Pope (May 21, 1688-May 30, 1744) was an English poet and satirist of the English Augustan period, best known for his poems *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), *The Rape of the Lock* (1712–14), *The Dunciad* (1728), and *An Essay on Man* (1733–34) and *An Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot* (1734-1735).

When the “Pastorals” were published, Pope was already at work on a poem on the art of writing. This was *An Essay on Criticism*, published in 1711. Its brilliantly polished epigrams such as “A little learning is a dangerous thing,” “To err is human, to forgive, divine,” and “For fools rush in where angels fear to tread”, etc, which have become part of the English language, are readily traced to their sources in Horace, Quintilian, Boileau, and other critics of both modern and ancient times.

The *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is a satire in poetic form written by Alexander Pope and addressed to his friend John Arbuthnot, a physician. It was first published in 1735 and composed in 1734, when Pope learned that Arbuthnot was dying. Pope described it as a memorial of their friendship. It has been called Pope's "most directly autobiographical work",

in which he defends his practice in the genre of satire and attacks those who had been his opponents and rivals throughout his career.

Explanation of the lines

(Lines 1-6)

In this stanza, Pope expresses a desire for privacy and retreat from the frenetic activities of the world. Pope simply wants a break from the chaos and noise around him. He vividly describes the intense atmosphere and compares it to madness being unleashed. The poet is essentially asking for a break from the chaotic influences around, suggesting a need for solitude and peace.

(Lines 7- 14)

In this stanza, the poet vividly expresses a sense of frustration and invasion of personal space. The rhetorical questions at the beginning convey a feeling of helplessness, as if there is no escape or refuge from unwanted intrusion. The poet describes the relentless pursuit of these intruders, emphasizing their determination by land and water. The statement that "No place is sacred, not the church is free" suggests a profound disillusionment, indicating that even traditionally sacred or protected spaces are violated. The mention of Sunday not being a Sabbath-day emphasizes the constant disruption, as even a day traditionally associated with rest and tranquility is not spared. The statement that "No place is sacred, not the church is free" suggests a profound disillusionment, indicating that even traditionally sacred or protected spaces are violated. The mention of Sunday not being a Sabbath-day emphasizes the constant disruption, as even a day traditionally associated with rest and tranquility is not spared.

(Lines 15-26)

In this stanza, the poet presents a satirical commentary on various characters who turn to him in times of peculiar circumstances. The description includes a parson immersed in beer, an emotional poetess, a rhyming peer, and a neglectful clerk. These individuals turn to the poet, seeking his help in maintaining their eccentric or vain behaviors. The poet humorously portrays himself as the source of blame for troubles in people's lives, with examples like Arthur accusing him of influencing his son negatively, and Cornus attributing his wife's departure to wit, poetry, and Pope. The stanza satirically explores the absurdity of people blaming the poet for their own misfortunes. Overall, the stanza explores the theme of humor and satire, revealing the poet's wry commentary on human behavior and the tendency to blame external influences for personal troubles.

(Lines 27-40)

In this stanza, the poet thinks about how their creative work, inspired by a friend, affects their life. They face a tough choice between dealing with fools' anger or the complications of love. The burden of judgment and the challenge of staying silent or truthful add to their struggles. Balancing humor and seriousness is hard, and reading becomes unpleasant. The poet reluctantly suggests waiting nine years before sharing their work, highlighting the difficulties of expressing oneself creatively while dealing with societal expectations.

(Lines: 41-46)

In this stanza the poet, describes a person in Drury Lane, a famous theater area in London. This individual is presented as a poet in a prominent position, perhaps metaphorically, who finds inspiration in the gentle breezes coming through a broken window. The poet writes verses even before fully waking up and rushes to publish them before a deadline or term ends, driven by a mix of hunger and requests from friends. The poet acknowledges that others might spot flaws in their work and, in a humble and open-minded manner, invites critics to propose improvements. The phrase "I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it" reflects the poet's readiness to embrace feedback and make necessary adjustments to the poem. These lines illuminate the creative process, the pressures of meeting deadlines, and the poet's openness to constructive criticism.

(Lines:47-50)

In this stanza, the poet describes three things constrained by someone else's humble requests: the speaker's friendship, the creation of a prologue, and the contribution of ten pounds. Pitholeon is introduced as an individual who contacts the speaker, sharing a desire for a patron and asking them to approach a person of high status, referred to as "his Grace," to seek a position or favour.

(Lines: 51-54)

In this stanza, the speaker is conveying that Pitholeon had previously spoken ill of them, but now sends a letter claiming ignorance at that time. The speaker is challenging the recipient to see if they would reject Pitholeon's current request. Additionally, there's an invitation from Curll to dine, suggesting that Pitholeon might pursue a different path, either writing a journal or turning towards a more religious theme.

(Lines:55- 68)

Here the poet, narrates an amusing situation where they receive a play from an unknown person. The poet receives a packet containing a new play, described as a "virgin tragedy" and an "orphan muse." The poet faces a dilemma disliking it may lead to curses, but if they approve, they are urged to recommend it for the stage. The poet, fortunate not to be friends with the players, decides to print the play if it's rejected by the theater, intending to shame the critics. The stanza humorously depicts the negotiations with an enthusiastic but persistent writing, culminating in the poet's decision to end the interaction and avoid further entanglements. These lines provide a humorous and insightful glimpse into the challenges, pressures, and negotiations involved in navigating the reception and publication of creative works, offering a witty commentary on the complexities of the literary world.

(Lines:- 69-74)

In this stanza, the poet playfully alludes to the myth of King Midas, famous for turning everything he touched into gold. The reference is made to Midas' ears, which, according to the myth, sprang donkey ears due to a misguided wish. The speaker amusingly suggests that someone close to Midas, possibly his queen or a minister, had to speak up about the unusual ears. The speaker then draws a parallel to their own situation, claiming that their predicament is even worse. Instead of golden ears, the speaker contends that they have to endure the constant presence of fools who, metaphorically speaking, "perk" or draw attention to themselves in an annoying way. The use of the term "coxcomb" implies individuals who are arrogant or foolish. In essence, the lines humorously express the speaker's exasperation at dealing with the bothersome behavior of fools, drawing on the amusing imagery from the Midas myth.

