

**SELF-LEARNING  
MATERIAL**



# MA ENGLISH

**MEN 101 : ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY**

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

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## MEN 101

### ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Contents</b>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Milton to Johnson</b> Religion and Literature in the Seventeenth Century; Restoration Theatre; Women's Writing in the Seventeenth Century; The Rise of the Novel; The Enlightenment
<b>3</b>	<b>Wordsworth to Hardy</b> Romantic Literature and Culture; Industrial Revolution; Darwinism; The Spread of the British Empire; Victorian Literature
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**PAPER CODE: MEN 101**

**PAPER TITLE: ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY**

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY

### MEN 101

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## **UNIT 1: THE PRINT REVOLUTION**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

Learning Objectives

Introduction

Background of the Print Revolution in England

Impact of Printing in England

Let Us Sum Up

Further Reading

Answers to Check Your Progress

Model Questions

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### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- Form an idea regarding how the print revolution began in England
- Understand the background of the print revolution
- Learn about its impact on literary production and future developments

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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The arrival of the printing press in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century brought about a significant change in the history of literary production and its consumption in the succeeding ages. Johannes Gutenberg (1398 - 1468 CE), a German printer, is identified as the innovator who invented the printing press, and is famed for having printed an edition of the Bible in 1456 CE. The printing press largely began with the printing of religious texts but in the following centuries it gradually began to produce other forms of literary compositions such as pamphlets, journals and novels. Although the invention of the moveable type metal printer is associated with Gutenberg, in other parts of the world such as Asia, there had already existed the tradition of printing that catered to the needs of the regional cultures. For instance, during the reign of the Song Dynasty (960-1392 CE) in China, Buddhist scholars printed religious works using wood blocks and also moveable type presses.

In Europe, the cities of Mentz and Haarlem are associated with the origin of printing. Some of the earliest texts that are connected to the first edition of printing in fifteenth century include *The Indulgence of Nicholas V*, *The Magazine Bible*, and *Psalters*.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- a. Who is the innovator associated with the invention of the printing press in Europe?
- b. Name the two European cities associated with the origin of printing.

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**BACKGROUND OF THE PRINT REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND**

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The history of printing in England is associated with William Caxton (1422-1491 CE), a British merchant, diplomat and a writer. In his early part of career, Caxton was involved in translating several texts into English, and consequently he acquired expertise in several foreign languages. In the year 1471, Caxton visited Cologne in Germany where he was introduced to the technology of printing for the first time. During his stay in Cologne, he met several printers and learnt the skill from them. His first printed text was *Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum*. After Caxton returned to England in 1477, he began printing from Westminster. The first book printed in England was *Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers*. From the year 1477 till his death in 1491, Caxton had printed numerous texts, supervising their production and also contributing as a translator. Historians consider his significance in developing English literature as equally at par with the writers of the time. This was because as a translator, he shaped the way English prose developed in the way Geoffrey Chaucer had done for English poetry. In fact, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, a seminal poetic work of the fourteenth century England was printed in Caxton's press. Caxton's printing press also printed other works such as Chaucer's *Boethius*, *The Chronicles of England*, *The Cordyal* and *The History of Jason*.

Caxton's contending rival was John Lettou who established his printing press in London in the year 1480. Lettou's production came out as more developed by its neat, small letters and even spacing between lines. However, Caxton began to use illustrations and diagrams in his prints. *The Mirror of the World* (1481), a text on medieval science and cosmology, was the first book to contain diagrams. During the period of 1480-1486 CE, Caxton brought out about thirty five books, many of which have shaped the literature of England. This include *Reynard*

*the Fox, Morte D'Arthur, Aesop's Fables, The Golden Legend, Gower's Confessio Amantis* and Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Soul*.

Following William Caxton's example, several printing presses were opened throughout England that paved the way for the Age of Renaissance in England.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- c. Who introduced the printing press in England?**
- d. Name the first book printed in England.**
- e. Name some of the books printed by Caxton's printing press.**

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### **IMPACT OF PRINTING ON ENGLAND**

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In the century following William Caxton's introduction of printing press in England, other inter-related enterprises opened all over England. Printing presses were essentially found in the urban areas where the dominant reading groups and patrons for writers were present. There were gradually changes seen in the thoughts and ideas of the English society, and these were largely created as a result of the growth in printing press and growing literacy. In spite of the inadequacies seen in the early printed works, there were several advantages brought about by the printing enterprise in England.

