

REV-00

SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL



MA ENGLISH

MEN 101 : ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY

w.e.f Academic Session: 2024-25



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

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SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL**Master of Arts in English (MEN)****MEN 101****ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURAL HISTORY****Academic Session: 2024 – 25****Centre for Distance and Online Education****UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA****Accredited 'A' Grade by NAAC**

Self-Learning Material

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COURSE INFORMATION

This is the first paper of the M.A. English Programme of first semester learners will be able to go through the journey of English Literature that has a rich history that spans through centuries, and it is impossible to discuss it without mentioning the two literary giants who stand at either end of the Middle English and Early Modern English periods- Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare. From their works, we can see how the English language and literary traditions evolved over time.

Unit 1 will make the learners understand the period spanning from Geoffrey Chaucer to William Shakespeare, roughly the late 14th to the early 17th century, marks a transformative era in English literature. Beginning with Chaucer, often regarded as the Father of English literature, who pioneered the use of Middle English vernacular in his seminal work *The Canterbury Tales*, literature began to reflect more diverse themes and characters drawn from everyday life. Chaucer's writing showcased a blend of courtly romance, satire, and keen observations of human nature, setting a precedent for future English poets and playwrights. As the Renaissance dawned, the cultural and intellectual landscape shifted dramatically. The revival of classical learning and humanism inspired a new wave of literature characterized by a renewed interest in classical themes, human potential, and empirical observation. This period witnessed the emergence of the English Renaissance drama, with playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare defining the era. Shakespeare, in particular, stands as the quintessential figure of English literature, renowned for his profound insight into human psychology, linguistic mastery, and enduring exploration of universal themes such as love, power, and ambition. The transition from Chaucer to Shakespeare encapsulates a journey of literary evolution, where language, form, and content underwent profound changes, paving the way for the rich tapestry of English literature that followed.

Unit 2 will make the learners understand the period from John Milton to Samuel Johnson, spanning the 17th and 18th centuries, witnessed significant shifts in English literature and thought. John Milton, known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, exemplifies the era's exploration of religious and political themes amidst a backdrop of civil war and restoration. His works reflect a deep engagement with theological questions and the complexities of human morality. Moving into the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment brought forth writers like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, who used satire and wit to critique societal norms and political corruption. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* exemplify their respective contributions to literary satire and social commentary. Samuel Johnson, with his influential *Dictionary of the English Language* and essays in *The Rambler* and *The Idler*,

solidified his reputation as a leading figure of the period. His literary criticism and moral essays contributed to shaping the literary canon and intellectual discourse of the time. Overall, the period from Milton to Johnson was characterized by a flourishing of literary forms, intellectual inquiry, and social commentary, laying the foundation for the modern English literary tradition.

Unit 3 will make the learners understand the period from Wordsworth to Hardy spans the 19th century, a time of immense change and innovation in English literature. Beginning with William Wordsworth and the Romantic movement, literature shifted away from the rationalism of the Enlightenment to embrace the beauty of nature, individual emotion, and the sublime. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (co-authored with Samuel Taylor Coleridge) exemplified this shift with poems that celebrated the ordinary and the natural world. The Victorian era followed, marked by writers such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who explored themes of morality, social justice, and the complexities of human relationships. Tennyson's poetry, including *In Memoriam* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, captured the spirit of the times with its blend of lyricism and social commentary. Towards the end of the 19th century, Thomas Hardy emerged as a prominent figure, challenging Victorian ideals with his realistic portrayal of rural life and the human condition. Hardy's novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Maddening Crowd* reflected a growing disillusionment with societal constraints and a keen sense of fatalism. Overall, the period from Wordsworth to Hardy witnessed a rich tapestry of literary movements and styles, reflecting the societal upheavals and intellectual ferment of the 19th century, while laying the groundwork for modernist and post-modernist literature to come.

Unit 4 will make the learners understand the period from Joseph Conrad to the present day spans a vast landscape of literary evolution and global change. Conrad, a seminal figure of the early 20th century, explored themes of colonialism, human nature, and moral ambiguity in works like *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, reflecting the complexities of the modern world and the dark undercurrents of European imperialism. Moving into the mid-20th century, writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka pioneered modernist literature, experimenting with narrative form, consciousness, and the subjective experience of reality. Their works, such as Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, challenged traditional storytelling conventions and explored existential themes in the face of societal upheaval and war. Post-World War II literature saw the emergence of diverse voices and narratives from around the world. Writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Chinua Achebe, and Salman Rushdie addressed issues of identity, post colonialism, and globalization in their works, reshaping the literary landscape with their cultural insights and

narrative innovations. Overall, from Conrad's exploration of the human psyche in a changing world to the present-day diversity of voices and narratives, literature has continually evolved to reflect and challenge the complexities of our modern existence.