(Lines: 75 -82)

In these lines, the speaker advises their friend to avoid discussing risky subjects like queens, ministers, or kings. Instead, they suggest talking about safer topics, like ears, particularly those of asses. The speaker seems to downplay the importance of discussing ears, calling it "nothing." However, they quickly add a playful twist by questioning if it's truly harmless, especially when fools might get offended by seemingly innocuous topics. The speaker then introduces a secret revealed in the "Dunciad," a satirical poem. The secret is that everyone, especially fools, is essentially foolish themselves. This injects humor and satire into the lines, suggesting that the

real danger lies in not recognizing one's own foolishness. Overall, these lines cleverly comment on the delicate nature of certain discussions and highlight the theme of folly. The passage refers to King Midas who was cursed by Apollo to have ass's ears, to indicate his stupidity in the decision he made as an umpire in a musical contest. But the King naturally tried his best to hide his ears. Pope means to get similar relief only after he circulates the truth and proclaims that each fool is an ass. It throws light on Pope's mental attitude, one of restlessness till he publishes his unpleasant attacks even against asses as he calls them, and whatever their truth be.

(Lines 83-108)

In these lines the poet offers a perspective on handling criticism and mockery. They suggest that ridiculing fools shouldn't be seen as cruelty because fools are least affected by such taunts and can endure them without much distress. The speaker amusingly illustrates the resilience of individuals like Codrus, who remain indifferent and composed even amid uproarious laughter. The metaphor of breaking a cobweb signifies attempting to criticize or debunk a fool's work, only to find that the fool easily reconstructs their flimsy arguments. The poet acknowledges the futility of trying to shame mediocre writers, as they persist in creating self-indulgent pieces. The speaker satirically describes these writers as proud of their extensive but insubstantial writings. The poet questions whether real harm befalls individuals criticized in satire, mentioning poets, peers, and specific figures from the literary world. The speaker humorously notes that despite criticism, certain figures like Colley, Henley, Moore, and Philips continue to thrive. There's a caution against explicitly naming individuals to avoid offense. The poet, possibly indicating their own capabilities, acknowledges the potential for writing but refrains to prevent making enemies. The poem concludes by suggesting that flattery is more harmful than criticism and highlights that a fool's anger is innocent, but their regret is more troublesome.

(Lines:109-114)

The poet reflects on the varied responses they face from different quarters in response to their work. One individual dedicates lavish praise in elaborate prose but simultaneously ridicules numerous enemies. Another, under the guise of friendship, defends the poet by mocking those who oppose them. Within the realm of Grub Street, a symbolic space for struggling writers, some vehemently defend the poet's reputation, even resorting to abusive language. The poet

acknowledges the presence of those driven by personal motives; for example, someone prints their letters with an expectation of a bribe. Furthermore, there are those who actively promote subscriptions, emphasizing the commercial aspect of garnering public support. The poet paints a picture of the intricate and occasionally conflicting responses they encounter—from praise to defense, criticism, and commercial expectations. These diverse reactions contribute to the complex dynamics surrounding the poet's work and reputation.

(Lines 115—24)

In these lines, the poet, Alexander Pope, uses satire and self-mockery. The poet addresses those who seek to flatter and please, sarcastically suggesting that they compare the poet's traits to those of historical figures like Horace, Ammon's son, and Ovid. The poet humorously invites these flatterers to find similarities between their own flaws and those of renowned individuals from the past. By playfully encouraging flatterers to comfort the poet by drawing parallels between their imperfections and those of great figures, the poet exposes the absurdity of seeking validation in such comparisons. In the final two lines, the poet satirically touches on mortality and the desire for posthumous recognition, using it as a humorous commentary on the human tendency to crave praise and assurance.

(Lines: 125 -34)

In these lines, Pope reflects on the origin of his writing impulse. He questions whether his inclination to write was a result of some unknown sin, whether from his parents or a personal choice. As a child, before seeking fame, he naturally expressed himself in verse. The poet emphasizes that he didn't forsake any legitimate occupation or defy parental authority to pursue what might seem like an idle profession. His writing, instead, was a way to offer solace to friends rather than seeking personal fame. Pope acknowledges the Muse's role in helping him navigate life's challenges and expresses gratitude to Arbuthnot for his support and guidance in preserving the poet's well-being. The poet underscores that his writing was a thoughtful response to life's difficulties, not a reckless pursuit of recognition.

(Lines 135-46)

In these lines, Alexander Pope reflects on his decision to publish his writings. He mentions the support and praise he received from influential and knowledgeable figures such as Granville,

Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, Rochester, and St. John. These individuals, held in high regard in both society and literature, acknowledged Pope's talent and welcomed him into the esteemed circle of poets. The poet expresses his gratitude for the approval and encouragement of these esteemed figures, finding joy in being recognized and appreciated by them. He contrasts this genuine appreciation with the critiques of historians and critics like Burnet, Oldmixon, and Cooke, suggesting that a true assessment of both individuals and their works should come from those who possess a deep understanding and appreciation of literature, rather than relying solely on the perspectives of biased or less informed critics. Pope here emphasizes the importance of receiving praise and validation from respected literary figures as a motivating factor for publishing, considering their endorsements more meaningful than the judgments of certain historians and critics.