Firstly, introduction of printing led to an increase in the literacy among the English people. This factor shaped the structure of education in Renaissance England and later. Since the books printed were cheap and affordable, they were more accessible to people other than the elite section of the society. Consequently, reading habit inherently became a part of the British culture. Secondly, printing with movable press saved a lot of labour, and hence books were inexpensive. Thirdly, owing to the growing literacy caused by the print revolution in England, knowledge and information became accessible to all social groups. This, in turn, developed the inquisitive nature and reasoning capacity in the individuals, paving the way for growth in literature, arts, culture and scientific thought. The Print Revolution did not bring drastic changes suddenly but it allowed the society to move away from the centrally faith-dominated medieval notions about life and the world. Non-religious books dealing with secular matters of life such as conduct books, manuals of instruction, plays and poetry, came to be circulated.

In sixteenth-century Elizabethan England, printing came to be associated with the professional workings of the society. Books such as songbooks, ritualistic manuals, ballads, chronicles, etc came to be printed, circulated and critically appraised. Further, books functioned as one of the primary agencies responsible for creating the spirit of nationalism in England. Land reforms This happened with the standardization of the English language for which specific books were circulated. *The King's English* was one such book that was printed in London but became popular in places such as Wales and Yorkshire where people used a form of dialect rather than the standard English spoken in the urban areas.

It cannot be denied that the impact of the print revolution on the English society was very significant. It was William Caxton's venture in the fifteenth century that culminated in the Rise of Humanism and Renaissance in England.

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**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**f. What was mainly printed in the sixteenth-century England?**

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**LET US SUM UP**

From the reading of this unit, you have come to know about the history of printing press in Europe. You have also learnt about how printing press was introduced in England and how it influenced the literature, culture and ideas of England in the successive times.

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**FURTHER READING**

Carter, Roland and McRae, John. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. Routledge, 1997.

Trevelyan, G.M. *English Social History*. Penguin, 1986.

Widdowson, Peter. *The Palgrave Guide to English Literature and its Contexts 1500- 2000*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.



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### ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- a. Johannes Gutenberg
- b. Mentz and Haarlem
- c. William Caxton
- d. *Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers*
- e. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, *Reynard the Fox*, *Morte D'Arthur*, *Aesop's Fables*, *The Golden Legend*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Soul*.
- f. Songbooks, Ritualistic manuals, Ballads, Chronicles

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### MODEL QUESTIONS

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1. Write a note on how the printing press as a venture began in Europe.
2. Discuss the print revolution which began in England with reference to the role of William Caxton.
3. Comment on the impact of the print revolution on the culture of England.

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## **UNIT 2.2: RESTORATION THEATRE**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

Learning objectives

Introduction

Background and characteristics of Restoration Theatre

Types of Restoration Theatre

Let us Sum up

Further Reading

Answers to Check your Progress

Model Questions

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### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- Form an idea regarding how the restoration age began in England
- Understand the background and characteristics of Restoration Theatre
- Learn about eminent personalities contributing to Restoration Theatre

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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The Restoration period in England marks the restoration of monarchy after the period of Commonwealth rule till 1660. The English theatre went through a very critical phase under the Puritan rule. The theatre, which had been immensely popular during Elizabethan and Jacobean period, were shut by an ordinance of Parliament in the year 1642, right after the deposition of Charles I. People were allowed neither to act or enjoy drama till the restoration of monarchy in the year 1660.

In 1660, Charles II was restored to his throne. With him, the long-lost theatre also came back to the stage. However, after a leap of around twenty years of inactivity, the restoration theatre was seen to be very different from Elizabethan or Jacobean Theatre.

<b>CHECK YOUR PROGRESS</b>
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- a. **Who was restored to the English throne?**
- b. **For how many years there was total inactivity in the field of theatre?**

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## **BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION THEATRE**

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The deprivation of dramatic entertainment for two decades did not certainly impair the appetite of the English people for the same. Though a few changes could be noticed in the Restoration theatre, the audience accepted them with full enthusiasm.

The spontaneity of Elizabethan theatre seemed to be lost in the leap and could not find a place in Restoration theatre. Moreover, the human outlook of the dramatists was not found in the new plays. Theatre became artificial, pompous and too stagey, dealing with courtly affairs, its vulgarity and vain-glories. Such qualities became very vivid in the world of comedy through Dryden's 'The Wild Gallant' and Etharage's play 'Love in a Tub'.