From Geoffrey Chaucer's Middle English tales of *The Canterbury Tales* to the present day, English literature has undergone profound transformations, reflecting the cultural, social, and linguistic shifts across centuries. Chaucer's innovative use of vernacular set a precedent for future writers, blending humour, satire, and keen observations of medieval life. The Renaissance brought forth towering figures like William Shakespeare, whose plays and poetry continue to resonate with universal themes of love, power, and human folly. The Enlightenment era ushered in a period of intellectual inquiry and reason, with writers such as John Milton exploring theological and political themes in works like *Paradise Lost*. The 19th century saw the rise of Romanticism, with poets like William Wordsworth and John Keats celebrating nature, emotion, and the individual spirit. The Victorian era brought a focus on social issues and moral values, as seen in the works of Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters. Into the 20th century, modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot experimented with form and language, reflecting the fractured realities of a world torn by war and rapid societal change. Post-World War II literature witnessed a diversification of voices and perspectives, from the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez to the existential angst of Albert Camus and the postcolonial narratives of Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie. In the contemporary era, literature continues to evolve, embracing global perspectives, new technologies, and the complexities of identity and belonging. Writers like Toni Morrison, Haruki Murakami, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and J.K. Rowling have captured the zeitgeist with their exploration of race, gender, politics, and the human condition. Throughout these centuries, English literature has been a mirror to society, reflecting its triumphs and struggles, while continually pushing the boundaries of storytelling and expression.

UNIT 1: CHAUCER TO SHAKESPEARE

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Feudalism: Christianity, Religion, Church, Growth of Towns

1.4 Renaissance and the Early Modern Print Revolution

1.4.1 Renaissance

1.4.2 The Printing Press

1.4.3 Background of the Print Revolution in England

1.4.4 Impact of Printing in England

1.5 Renaissance Theatre and Literature

1.6 Let Us Sum Up

1.7 Further Reading

1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.9 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Trace the evolution from Medieval literature through Renaissance, identifying key characteristics and themes of each period.
- Understand how historical, social, and cultural contexts influence literary production and reception from the feudal society depicted in Chaucer's tales.
- 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

1.2 INTRODUCTION

The Middle Ages, spanning from the fall of ancient Rome in 476 A.D. to the dawn of the 14th century, is often characterized by minimal advancements in science and art. Commonly referred to as the "Dark Ages," this period is frequently depicted as a time marked by war, ignorance, famine, and pandemics, including the devastating Black Death.

However, some historians argue that these bleak portrayals are overly exaggerated. While it is true that there was a general lack of appreciation for ancient Greek and Roman philosophies and learning during this era, the Middle Ages were not entirely devoid of progress and development. Despite the challenges, various regions in Europe still experienced cultural and intellectual activity, laying the groundwork for the eventual resurgence of knowledge and creativity in the Renaissance.

The period spanning from Geoffrey Chaucer to the present day in English literature is a journey through centuries of literary evolution, cultural transformation, and intellectual exploration. Beginning with Chaucer, often hailed as the Father of English literature, whose pioneering use of Middle English vernacular in *The Canterbury Tales* laid the foundation for a distinctly English literary tradition, we embark on a fascinating exploration of diverse literary movements, styles, and voices.

From the Renaissance brilliance of William Shakespeare, whose timeless plays and sonnets continue to captivate audiences with their profound insights into human nature and society, to the Enlightenment era's emphasis on reason, science, and social reform, English literature reflects the shifting paradigms of thought and expression.

The 19th century witnessed the rise of Romanticism, with poets like William Wordsworth and John Keats celebrating the beauty of nature and the individual spirit, while the Victorian era brought a focus on morality, societal issues, and realism in the works of Charles Dickens, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot.

Moving into the 20th century, modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot revolutionized literary form and content, challenging conventions and exploring new realms of consciousness, identity, and existential angst. The post-World War II period saw the emergence of diverse voices and global perspectives, from the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez to the postcolonial narratives of Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie.

Today, contemporary literature continues to evolve, embracing a kaleidoscope of genres, themes, and cultural influences, reflecting the complexities of our interconnected

world. From the exploration of technological advancements and environmental concerns to the redefinition of identity and the exploration of marginalized voices, English literature remains a vibrant and essential reflection of our shared human experience.