(Lines 147- 156)

In these lines, Alexander Pope reflects on the mild and inoffensive nature of his poetry when it was primarily descriptive and lacked controversial elements. He suggests that during this period, his verses, much like "gentle Fanny's flowery theme," were comparable to pleasant descriptions of a painted mistress or a babbling stream. Despite the benign nature of his work, Pope acknowledges that critics like Gildon and Dennis still found reasons to criticize. Gildon is portrayed as using his pen for financial gain, and Pope expresses a desire for him to have a meal and be content, opting not to engage in conflict. As for Dennis, depicted as passionately ranting, Pope refrains from responding, emphasizing that he had no debts or obligations to Dennis. The poet conveys a sense of detachment from the criticism, indicating that if these attacks were motivated by necessity or irrationality, he chose not to initiate a conflict. The references to Bedlam (a mental institution) and the Mint (associated with financial troubles) suggest that Pope preferred not to engage in disputes with those possibly driven by personal or financial issues rather than a genuine critique of his work.

(Lines 157-72)

In these lines, Pope makes fun of critics who focus too much on grammar and punctuation but lack important qualities like spirit, taste, and sense. The poet humorously acknowledges their attention to details like commas and points, playfully suggesting it would be a mistake not to give them credit for such precision. Despite their carefulness, Pope argues that these critics, from Bentley to Tibbalds, never achieved any recognition or praise. Pope casually dismisses those who only scan and spell words, suggesting that even these small critics might gain some

respect if they associate themselves with the names of literary giants like Milton or Shakespeare. In the closing lines, Pope uses a metaphor involving amber to criticize those who obsess over trivial details, wondering how such unimportant things ended up there. Here the poet makes fun of overly meticulous and picky critics, pointing out their lack of true literary insight and achievement.

(Lines 173-92)

In these lines, Pope addresses the anger of fellow poets provoked by his satire. He excuses their fury, suggesting they deserved the criticism he directed at them. Pope reflects on the difficulty of accurately assessing a person's true merit, emphasizing the subjective standards each individual holds in their mind. He critiques poets who gain recognition through stolen works, those who produce little despite thriving on theft, and those whose writing lacks clear meaning. Pope humorously mentions poets he encouraged to translate, playfully asserting that nine such poets collectively amount to a poet named Tate. The lines depict the furious reactions of these poets to Pope's satire, including their indignation, stamping, roaring, and swearing, even questioning the safety of a respected figure like Addison. Pope uses satire to expose the shortcomings and pretensions of certain poets, evoking their intense and heated responses.

(Lines:193-214)

In this stanza, Pope describes an individual with genuine genius, fair fame, and a myriad of talents. Despite these positive attributes, this person is hindered by insecurities, avoiding sharing the limelight. Pope criticizes them for harboring envy, looking down upon others with similar gifts, and hesitating to acknowledge their merits. The person is depicted as employing subtle criticism, offering polite agreement with a concealed sneer, and subtly encouraging others to share in disdain. Pope portrays this individual as unwilling to directly confront or criticize, opting for a reserved approach. They are described as a cautious adversary and a distrustful friend, consistently wary of fools and surrounded by flatterers. The person is excessively focused on self-applause, imposing their opinions on a select group and receiving praise from those lacking genuine discernment. In the concluding lines, Pope questions the existence of such an individual, suggesting that if they do exist, it would be laughable. However, there's an underlying sense of sadness, particularly if this person resembles Atticus, known for his friendship with Cicero. Pope here critiques the hypocrisy, insecurity, and lack of genuine admiration in this person.

(Lines: 215-230)

In these lines, Pope rejects the idea of seeking attention for his name being widely displayed. He mentions the possibility of his name being celebrated publicly but asserts that he doesn't desire acknowledgment from the writing community. Pope likens himself to Asian monarchs who prefer to stay away from public attention. He expresses indifference to poems, even those that have praised him for a long time, comparing this indifference to how a birthday song may mean little to someone important like George. Pope avoids the company of fellow writers and critics, steering clear of the busy literary scene. He contrasts himself with those who eagerly promote their own verses, describing them as resembling puppies running around town to fetch and carry their sing-song. Pope declares his disinterest in attending rehearsals, leaving the entire realm of poetic pursuits to someone named Bufo. Pope conveys a disdain for public attention and self-promotion in literary circles, preferring to distance himself from the fuss and leave the world of poetry to someone else.

(Lines 231-48)

In these lines, Pope satirizes a figure named Bufo, presenting him as a proud and self-inflated individual akin to Apollo on his hill. Bufo is portrayed as receiving excessive flattery and dedication from various poets, particularly in collaboration with Horace. His library, adorned with busts of dead poets and a headless Pindar, becomes a gathering place for a variety of poets seeking both judgment and favor. Bufo's discernment is questioned as poets vie for his approval and a place in his esteemed library. The satire extends to his frugality in later years, paying some poets with wine, some with praise, and subjecting others to dry rehearsals. The notable absence of Dryden is highlighted, suggesting that even the great are not immune to Bufo's judgments. Pope suggests that Dryden, despite his eminence, was not spared from Bufo's scrutiny, as he alludes to Dryden helping to bury those he may have indirectly contributed to starving. The lines humorously critique the dynamics of literary patronage and the whims of those in positions of influence.

(Lines: 149-60)

In these lines, Pope expresses a desire for patrons to support the endeavors of less accomplished poets and hopes that each mediocre writer finds their own critic. He envisions a scenario where inept poets, represented by Bavius and Bufo, are paired with each other, allowing them to be

dismissed when statesmen require defense or when envy and pride demand flattery. Pope acknowledges the significance of great patrons and expresses gratitude for those he has had. He mentions Gay, an unrecognized genius who passed away without receiving the acknowledgment he deserved. The poet reflects on his own verses and the grief of Queensberry, who mourns over Gay's unmarked tomb as the sole recognition of his virtuous life. These lines emphasize the struggles faced by overlooked talents and the influential role of patrons in shaping the destiny of poets.