Two very important distinctions between the pre-Puritan theatre and Restoration theatre were- Firstly, moveable scenery began to be used as the backdrop of the plays, which demanded skilled technicians in the process of creating and employing such backdrops. Secondly, the actresses started playing the female parts, which were formerly played by males.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- c. **State a difference between Elizabethan and Restoration theatre.**
- d. **Name a play by Dryden.**

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## **TYPES OF RESTORATION THEATRE**

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There were three principal kinds of Restoration theatre: Restoration Heroic Plays, Restoration Tragedy and Restoration comedy. Among these types Restoration Tragedy can be subdivided as – Blank verse Tragedy, Domestic Tragedy and She Tragedy. Again, Restoration comedy is divided as Intrigue Comedy, Comedy of Humour, Farcical Comedy and Comedy of Manners.

The Restoration Heroic plays depicted heroic personalities, possessing super-human qualities with extra-ordinary way of dealing with problems. The plays revolved around the conflict

between honour and love in a heroic personality or personalities. Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* can be read in this context.

Dryden and Thomas Otway are considered to be the chief architect of Restoration Tragedy. The influence of Shakespearean tragedy can be noticed in the tragic plays by Dryden. Such as his *All for Love*.

The Restoration Comedy is the result of the influences of the two sources, the wit of Johnsonian comedy and the dialogues and dramatic situations of the comedies of Fletcher and Beaumont. Some examples are; *Sullen Lovers* by Dryden, John Lacy's *The Old Troop* and so on.

The Restoration theatre is known for the Comedy of Manners. It is a sub type of Restoration comedy which deals with intellect and has little of emotion or impulsiveness. It centres around wit and frank display of social depravity. Love here is more about intellect than of impulse, which makes it more of external consideration than of internal emotions. This type of comedy is based on common sense and social reality, written in plain prose with a direct approach.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- e. Who are considered to be the chief architect of Restoration tragedy?**
- f. What are the sub-types of Restoration Tragedy?**

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#### **LET US SUM UP**

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From the reading of this unit you came to know about the history of English throne after Caroline period as well as the beginning of Restoration Theatre. You have also learnt the characteristics and types of Restoration plays and eminent personalities contributing to the field of seventeenth century theatre.

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### **FURTHER READING**

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Carter, Roland and McRae, John. The Routledge History Of Literature in English. Routledge, 1997

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

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### **ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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- a. Charles II
  - b. around twenty years
  - c. The female parts are played by actresses in Restoration theatre
  - d. 'The Wild Gallant'
  - e. Dryden and Thomas Otway
  - f. Blank verse Tragedy, Domestic Tragedy and She Tragedy
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### **MODEL QUESTIONS**

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1. Write a note on the beginning of Restoration Theatre.
2. What are the differences between Pre-Puritan age Theatre and Restoration Theatre?
3. What are the types of Restoration Theatre?

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## **UNIT 4: CONRAD TO THE PRESENT**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

Learning Objectives

Introduction

Modernism in literature and arts

Decolonization

Postmodern Culture and Literature

Globalization

Literature and the new media

Let us sum up

Further reading

Answers to check your progress

Model questions

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the impact of modernism in literature and arts
- Learn the idea of decolonization, postmodern culture and its impact on literature
- Get the concept of globalization and the connection of new media and literature.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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Modernism is a period which started around the early twentieth century and continued until the mid-twentieth century. In literature, modernism is considered to be a literary movement that deals with contemporary elements. The modernism literary movement started after the first World War. It developed as a consequence of the sociological changes of that period. It was a period of chaos and new settlements. The period saw colonies and the fight against the setting and its impact. The succeeding period of modernism is known as postmodern period, which followed different traits in creating literature. The effect of globalization and new media is very important to look at to understand the postmodern art and literature.

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### **MODERNISM IN LITERATURE AND ART**

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The modern age appears quite sceptical of the old values and norms. The World Wars and their terrible impacts, the post-war economic depression, newly cultivated rational and scientific attitudes and approaches and an accelerated degree of changes in social life, conceptions and notions have brought about remarkable alterations from the nineteenth century ethos. The modern art and literature is perceived as unusually different from the existing creations of the past. Though there had never been any agreed formula in this respect, anything exceptional, deviating from the accepted or the traditional way of living, thinking or expressing may even be considered modernism then. D.H. Lawrence's concept of sexual morality, Virginia Woolf's 'stream of consciousness' technique, T.S. Eliot's prosaic versification are definitely literary innovations and can be characterized by 'modernism' in literature.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- a. Who came up with the 'stream of consciousness' technique?
- b. Name any modernist writer.