Thus, the journey from Chaucer to the present day in English literature is not just a chronicle of literary achievements, but a testament to the enduring power of storytelling, creativity, and imagination in shaping our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

1.3 FEUDALISM: CHRISTIANITY, RELIGION, CHURCH, GROWTH OF TOWNS

Feudalism was a dominant social and economic system in medieval Europe, roughly spanning from the 9th to the 15th century. Feudalism in England during the medieval period was characterized by a hierarchical system of land ownership and obligations. At its core was the king, who owned all the land and granted portions of it to nobles and bishops in exchange for military and administrative service. These nobles, in turn, granted land to knights and lesser lords (vassals) who pledged loyalty and military support. Peasants worked the land in exchange for protection and a portion of their produce, forming the backbone of the agricultural economy. The system provided stability but also led to power struggles between monarchs and nobles, shaping English political and social structures for centuries.

Here's how it interacted with Christianity, religion, the Church, and the growth of towns:

Christianity and Feudalism

Christianity and feudalism in medieval Europe were closely intertwined, with the Catholic Church playing a dual role as spiritual guide and political authority. The Church's hierarchical structure mirrored feudal society, with the Pope at its apex, influencing moral values and reinforcing feudal obligations such as loyalty and duty among lords and vassals. This symbiotic relationship provided a moral framework for governance and social order, shaping the fabric of medieval European society for centuries.

- **Church's Influence:** The Catholic Church played a crucial role in medieval society, providing spiritual guidance, education, and even acting as a political authority. It had a hierarchical structure mirroring feudalism, with the Pope at the top.
- **Feudal Obligations:** The Church owned significant land and had vassals just like secular lords. Bishops and abbots held feudal titles and provided military support in exchange for land.

- **Moral and Social Influence:** Christianity reinforced feudal values such as loyalty, duty, and hierarchy. It provided a framework for understanding social order and the obligations of lords and vassals.

Religion and the Church

Religion and the Church played pivotal roles in medieval Europe, serving as spiritual anchors and centres of authority. The Catholic Church, with its hierarchical structure led by the Pope, wielded significant influence over both spiritual and temporal matters. It provided avenues for social mobility through the clergy and administered justice through its courts, which often competed with secular authorities. Monasteries and cathedral schools preserved knowledge, advanced learning, and contributed to the intellectual development that underpinned medieval society's cultural and educational foundations.

- **Clergy:** The Church was one of the few avenues for social mobility, and many noble families placed younger sons in the Church to maintain family lands.
- **Legal Authority:** Church courts had jurisdiction over matters of marriage, inheritance, and morality, often in competition with secular courts.
- **Intellectual Centers:** Monasteries and cathedral schools preserved knowledge and served as centers of learning, helping preserve classical knowledge and develop medieval scholarship.

Growth of Towns

The growth of towns in medieval England was a transformative process driven by economic, social, and political factors. As feudalism stabilized, towns emerged as centers of commerce, craftsmanship, and cultural exchange. They provided markets for goods, services, and agricultural produce, fostering a vibrant economy that attracted merchants, artisans, and labourers. Urbanization led to the rise of a new social class—the bourgeoisie—who played crucial roles in trade and local governance. Towns often gained charters granting them self-governing rights, marking a shift towards greater autonomy from feudal lords and contributing to England's evolving political landscape.

- **Economic Factors:** As feudalism stabilized, trade and commerce grew, leading to the rise of towns. Towns provided markets, craftsmen, and services that feudal estates lacked.

- **Social Change:** Urbanization created a new social class—the bourgeoisie—composed of merchants, craftsmen, and skilled workers who didn't fit into the feudal hierarchy.

- **Legal Freedoms:** Towns often received charters from lords or kings granting them rights to govern themselves, fostering independence from feudal lords.

Overall, feudalism's interaction with Christianity, the Church, and the growth of towns was complex and mutually influential. The Church provided moral and organizational support to feudalism, while also fostering intellectual development. Meanwhile, the growth of towns challenged feudal norms and contributed to the eventual decline of the feudal system in favour of more centralized forms of governance and economic organization.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. **What role did the Catholic Church play in medieval society under feudalism?**
- b. **How did the Church's hierarchical structure mirror feudalism?**
- c. **What economic factors contributed to the growth of towns during the feudal era?**
- d. **What social class emerged as a result of urbanization during feudalism?**

1.4 RENAISSANCE AND THE EARLY MODERN PRINT REVOLUTION

The Renaissance and the Early Modern Print Revolution marked a transformative period in European history. Beginning in the 14th century, the Renaissance was characterized by a revival of interest in classical learning, arts, and culture. This cultural rebirth was supported and disseminated by the printing press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg around 1440. The printing press revolutionized communication by allowing for the mass production of books and pamphlets, democratizing access to knowledge. This dissemination of ideas fueled intellectual inquiry, scientific discovery, and religious reform movements such as the Protestant Reformation. The impact of the print revolution was profound, contributing to the spread of Renaissance humanism and paving the way for the Enlightenment era of the 17th and 18th centuries.