(Lines 269-70)

In these lines, Alexander Pope expresses his desire for a straightforward and self-sufficient life. He underscores the importance of maintaining the dignity and ease that come with being a poet, living life on his own terms. Pope values the freedom to choose his friends and read whatever books he pleases, prioritizing personal pursuits over seeking patronage or engaging in complex political matters. While he acknowledges occasional connections with ministers, he asserts that he wasn't meant for the intricacies of courtly affairs. Pope cherishes a life centered on fulfilling personal responsibilities, believing and saying prayers, and being able to sleep without the weight of political or literary concerns, indifferent to the fate of figures like Dennis. Overall, the poet values a life of personal independence, simplicity, and a focus on his own well-being. Thus these lines which claim Pope's tranquillity and rest, and indifference and unconcerned nature towards his enemies, are in the form of a dignified pose which the poet assumes.

(Lines- 171-82)

In these lines, Alexander Pope expresses irritation at the constant inquiries about his upcoming literary works. He questions whether his life's purpose is solely to write and whether there are no other joys or meaningful pursuits for him. Pope sarcastically mentions the association with Swift and how people anticipate more works from him. Despite repeatedly denying any imminent projects, others insist that a genius like him cannot remain inactive. Pope humorously mentions being mistaken for lampoons created by individuals like Sir Will. or Bubo. Despite his innocence, Pope finds amusement in the fact that his writing style is so distinctive that even coxcombs can identify him. Overall, the poet reflects on the expectations placed on him as a writer and the humorous misunderstandings surrounding his identity and literary output.

(Lines:183-304)

In these lines, Pope strongly condemns the use of poetry that damages a person's character or virtue. He curses any verse that turns a worthy individual into an adversary, spreads scandal about virtue, instills fear in innocence, or brings tears to a gentle virgin. Pope criticizes those who disrupt a neighbor's peace, insult those who have fallen from grace or distressed beauty, propagate lies, write harmful pieces, or replicate damaging content. He particularly targets individuals who, while pretending to be patrons, harm an author's honest reputation in their absence and selfishly approve of merit without genuine affection. Pope highlights the vanity of those who claim friendship but lack the honor to defend when necessary. He exposes those who disclose private thoughts and words, and, if not outright lying, at least betraying trust. The poet further criticizes individuals who swear falsely, misapply literature, turn satire into lampoons, and distort fiction into lies. Pope asserts that his critique is directed at such talkative fools, sparing honest individuals from undue fear. Here, the poet strongly condemns the misuse of poetry to harm others and underscores the consequences for those who engage in such behavior. The passage is an example of pleasing alliteration and is full of force and precision.

(Lines:305- 33)

In this Stanza, Pope harshly criticizes a character named Sporus, questioning their ability to comprehend satire or sense. Depicting Sporus as a delicately created being born from ass's milk, Pope employs vivid imagery to describe the figure with gilded wings, buzzing annoyingly around the witty and fair. Despite a flashy appearance, Sporus is compared to a well-bred spaniel that mumbles without biting, and his perpetual smiles betray an underlying emptiness. Pope underscores the contradictions in Sporus's character, portraying them as an amphibious entity shifting between roles—a fop at the toilet, a flatterer at the board, tripping like a lady or strutting as a lord. Drawing parallels to Eve's tempter, Pope depicts Sporus with a cherub's face but a corrupted heart, presenting beauty that is unsettling, parts that are untrustworthy, and wit that is deceptive. Ultimately, Pope condemns Sporus for their superficiality, insincerity, and moral ambiguity.

(Lines:333-359)

In these verses, Pope lauds a poet who remains independent of fortune, fashion, greed, and ambition. The poet's commendation comes from their ability to please through honorable means, refraining from flattery even towards monarchs and holding lies, whether in verse or prose, in equal disdain. This poet is characterized by a commitment to truth, grounding their work in morality rather than meandering through fanciful realms. Their motivation is not fame but the pursuit of virtue. Facing adversaries, timid allies, criticism, and mockery, the poet maintains resilience and even finds humor in the absence of friends among the dull, proud, wicked, and mad. Enduring false accusations, imputed nonsense, and attacks on their character, the poet responds phlegmatically, to the abuse spread by those they loved or who loved them. Pope extends a warm welcome to fair Virtue, expressing gratitude for her presence in the poet's life through past challenges and accepting her even in the face of future trials.

(Lines: 360- 67)

In these lines, Pope expresses his impartial disdain for knaves, regardless of their social status or success. Whether a knave is found at court or in jail, a hireling scribbler or a peer, on a pillory or near a throne, Pope considers them equally deserving of his scorn. The poet emphasizes that the individual's proximity to power or their own failures does not alter his contempt for their dishonest and corrupt nature.

(Lines: 368- 387)

In this stanza, Pope describes a person, possibly Welsted, who is soft by nature, more trusting than clever, and has been deceived. Sappho can testify to how this individual was deceived. Despite being feared as a satirist, even Dennis admits that he is an enemy to his pride but a friend in times of distress. The person is portrayed as humble, having approached Tibbald's door, shared a drink with Cibber, and even written verses for Moore. Despite being slandered for ten years, the person rarely responded, allowing Welsted's lies to persist. When his life was aspersed to please a mistress, he didn't retaliate but allowed her to become his wife. Pope mentions other satirical writers like Budgell and the Curlls, who abuse their targets, but emphasizes that this person's family, particularly James Moore, should be spared from such attacks. Pope praises the unspotted names of this individual and their family, considering them memorable if virtue or song holds any power.

(Lines: 388-405)

In this stanza, Pope portrays an individual of noble lineage, with ancestors who earned honor

through bloodshed when such actions were applauded in Britain. The poet underscores that the person's wealth was self-earned, surpassing even what Bestia gained from a royal throne. This individual, born without pride and free from familial conflicts, avoided marrying into discord. They remained untouched by political and religious turmoil, leading a tranquil life. The good person refrained from legal entanglements, avoided oaths and lies, and lacked the education of a scholar but spoke sincerely. With a natural honesty and wisdom gained from life experiences, the person maintained good health through moderation and exercise. Their long life was devoid of sickness, and death arrived instantly and painlessly. Pope expresses a personal desire to live and die similarly, believing that such a life, unburdened by royal lineage, would bring greater joy than that experienced by those born into royalty.