## **DECOLONIZATION**

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Decolonization is a post-colonial concept, an urge to break free from the colonial impact on different aspects of life. When people saw a colonial life, colonized could never enjoy power and liberty. They felt a control over their decisions and actions which they started to despise. Eventually this feeling of breaking free from the control got reflected in their literature and art. The literary creations, which supported the idea of decolonization are known as postcolonial literature. Such literature usually attacked the white or westernized narratives, focusing on several social issues like racism, classism and imperialism. Some examples are: *The Wretched of the Earth* by Franz Fanon, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* by Walter Rodney, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* and so on.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- c. Mention any two issues which are focused on by the postcolonial literature.

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## **POSTMODERN CULTURE AND LITERATURE**

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Postmodern period is believed to be starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This period is marked by the 'new sensibility' which was spreading across different aspects of the society. This 'new sensibility' is defined by the American cultural critic, Susan Sontag, as "one important consequence of the new sensibility (is) that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture seems less and less meaningful." It rejected the cultural elitism of modernism. In modern period, the popular culture was titled as popular as it was a preference of the elite. Therefore, the postmodern tendency was to look at the already accepted popular culture with suspicion.



The influence of the ‘new sensibility’ can also be noticed in the literature of post-modern period. The postmodern literature rejects the boundary between high and low art. It ideologically and structurally depended on the literary conventions which were not found in modern literature. Such as – fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, impossible and unrealistic plots, parody, paranoia, dark humour and authorial self-reference. Some important postmodern literary stylistic techniques are : pastiche, intertextuality, metafiction, minimalism, magical realism, maximalism, reader involvement and so on. The postmodern literature showed a disbelief in the modern representation of quest for meaning. Many postmodern novels, poems or story represent parody on modernists’ way of encounter with reality. Such an example is Thomas Pynchon’s novel *The Crying of Lot 49*.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- d. Mention any two postmodernist stylistic techniques.
- e. Give an example of a postmodern text which is a parody on modernism.

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**GLOBALIZATION**

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Globalization is a term that refers to the fact that the current world has become more connected and interdependent place due to the progress in science and technology. Globalization, as a discourse of study, also covers its impact on economic, social and cultural changes. Though it can not be specified that when the process of globalization had actually started but it can be considered that it had been happening since a long period of time. It continued through the age of Revolution (French Revolution), when ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity spread like fire from one country to another. The influence of such speedy waves of ideas had also impacted the literature and art, created

at the different corners of the world. With the achievement in science and technology in modern age, the process of making the world more connected has become very easy and fast in nature. Though the advantages and disadvantages of globalization has become a topic of debate, it is also accepted that globalization is inevitable in the era of digitization. The impact of globalization in art and literature can be noticed in the popular culture beyond the geographical boundaries, demand of translations and so on.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- f. What does globalization mean?

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**LITERATURE AND THE NEW MEDIA**

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According to Mathew Arnold, “Media is literature in a hurry.” To understand the statement by Arnold, it is important to look back at the history of media and literature. Literature had been a way to express one’s feelings. Media came to the scene with Print Revolution which allowed people to have multiple copies of their manuscripts. It encouraged the publishers and the writers to write informative columns which brought journals, magazines and news paper to life. Eventually, the writers could understand that public would love to read entertaining columns which inspired them to include pages in the magazines based on the then current popular culture or taste. However, with change in the media, people changed their way of looking at entertainment. With the invent of television and radio, public chose to see and hear international culture and information. It encouraged to learn different languages which led to the increasing demand in translations of the existing works of the writers. The present condition of media is very different from twentieth century. Friedrich Kittler, a German literary theorist said that literature is the sub-genre of media. The current scenario of literature on social media

strengthens the statement. It is an age of speed which cannot afford long exercises on creating classics hence it finds affinity with the literature which is of proper length to be shared and found on social media.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

g. Who said that literature is a sub-genre of media?

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**LET US SUM UP**

In this unit, you have found out modernism and its impact on art and literature, decolonization and the other aspects of postmodern world. You have learnt how post-modern literature is different from that of the modern literature. The influence of globalization and new media in the creation of literature is also discussed.

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**FURTHER READING**

Carter, Roland and McRae, John. The Routledge History Of Literature in English. Routledge, 1997

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

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**ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- a. Virginia Woolf
- b. T.S. Eliot
- c. Racism, Classism
- d. pastiche, intertextuality

e. Thomas Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49*.

f. Globalization means the process of making the world more connected.

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**MODEL QUESTIONS:**

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1. Write a note on modernism and its impact on literature and culture.
2. What were the common themes of postcolonial texts?
3. What do you understand by globalization? What is its connection with new media and literature?
4. What are the stylistic techniques of postmodern writers?