1.4.1 RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance was a vibrant era of European cultural, artistic, political, and economic revival following the Middle Ages. Spanning from the 14th to the 17th century, this period is renowned for the resurgence of classical philosophy, literature, and art.

During the Renaissance, some of the most influential thinkers, writers, statesmen, scientists, and artists in history emerged. This era also saw significant global exploration, leading to the discovery of new lands and the expansion of European commerce. The Renaissance played a pivotal role in transitioning Europe from the medieval period to the modern age, laying the foundations for contemporary civilization.

In the 14th century, a cultural movement known as humanism began to flourish in Italy. Central to humanism was the belief that humans were the centre of their own universe, encouraging the celebration of human achievements in education, classical arts, literature, and science.

The invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1450 revolutionized communication across Europe, facilitating the rapid dissemination of ideas. This technological advancement enabled the widespread printing and distribution of texts from early humanist authors like Francesco Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio, who advocated for the revival of traditional Greek and Roman culture and values.

Moreover, many scholars believe that developments in international finance and trade significantly influenced European culture, setting the stage for the Renaissance. These economic advancements helped to create a more interconnected and prosperous society, fostering the cultural rebirth that characterized the Renaissance period.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

e. What period does the Renaissance generally cover?

f. How did the Renaissance contribute to the transition from the Middle Ages to modern civilization?

Some of the most renowned and groundbreaking intellectuals, artists, scientists, and writers of the Renaissance include:

- **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519): An Italian polymath, Da Vinci was a painter, architect, inventor, and quintessential "Renaissance man" known for masterpieces such as "The Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper."
- **Desiderius Erasmus** (1466–1536): A Dutch scholar who played a pivotal role in the Northern European humanist movement and translated the New Testament into Greek.
- **René Descartes** (1596–1650): A French philosopher and mathematician regarded as the father of modern philosophy, famous for his declaration, "I think; therefore I am."

- **Galileo Galilei** (1564–1642): An Italian astronomer, physicist, and engineer whose groundbreaking work with telescopes led to the discovery of Jupiter's moons and Saturn's rings. He was placed under house arrest for his support of heliocentrism.
- **Nicolaus Copernicus** (1473–1543): A Polish mathematician and astronomer who formulated the first modern scientific argument for a heliocentric solar system.
- **Thomas Hobbes** (1588–1679): An English philosopher best known for his work "Leviathan."
- **Geoffrey Chaucer** (1343–1400): An English poet famous for "The Canterbury Tales."
- **Giotto di Bondone** (1266–1337): An Italian painter and architect whose realistic depiction of human emotions influenced generations of artists, notably through his frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua.
- **Dante Alighieri** (1265–1321): An Italian philosopher, poet, writer, and political thinker known for "The Divine Comedy."
- **Niccolò Machiavelli** (1469–1527): An Italian diplomat and philosopher, renowned for "The Prince" and "The Discourses on Livy."
- **Titian** (1488–1576): An Italian painter celebrated for his portraits of Pope Paul III and Charles I, as well as his religious and mythological works like "Venus and Adonis."
- **William Tyndale** (1494–1536): An English biblical translator and scholar who was executed for translating the Bible into English.
- **William Byrd** (1539/40–1623): An English composer known for his development of the English madrigal and his religious organ music.
- **John Milton** (1608–1674): An English poet and historian best known for his epic poem "Paradise Lost."
- **William Shakespeare** (1564–1616): England's "national poet" and the most famous playwright of all time, celebrated for his sonnets and plays such as "Romeo and Juliet."
- **Donatello** (1386–1466): An Italian sculptor renowned for lifelike sculptures like "David," commissioned by the Medici family.
- **Sandro Botticelli** (1445–1510): An Italian painter best known for "The Birth of Venus."

- **Raphael** (1483–1520): An Italian painter who learned from da Vinci and Michelangelo, celebrated for his paintings of the Madonna and "The School of Athens."
- **Michelangelo Buonarroti** (1475–1564): An Italian sculptor, painter, and architect famous for his sculptures such as "David" and the Sistine Chapel ceiling in Rome.

During the Renaissance, art, architecture, and science were intricately connected, forming a unique era where these disciplines seamlessly merged. This fusion led to remarkable advancements and masterpieces that continue to be celebrated today.

For example, artists like Leonardo da Vinci applied scientific principles, such as anatomy, to their work, enabling them to recreate the human body with extraordinary precision. Da Vinci's studies of human physiology are evident in his masterpieces, showcasing an unparalleled understanding of the human form.