(Lines: 406-419)

In this stanza, Pope extends warm wishes to his friend for a fulfilling domestic life. He expresses a willingness to take on the nurturing role during the friend's old age, offering comfort, companionship, and understanding. Pope hopes to alleviate the challenges that come with aging, bringing joy to moments of weariness and providing solace in the face of death. The poet envisions himself as a supportive presence, capable of deciphering unspoken thoughts and prolonging the time spent with a parent. Pope prays for his friend to experience a long and blessed life, maintaining a social, cheerful, and serene disposition. Regardless of whether prosperity continues or not, the poet acknowledges that certain aspects are beyond human control and ultimately rest in the hands of a higher power. In essence, these verses convey a heartfelt desire for his friend's well-being and contentment throughout the various stages of life.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Pope's "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" not only defends his poetry but also talks about the problems in literature and society during the 18th century. The poem looks at human behavior, showing how jealousy and envy can harm the artistic community. It explores friendship, loyalty, and betrayal among artists in a competitive and sometimes tricky environment. Pope uses classical references and poetic styles, showing his knowledge and skill. This makes the poem more than just satire; it becomes an important literary work. The mix of humor, wisdom, and criticism makes it a rich exploration of human nature and society.

The poem's predominant tone is satirical, marked by mockery and defiance as Alexander Pope sharpens his language to criticize and ridicule his detractors. His writing style in "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is distinguished by wit, satire, and various rhetorical devices. Employing techniques like allusion, metaphor, irony, and wordplay, Pope crafts a pointed message that resonates with his sharp commentary. Throughout the poem, the satirical tone intensifies, particularly when Pope targets a clerk who neglects his duties in favor of writing poetry and an individual resorting to charcoal when denied traditional writing materials. Pope sarcastically portrays himself as an entertaining and vain figure for these individuals, highlighting their dependence on him to sustain their madness or vanity. It is a rich blend of satire, introspection, and emotional intensity, offering a nuanced and multi-layered reading experience. Amid the satirical elements, there is a sense of vulnerability as Pope reflects on his mortality and the transient nature of fame. The poem, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" encapsulates the complexity of human emotions and relationships within the context of literary and societal challenges. The satirical elements provide a sharp critique, while moments of introspection convey a deeper emotional resonance. The poem becomes a tapestry of wit, vulnerability, and biting commentary, inviting readers to navigate the intricate layers of Pope's exploration of the human condition.

The poem also touches on politics, discussing power struggles and corruption of the time. Its relevance goes beyond the past, as readers can see connections to today's issues. "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is a thoughtful masterpiece, making us think about human behavior, artistic honesty, and societal values. Pope's storytelling and insights ensure that this satire remains important over time. It represents to have remonstrated the poet not to refer to Queens or Kings, as it is a dangerous thing, but the persists in exposing the truth about those foolish writers, by publishing the Dunciad. According to him each fool is an ass and this secret should be proclaimed to all.

Major themes of the Poem

Friendship and Gratitude:

Through the poem "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," Alexander Pope explores the theme of friendship and gratitude in his relationship with Dr. Arbuthnot. Pope expresses profound gratitude for Arbuthnot's loyal support and portraying their friendship as a source of sustenance in both

personal and literary aspects of his life. The poem emphasizes the mutual understanding shared between them. Arbuthnot not only as a loyal friend but also as a defender against criticism. Pope's appreciation and admiration show how genuine friendship is like a powerful source of strength, comfort, and inspiration for navigating life's challenges and creative pursuits.

Role of the Poet:

Through the portrayal of a poet, Pope expressed the personal grievances, by defending his poetic style, and navigate the complexities of fame and criticism. Through the portrayal of the poet, Pope to express personal grievances, defend his poetic style, and navigate the complexities of fame and criticism. Pope's voice to explore the impact of critics, the desire for recognition, and the ongoing struggle for artistic integrity. With this poem, Pope shapes the role of the poet as both an artist facing external scrutiny and an individual grappling with the demands of creativity, fame, and self-expression.

Critique of Literary and Social Norms:

The theme of critiquing the literary and social norms revolves around Alexander Pope's criticism of how things were done in literature and society during the 18th century. Using satire, Pope sharply points out problems in poetry, particularly how some focus too much on style and not enough on substance. The poem is his bold response to critics, exposing their envy and rejecting established ways of judging literature. Beyond just literature, Pope also questions societal norms like valuing short-lived popularity and a culture that cares more about appearances than substance. He suggests a need to rethink the role of poets and the topics they write about. The theme reflects Pope's discontent with how things were in literature and society, encouraging readers to think differently about established ways of doing things.

Satire and Mockery:

The theme of satire and mockery in "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" by Alexander Pope is filled with sharp wit and ridicule, as he satirizes individuals, literary rivals, and societal aspects through clever wordplay and humor. Through clever wordplay and humor, Pope mocks the pretensions of his critics, satirizes political figures, and criticizes the literary environment of his time. The poem serves as a platform for Pope to express his grievances and defend his own work while using satire as a tool to expose the follies and vanities of those he targets. The tone of mockery is evident in his humorous yet cutting remarks, creating a satirical portrait of the people and circumstances he addresses, contributing to the overall satirical nature of the poem.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on the contribution of Alexander Pope as a writer.
2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem *An Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot*.
3. Discuss the themes in the poem *An Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot*.

PAPER CODE: MEN 102**PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON****UNIT 4.2 SAMUEL JOHNSON: VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES(LINE 1-120)**

UNIT 4.2: Samuel Johnson: Vanity of human wishes(Line 1 to 120)

UNIT STRUCTURE

Learning Objectives

Introduction

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Vanity of human wishes (Line 1 to 120)

Let's sum up

Further Suggestions

Answer to check your progress

Model Questions

Learning Objectives

After reading unit 4 you will be able to:

- Talk about the poet Samuel Johnson.
- Discuss and appreciate "Vanity of human wishes".