Architects like Filippo Brunelleschi harnessed mathematical knowledge to engineer and design grand structures with expansive domes. His work on the dome of the Florence Cathedral is a testament to the harmonious blend of artistic vision and scientific ingenuity.

Scientific discoveries during the Renaissance brought about significant shifts in thinking. Galileo Galilei and René Descartes introduced new perspectives in astronomy and mathematics, while Nicolaus Copernicus revolutionized the understanding of the solar system by proposing that the Sun, not the Earth, was its centre.

Renaissance art was marked by a strong emphasis on realism and naturalism. Artists strived to depict people and objects in a lifelike manner, employing techniques such as perspective, shadows, and light to create depth and dimension. Emotion was also a key element, as artists sought to convey genuine human experiences and feelings through their work.

Some of the most iconic artistic creations from the Renaissance include:

- **The Mona Lisa** by Leonardo da Vinci
- **The Last Supper** by Leonardo da Vinci
- **Statue of David** by Michelangelo
- **The Birth of Venus** by Sandro Botticelli
- **The Creation of Adam** by Michelangelo

These masterpieces exemplify the Renaissance's artistic brilliance and its profound impact on the convergence of art, science, and architecture.

While many artists and thinkers used their talents to express new ideas, some Europeans embarked on maritime journeys to explore the world. This period, known as the Age of Discovery, saw several significant explorations that expanded global knowledge and opened up new trade routes.

During this era, voyagers launched expeditions that circumnavigated the globe, discovering new shipping routes to the Americas, India, and the Far East. These explorers mapped previously uncharted territories, greatly enhancing the geographical understanding of the world.

Notable explorers of this period include Ferdinand Magellan, who led the first expedition to circumnavigate the globe; Christopher Columbus, who completed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean, opening the way for the widespread European exploration and colonization of the Americas; and Amerigo Vespucci, whose name was given to the American continents. Other prominent explorers were Marco Polo, whose travels to Asia were well-documented; Ponce de Leon, who is associated with the exploration of Florida; Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who crossed the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean; and Hernando De Soto, known for his exploration of the southeastern United States.

These expeditions not only expanded the geographical horizons of the Europeans but also paved the way for global trade, cultural exchanges, and the eventual establishment of European colonies around the world.

Humanism encouraged Europeans to question the Roman Catholic Church's role during the Renaissance. As literacy rates increased and more people learned to read, write, and interpret ideas, they began to scrutinize and critique religious beliefs and practices. The invention of the printing press played a significant role in this transformation by making texts, including the Bible, more accessible to the general public.

In the 16th century, Martin Luther, a German monk, initiated the Protestant Reformation, a revolutionary movement that led to a schism within the Catholic Church. Luther challenged many church practices, questioning their alignment with Biblical teachings. His critiques resonated with many, leading to widespread religious reform and the emergence of Protestantism, a new branch of Christianity. This movement fundamentally altered the religious landscape of Europe, diminishing the Catholic Church's dominance and paving the way for greater religious diversity and freedom.

Scholars believe the demise of the Renaissance resulted from several compounding factors. By the end of the 15th century, numerous wars ravaged the Italian peninsula as Spanish,

French, and German forces battled for control over Italian territories, leading to significant disruption and instability.

Additionally, changing trade routes caused an economic decline, reducing the wealth available for patronage of the arts. This economic shift limited the financial support that had been crucial for the flourishing of Renaissance art and culture.

The Counter-Reformation further stifled the Renaissance. In response to the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church began censoring artists and writers, causing many Renaissance thinkers to fear expressing bold or innovative ideas. This climate of fear significantly dampened creativity.

In 1545, the Council of Trent established the Roman Inquisition, which declared humanism and any views challenging the Catholic Church as heresy, punishable by death. This draconian measure further suppressed intellectual and artistic freedoms.

By the early 17th century, these factors combined to bring the Renaissance to an end, paving the way for the Age of Enlightenment.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

g. Who is known for painting "The Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper"?

h. What scientific argument did Nicolaus Copernicus formulate?

i. Which invention significantly contributed to the spread of ideas during the Renaissance?

j. What movement did Martin Luther initiate in the 16th century?

1.4.2 THE PRINTING PRESS

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

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

1.4.3 BACKGROUND OF THE PRINT REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

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 includes *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.

LET US KNOW

John Lettou was an early printer who worked in England during the late 15th century, contributing to the nascent era of printing in Europe. Along with his partner William de Machlinia, Lettou established one of the first printing presses in England, located in Westminster. Their press operated from around 1480 to 1491 and produced a variety of texts, including legal documents, theological works, and classical literature. John Lettou's efforts played a crucial role in advancing the availability and dissemination of printed materials in England, contributing to the broader European print revolution that transformed intellectual and cultural landscapes during the Renaissance and Early Modern periods.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- m. Who introduced the printing press in England?**
- n. Name the first book printed in England.**
- o. Name some of the books printed by Caxton's printing press.**

1.4.4 IMPACT OF PRINTING ON ENGLAND

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.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

a pivotal era of cultural, artistic, and intellectual revival in England. Inspired by the broader European Renaissance, this period witnessed a flourishing of literature, art, science, and philosophy. It was characterized by a renewed interest in classical antiquity, humanism, and the potential of individual achievement.

Rooted in the revival of classical learning and humanism, this period redefined the relationship between humans and the world around them, emphasizing individual potential and the pursuit of knowledge. Renaissance literature is marked by its exploration of themes such as humanism, individualism, and the complexities of human nature. In England, it produced

some of the most enduring works in the English language, with playwrights like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, and poets like Edmund Spenser and John Milton, leading the charge. Their works reflected the tensions and harmonies of the time, blending classical forms with contemporary issues and human concerns. This era also witnessed the rise of the sonnet, the essay, and the novel, expanding the horizons of literary form and content. The rich interplay of ideas, coupled with the flourishing of the arts, makes Renaissance literature a cornerstone of Western literary tradition, echoing its influence through the centuries.

The English Renaissance covers a long span of time, which is divided for the sake of convenience into the following three periods:

i) The Beginning of Renaissance (1516 – 1558).

ii) The Flowering of Renaissance (1558 – 1603). It is actually called the Age of Elizabeth.

iii) The Decline of Renaissance (1603 – 1625). It is also termed the Jacobean Age.

Both the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods in the history of English literature are also known as **The Age of Shakespeare**. This span of time is the golden age of literature. It extends from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the death of James I in 1625. It was an era of peace, of economic prosperity, of stability, of liberty and of great explorations. It was an age of both contemplation and action. It was an era which was illustrious for the unprecedented development of art, literature and drama. John Milton calls England, during this age, as “a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks.”

The period marks the real beginning of drama. It is the golden age of English drama. The renewed study of classical drama shaped English drama in its formative years. Seneca influenced the development of English tragedy, and Plautus and Terence directed the formation of comedy. The classical drama gave English drama its five acts, its set scenes and many other features. Regular English tragedy, comedy and historical play were successfully written during this period.

Nichola Udal’s **Ralph Roister Doister** (1553) is the first English comedy of the classical school, which is divided into acts and scenes. **Gamar Gurton’s Needle** (1575), written by an unknown writer is another comedy in the classical style.

The first complete tragedy of the Senecan type is **Gorbuduc** (1562), which was written by Thomas Morton and Thomas Sackville. The example of Gorbuduc was followed by

Thomas Hughes in **The Misfortunes of Arthus** (1588) and George Gascoigne's **Jocasta** (1566). All these tragedies were influenced by Seneca both in style and treatment of theme.

Another dramatic genre, which emerged during this period, is tragic-comedy, which mixes lamentable tragedy with pleasant mirth. Some memorable plays of this type are Whetstone's **Right Excellent and Famous History**, Preston's **A Lamentable Tragedy**, Richard Edward's **Demons and Rithias** and R.B.'s **Apius and Virginia**.

Historical plays too were written during this period. Famous among the early historical plays are – **The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England** (1590), **Tragedy of Richard, the Third** (1590 – 94), **The Victories of Henry the Fifth** (1588) and the **Chronicle History of Lear** (1594).

The University Wits

Lyly, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Nashe, Kyd and Marlowe are known as the University Wits because they came either from Cambridge or from Oxford. They were romantic by nature and they represented the spirit of Renaissance. The great merit of the University Wits was that they came with their passion and poetry, and their academic training. They paved the way for the successive writers like Shakespeare to express his genius. The contribution of the university Wits to the development of drama needs to be highlighted:

1. John Lyly: Lyly wrote eight comedies, of which the best are **Campaspe, Endymion, Grallathia, Midas and Love's Metamorphosis**. He wrote for the private theatres. His writing is replete with genuine romantic atmosphere, humour, fancy for romantic comedy, realism, classicism and romanticism. Lyly established prose as an expression of comedy. He deftly used prose to express light feelings of fun and laughter. He also used a suitable blank verse for the comedy. High comedy demands a nice sense of phrase, and Lyly is the first great phrase maker in English. He gave to English comedy a witty phraseology. He also made an important advance at successful comic portrayal. His characters are both types and individuals. Disguise as a device was later popularized by Shakespeare in his plays especially in his comedies. The device of girl dressed as a boy is traced back to Lyly. The introduction of songs, symbolical of the mood owes its popularity to Lyly.