- Analyse Johnson's writing style.
- Talk about Jonson as an English writer who made lasting contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, sermonist, biographer, editor, and lexicographer.

Introduction

“The Vanity of Human Wishes” has been considered to be a challenging poem ever since it was first published in 1749. “The Vanity of Human Wishes” is an imitation of one of the Satires of the Roman poet Juvenal, whose works date to the first and second centuries. And as was the case with “London,” by an imitation Johnson means a poem that is not a translation but something looser. In this case, Johnson is building his poem on the framework provided by Juvenal’s tenth Satire, a poem about the futility of human aspirations in the face of the indifference of nature and the gods. Both poems present a sequence of people who desire something—power, glory, fame, a long life—but who then inevitably discover that their wishes are hollow. Where “London” was more or less a political poem taking a stance in opposition to the Walpole government and its corruption, “The Vanity of Human Wishes” is more moralistic and philosophical, pondering the place of desire in human life.

In this poem, Johnson replaces the particular examples that Juvenal uses with his own. Often these are examples of people drawn from English history, like Cardinal Wolsey, or contemporary European figures, like Charles XII, the Swedish king who fought several wars against Russia early in the eighteenth century. In other cases, Johnson uses examples from antiquity, like Xerxes or Alexander the Great. Throughout, though, “The Vanity of Human Wishes” creates a dense web of allusions to historical figures, and even the educated among Johnson’s contemporary readers would have had difficulty identifying all of them. In this edition, these allusions have been annotated to enable modern readers to follow the course of Johnson’s argument.

Johnson seems to have liked this poem. Later, he recalled that he composed the first seventy lines or so in his head, all at once, while taking a walk in the garden. And, unlike “London,” here Johnson’s name appears on the title page. This is probably a sign of Johnson’s pride in the work, and also a sign that Johnson, after more than a decade of anonymous writing, much of it for the Gentleman’s Magazine, was in a position to assert his authorship more publicly. The poem was published when Johnson was hard at work at the book that would bring him fame, the Dictionary of the English Language, which was published in 1755.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson (18 September 1709 – 13 December 1784), often called Dr Johnson, was an English writer who made lasting contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, sermonist, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography calls him "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". Johnson displayed signs of great intelligence as a child, and his parents, to his later disgust, would show off his "newly acquired accomplishments".[22] His education began at the age of three, and was provided by his mother, who had him memorise and recite passages from the Book of Common Prayer.[23] When Samuel turned four, he was sent to a nearby

school, and, at the age of six he was sent to a retired shoemaker to continue his education.[24] A year later Johnson went to Lichfield Grammar School, where he excelled in Latin.[25] For his most personal poems, Johnson used Latin.[26] During this time, Johnson started to exhibit the tics that would influence how people viewed him in his later years, and which formed the basis for a posthumous diagnosis of Tourette syndrome.[27] He excelled at his studies and was promoted to the upper school at the age of nine.[25] During this time, he befriended Edmund Hector, nephew of his "man-midwife" George Hector, and John Taylor, with whom he remained in contact for the rest of his life. Encyclopedia Britannica

Johnson once characterized literary biographies as "mournful narratives," and he believed that he lived "a life radically wretched." Yet his career can be seen as a literary success story of the sickly boy from the Midlands who by talent, tenacity, and intelligence became the foremost literary figure and the most formidable conversationalist of his time. For future generations, Johnson was synonymous with the later 18th century in England. The disparity between his circumstances and achievement gives his life its especial interest.

From his earliest years Johnson was recognized not only for his remarkable intelligence but also for his pride and indolence. In 1717 he entered grammar school in Lichfield. The master of the school, John Hunter, was a learned though brutal man who "never taught a boy in his life—he whipped and they learned." This regime instilled such terror in the young boy that even years later the resemblance of the poet Anna Seward to her grandfather Hunter caused him to tremble. At school he made two lifelong friends: Edmund Hector, later a surgeon, and John Taylor, future prebendary of Westminster and justice of the peace for Ashbourne. In 1726 Johnson visited his cousin, the urbane Reverend Cornelius Ford in Stourbridge, Worcestershire, who may have provided a model for him, though it was Ford's conviviality and scholarship rather than his dissipation (he is thought to be one of those depicted carousing in William Hogarth's *A Midnight Modern Conversation* [1733]) that attracted Johnson.

Vanity of Human Wishes (Lines 1-120)

"The Vanity of Human Wishes" is one ambitious poem. In it, the speaker surveys all of mankind, and examines the way in which all kinds of dreams and wishes and ambitions come to nothing more on The Vanity of Human Wishes

"The Vanity of Human Wishes" is one ambitious poem. In it, the speaker surveys all of mankind, and examines the way in which all kinds of dreams and wishes and ambitions come to nothing.

The poem is loosely divided up into sections which deal with different kinds of power and ambition. There are sections that deal with political power, financial power, intellectual power, and even sexual power. The speaker's aim is to show how all of these kinds of power are pointless and don't bring us any satisfaction—good to know.

In order to convince us of his point of view, the speaker refers to various historical figures, citing their fates as examples of why the pursuit of wealth and power is ultimately futile. There's no point in running after money or status. They're not going to bring us happiness or peace. On the contrary: they'll only bring us lots of trouble.

The ultimate conclusion of the poem is that the only chance at a happy life we have is through God. It's only through our faith in God that we can hope to find peace and contentment. So we'd better pull out our prayer books and start praying.

"In Stanza 1 the speaker shows how hope, fear, desire, and hate lay traps for human beings throughout the world. People move through their lives without the guidance to avoid these pitfalls, steering between "fancied ills" or chasing imagined "airy good." Reason is rarely a larger guiding influence on them than pride, vengeance, or folly, and, as a consequence, whole nations are destroyed. In the end, Death comes to all. Throughout the poem, the speaker holds up the ambitions that drive humanity, one by one subjecting them to logical scrutiny and satirical ridicule.

In Stanza 2 the speaker points out that it takes little observation to see even exceptional people corrupted by greed. This greed inspires crimes in humanity: the soldier raises his sword upon another man; the corrupt judge distorts the laws for his monetary gain. The speaker remarks that one can have loads of wealth, but it will not buy the bearer's truth or safety. The wealthier a man is, the more danger he faces. Once fortune is attained, power that comes with the wealth makes the wielder a target for other ambitious people. Like Juvenal, the speaker uses clever wordplay to offer satirical criticism of respectable elements of society, "the knowing and the bold," who are led astray by greed.

The speaker contends in Stanza 3 that it is safer to be a "vassal"—a lowly person—or "hind"—a peasant—who enjoys more safety than an aristocratic ruler because kings have bloody fights over power. A vassal or hind can sleep soundly at night in his cottage, while the rich traitor will spend his nights imprisoned in the Tower of London—a locale where, historically, the majority of the imprisoned met death. Still, the hind or vassal needs to worry that the little they do own will be taken from them by the government.

In Stanza 4 the speaker conjures an image of a poor traveler meandering the "heath," or wasteland, and singing. The speaker points out that the peasant's joy and serenity would be destroyed the minute he attained wealth. He would fear losing his riches to thieves who follow in the "rustling leaves" and "shade." The speaker considers how wealth strips humans of happiness and serenity, yet people constantly pray for wealth and power. Most people do not know, however, the troubles that power and wealth bring politicians, for they face rivals and fear who will inherit their seats.

Echoing a passage in Juvenal's poem, the speaker, in Stanza 5, calls on the Greek philosopher Democritus "with cheerful wisdom and instructive mirth" to arise and see the poor state in which progress and modernity have put humankind. Like Juvenal, the speaker asserts that Democritus lived merrily in a time before wealth and inequality—when the debate was sincere, and laws remained constant despite changing relationships at court. The speaker asks the imagined spirit of Democritus how hard he would laugh at Britain now. His keen mind would see through the pretenses of modern life, and he would mock the farce and unreality of those pretenders "Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain." The speaker says in Stanza 6 that Democritus's disdain would be for all of humanity, justified by their every act, speech, and prayer.

Stanzas 7–12

In Stanza 7 the speaker comments on how enumerable people pray for wealth and greatness, and "Delusive Fortune" favors some, who rise, shine, and then burn away under strife. Others lie to and flatter those in power, hate them in life, mock them in death, and abandon them in times of need. The speaker illustrates this idea through the removal from the walls of portraits of wealthy and powerful people that will be sold at auction. The expensive frames are removed to place around different faces. Notably, each portrait is meant to represent a "Palladium," which is a reference to the Greek goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athena. In ancient Greek and Roman culture such cult images were meant to protect places such as Rome or Troy. In this case, the portraits produce false idols, no matter how many looked to these people as benefactors in life. When their fortunes fail, people will ridicule their memories. This small narrative within the body of the poem offers a pointed, satirical illustration of the foolishness of the ambition to power.

The speaker asks in Stanza 8 if Britain herself will not take care of her people since now the nation has established voting and Parliament. However, in the speaker's estimation, the system is corrupt. People no longer agitate for change; they only ask the price of votes. All the energy that might go into reform is squandered on political libel and bribery.

In Stanza 9 the speaker invokes Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey, the powerful, wealthy, and corrupt lord chancellor of England under King Henry VIII and a personal favorite of the king despite his low birth. The speaker describes his power over both the church and secular government, how he mediates between the people and the king and holds sole power to bestow security to citizens beneath him. He is never content; even when the people have given up all their rights to him, he is still not satisfied. He needs even more power when there is no more power left to be had, and this causes him to fall out of the king's favor. His friends desert him, and, aging and sick, he retires to hide in a monastery. The guilt he has over his actions causes his illness to advance, and in his last breaths before death, he criticizes the kings.

The speaker asks the listener, who rebels at the thought of "humble peace," if they would rather have Wolsey's position if it also meant Wolsey's end. The speaker continues to question the listener in Stanza 10, asking if they would rather stay "on the banks of Trent"—a reference to the River Trent that runs through England's provincial midlands region—having less pride and more justice. He says Wolsey's weak foundation could not bear the weight placed on him, and he ended up even lower than he began. The speaker then lists several political figures who were the favorites of English rulers and whose lives ended badly: George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, who was assassinated; Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, who died of disease; Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, who was executed; and Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon, who lived his days in exile. The protection of powerful patrons, as Johnson puts it, "By kings protected, and to kings allied," did not save them from widespread anger over their failures and excesses.

In Stanza 11 the speaker moves on to discussing a student, yearning to be a famous man of letters. He addresses the student directly, taking on the tone of someone wiser, giving advice. The speaker invokes "Bodley's Dome," a reference to Oxford University, where Thomas

Bodley established one of the world's foremost libraries. He also alludes to English philosopher and scientist Roger Bacon (c. 1220–92) in his reference to "Bacon's Mansion." The speaker's imagined student trusts the virtue of learning, but the speaker asks if it will be enough. Even if the scholar manages to avoid the distractions of false kindness and praise, frustration, laziness, love, poor health, and depression, his life will still be troubled. He advises the student to "pause a while from learning, to be wise," and to look at the world around him. Scholars live in poverty, subject to the whims of patrons and jailed when their ideas are unpopular. He tells the student to consider "Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end." Thomas Lydiat was a respected scholar at Oxford, who nevertheless spent time in debtor's prison, and Galileo Galilei's scientific discoveries resulted in his arrest by the Catholic Church.