2. George Peele: His work consists of **The Arraignment of Paris, The Battle of Alcazar, The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe** and **The Old Wives' Tales**. He has left behind a pastoral, a romantic tragedy, a chronicle history and a romantic satire. He juxtaposes romance and reality in his plays. As a humourist he influenced Shakespeare. In **The Old Wives' Tales** he for the first time introduced the note of satire in English drama.

3. Robert Greene: Greene wrote **The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon and Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay**. Greene was the first master of the art of plot construction in English drama. In his plays Greene has three distinct worlds mingled together – the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life, and the world of the country. There is peculiar romantic humour and rare combination of realism and idealism in his plays. He is the first to draw romantic heroines. His heroines Margaret and Dorothea anticipate Shakespeare's Rosalind and Celia.

4. Thomas Kyd: Kyd's **The Spanish Tragedy**, a Senecan tragedy, is an abiding contribution to the development of English tragedy. It is a well-constructed play in which the dramatist has skilfully woven passion, pathos and fear until they reach a climax. Kyd succeeded in producing dialogue that is forceful and capable. He introduced the revenge motif into drama. He, thus, influenced Shakespeare's **Hamlet** and Webster's **The Duchess of Malfi**. The device of play within play, which Shakespeare employed in **Hamlet**, is used for the first time in **The Spanish Tragedy**. He also introduced the hesitating type of hero, suffering from bouts of madness, feigned or real, in the character of Hieronimo, who anticipates the character of **Hamlet**.

5. Christopher Marlowe: Marlowe's famous plays **Tamburlaine, the Great, Dr. Faustus, Edward II** and **The Jew of Malta** give him a place of pre-eminence among the University Wits. Swinburne calls him — “the first great poet, the father of English tragedy and the creator of blank verse.” He is, indeed, the protagonist of tragic drama in English and the forerunner of Shakespeare and his fellows. Marlowe provided big heroic subjects that appealed to human imagination. He for the first-time imparted individuality and dignity to the tragic hero. He also presented the tragic conflict between the good and evil forces in **Dr. Faustus**. He is the first tragic dramatist who used the device of *Nemesis* in an artistic and psychological manner. Marlowe for the first time made blank verse a powerful vehicle for the expression of varied human emotions. His blank verse, which Ben Jonson calls, — “Marlowe's Mighty Line” is noticeable for its splendour of diction, picturesqueness, vigour and energy, variety in pace and its responsiveness to the demands of varying emotions. Marlowe has been termed ‘*the father of English tragedy*’. He was in fact the first to feel that romantic drama was the sole form in harmony with the temperament of the nation. He created authentic romantic tragedy in English and paved the way for the full blossoming of Shakespeare's dramatic genius.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- q. Who is considered the "father of English tragedy" and the creator of blank verse?
- r. What significant device did Thomas Kyd introduce into English drama in his play *The Spanish Tragedy*?
- s. Which playwright introduced songs into English drama and is credited

Dramatic Activity of Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was not of an age but of all ages. He wrote 37 plays, which may be classified as tragedies, comedies, romances or tragic-comedies and historical plays. The period of Shakespeare's dramatic activity spans twenty-four years (1588 – 1612) which is divided into the following four sub-periods:

- i) The First Period (1588 – 96): It is a period of early experimentation. During this period he wrote **Titus Andronicus, First Part of Henry VI, Love's Labour Lost, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II** and **Richard III** and **King John**. His early poems *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Andonis* belong to this period.
- ii) The Second Period (1596 – 1600): Shakespeare wrote his great comedies and chronicled plays during this period. The works of this period are **The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, The Twelfth Night, Henry IV, Part I & II, and Henry V.**
- iii) The Third Period (1601 – 08): It is a period of great tragedies **Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, Julius Caesar**, and of sombre and better comedies **All's Well That Ends Well, Measure For Measure** and **Troilus and Cressida.**
- iv) The Fourth Period (1608 – 1613): Shakespeare's last period begins with **Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, Henry VII** and **Pericles**. What distinguishes Shakespeare's last period is the reawakening of his first love romance in **Cymbeline, The Tempest** and **The Winter's Tale.**

Shakespearean Comedy

Shakespeare brought perfection to the writing of romantic comedy. His comedies are classified into the following three categories.

i) The Early Comedies: They are **The Comedy of Errors**, **Love's Labour Lost** and **The Two Gentlemen of Verona**. The plays show signs of immaturity. The plots are less original, the characters are less finished and the style is also vigorous. The humour lacks the wide human sympathy of his mature comedies.

ii) The Mature Comedies: Shakespeare's comic genius finds expression in **Much Ado About Nothing**, **Twelfth Night**, **The Merchant of Venice** and **As You Like It**. These plays are full of love and romance, vigour and vitality, versatility of humour, humanity and well-portrayed characters.

iii) The Sombre Comedies: **All's Well That Ends Well**, **Measure for Measure** and **Troilus and Cressida** belong to the period of great tragedies. These comedies have a serious and sombre time.