The speaker goes on to point out in Stanza 12 that advocating for the truth often causes a person to make political enemies. He mentions William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was executed in 1645 when the Puritan religious minority he had opposed gained power. A scholar may find that when political fortunes change, "fatal learning leads him to the block." His death may be a great loss for art and learning, but it will not trouble the unambitious or, as the author calls them, "blockheads."

Stanzas 13–15

The speaker moves on to military glory in Stanza 13, with a discussion of the honor the brave expect to receive. He evokes the Roman triumphal parade, where a general would return with slaves and treasure from conquered lands. He ties this to the acclaim the brave want from modern papers, such as the Oxford Gazette. War has always been an ambition, from ancient Greece—the speaker alludes to Alexander the Great of Macedonia, who conquered all the way to India—to Rome, to Britain's current wars in Germany, where the Danube River and Rhine River flow. The bloody business of war provides immense glory but is costly and senseless, leaving nations indebted and glory tarnished.

More on The Vanity of Human Wishes

Lines 104-112

But still Wolsey wasn't satisfied with all he had, and he was greedy for more power. Everyone submitted their rights to him, until there were no more rights for him to take, and he still wasn't satisfied.

Wolsey goes so far in his greed for more power that the king begins to be displeased. The rest of the country notices the king's displeasure, and waits for a sign from him to begin hating Wolsey.

Suddenly, everywhere Wolsey turns he finds that he is dealing with strangers. The people who had come to him to seek help now scorn him, and his followers turn their backs on him.

Lines 113-120

All at once Wolsey's pride is shaken. His golden canopy, his fancy cutlery and plates, his royal palace, his luxurious lifestyle, his army, and everything else is taken away from him.

Wolsey is oppressed by age and worries and illness, and so he seeks to recover by leading a monastic life. But his grief makes his illness worse. The memory of all his mistakes stings him. And with his last breath he reproaches (criticizes) treacherous kings. It's not a good way to go out.

The speaker questions a soldier's pride in Stanza 14, since factors out of his control drastically affect outcomes. He uses the example of the Great Northern War, in which a young Charles XII of Sweden surprises enemies and allies alike with early decisive victories. Charles XII defeats a coalition of Danish, German, and Polish opponents and then, greedy for more power, attempts to invade Russia. The speaker recounts how, as a result, his army endures famine and the Russian winter before losing decisively at Poltava—rendered here as Pultowa—in 1709. Sweden's power goes into decline, and Charles XII dies childless attempting to retake Fredrikshald, Norway, in 1718. The speaker concludes that Charles ended ingloriously, leaving his name as a cautionary tale as his most significant mark on the world.

The mighty have fallen throughout history, the speaker points out in Stanza 15, from the tyrants of Persia to Bavarian lords who displayed arrogance and too much pride. The failed conquest of Greece by the ancient Persian king Xerxes I destabilizes the Achaemenid Empire, Persia's ruling family between 559 BCE and 330 BCE. The speaker tells how flattery convinces Xerxes that he is unstoppable until he is mad with pride and ambition, believing himself divine. He references a story in which Xerxes has the sea whipped as punishment for its insolence after a storm destroys his bridge across the Dardanelles. Despite initial successes in the Greek campaign, Xerxes loses the decisive sea battle at Salamis in 480 BCE, and, with his navy destroyed, he is no longer able to pursue aggression. The speaker implies the "insulted sea" sided with the humbler Greeks.

The speaker then recounts the failed military exploits of Holy Roman Emperor Charles VII, whom he calls "the bold Bavarian," against the Hapsburg queen of Bohemia and Hungary, Maria Theresa. Charles VII attempts to invade the queen's defenseless territories, but she sends out a call that, combined with the promise of plunder, draws the world to her aid. The speaker references some of the eastern European ethnic groups—"the fierce Croatian, and the wild Hussar"—involved in the fighting on the Austrian side. The Bavarian dies in shame after losing the war. At the time of the poem's publication, Maria Theresa had ascended to Holy Roman Empress.

Though all of these historical events and the characters are simplified, the speaker weaves a narrative that illustrates and satirizes the ruin of military ambition.

Let Us Sum Up

Samuel Johnson's 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' is a reflective and critical exploration of the ceaseless pursuit of worldly desires and ambitions. Through vivid imagery and allegorical

elements, the poem underscores the often misguided nature of human aspirations and the inevitable disillusionment that follows.

It warns against the pitfalls of unbridled ambition, emphasizing the importance of inner virtues and wisdom. Johnson's work serves as a contemplative examination of the human condition, urging readers to seek contentment and meaning beyond the ephemeral trappings of success and wealth.

"The Vanity of Human Wishes" is one ambitious poem. In it, the speaker surveys all of mankind, and examines the way in which all kinds of dreams and wishes and ambitions come to nothing.

The poem is loosely divided up into sections which deal with different kinds of power and ambition. There are sections that deal with political power, financial power, intellectual power, and even sexual power. The speaker's aim is to show how all of these kinds of power are pointless and don't bring us any satisfaction—good to know.

In order to convince us of his point of view, the speaker refers to various historical figures, citing their fates as examples of why the pursuit of wealth and power is ultimately futile. There's no point in running after money or status. They're not going to bring us happiness or peace. On the contrary: they'll only bring us lots of trouble.

The ultimate conclusion of the poem is that the only chance at a happy life we have is through God. It's only through our faith in God that we can hope to find peace and contentment. So we'd better pull out our prayer books and start praying.

Answer to Check your Progress

What is the subject matter of Samuel Johnson's poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?

What remedies does Samuel Johnson offer for suffering due to vain wishes in "The Vanity of Human Wishes".

Model Questions

What is the rhyme scheme of Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?

What is the main idea of Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?

What are the prominent neoclassical features in "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?

Evaluate "A Vanity of Human Wishes" as a satire by Samuel Johnson.



Techno City, Khanapara, Kling Road, Baridua, 9th Mile,
Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya-793101
Phone: 9508 444 000, Web : www.ustm.ac.in