Shakespearean Tragedy

Shakespearean comedy is romantic and not classical. It observes the fundamental requirements of tragedy expounded by Aristotle in **The Poetics**. The main characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy are as follows:

Tragic Hero: Shakespearean tragedy is pre-eminently the story of one person, the hero or the protagonist. It is, indeed, a tale of suffering and calamity resulting in the death of the hero. It is concerned always with persons of high degree, often with Kings or princes or with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus and Antony. Shakespeare's tragic heroes are not only great men, they also suffer greatly, their calamity and suffering are exceptional. The sufferings and calamities of an ordinary man are not worthy of note, as they affect his own life. The story of the prince like Hamlet, or the King like Lear, or the generals like Macbeth or Othello has a greatness and dignity of its own. His fate affects the fate of a whole nation or empire. When he falls from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast of the powerlessness of man. His fall creates cathartic effects on the audience.

Shakespeare's tragic hero is endowed with noble qualities of head and heart. He is built on a grand scale. For instance, Macbeth has —vaulting ambition, Hamlet noble inaction, Othello credulity and rashness in action, and Lear the folly and incapacity to judge human character.

Owing to this —fatal flaw the hero falls from a state of prosperity and greatness into adversity and unhappiness, and ultimately dies.

Tragic Waste: In Shakespearean tragedy we find the element of tragic waste. All exceptional qualities of the protagonist are wasted. At the end of the tragedy, the Evil does not triumph. It is expelled but at the cost of much that is good and admirable. The fall of Macbeth does not only mean the death of evil in him, but also the waste of much that is essentially good and noble. In **Hamlet** and **King Lear**, the good is also destroyed along with the evil. There is no tragedy in the expulsion of evil, the tragedy is that it involves the waste of good.

Fate and Character: The actions of the protagonist are of great importance as they lead to his death. What we do feel strongly as the tragedy advances to its close is that the calamities and catastrophe follow inevitably from the deeds of man, and that the main source of these deeds is character. But to call Shakespearean tragedy the story of human character is not the entire truth. Shakespeare's tragedies, as Nicoll points out are — “tragedies of character and destiny.” There is a tragic relationship between the hero and his environment. A. C. Bradley also points out that with Shakespeare — “character is destiny is an exaggeration of a vital truth.” Fate or destiny places the protagonist in just those circumstances and situations with which he is incapable of dealing. The flaw in the character of the protagonist proves fatal for him in the peculiar circumstances in which cruel Destiny has placed him. The essence of Shakespearean tragedy, therefore, is that Fate presents a problem which is difficult for the particular hero at a time when he is least fitted to tackle it. The tragic relationship between the hero and his surroundings is a significant factor in Shakespearean tragedy. So, both character and destiny are responsible for the hero's tragic end.

Abnormal Psychology: Some abnormal conditions of mind as insanity, somnambulism and hallucinations affect human deeds. Lear and Ophelia become victims of insanity. Lady Macbeth suffers from somnambulism and her husband Macbeth from hallucinations.

The Supernatural Element: The supernatural agency plays a vital role in Shakespearean tragedy. It influences the thoughts and deeds of the hero. In the age of Shakespeare ghosts and witches were believed to be far more real than they are today. It is the supernatural agency that gives the sense of failure in Brutus, to the half-formed thoughts of guilt in Macbeth and to suspicion in Hamlet. Supernatural agency has no power to influence events unless by influencing persons.

Chance: In most of Shakespeare's tragedies chance or accident exerts an appreciable influence at some point in the action. For instance, it may be called an accident the pirate ship attacked

Hamlet's ship, so that he was able to return forthwith to Denmark; Desdemona drops her handkerchief at the most fatal of moments; Edgar arrives in the prison just too late to save Cordelia's life.

Conflict: Conflict is an important element in Shakespearean tragedy. According to Aristotle it is the 'soul of tragedy'. This conflict may arise between two persons, e.g. the hero and the villain, or between two rival parties or groups in one of which the hero is the leading figure. This is called the 'external conflict'. In **Macbeth** the hero and the heroine are opposed to King Duncan. There is also an —inner conflict, an inward struggle, in the mind of the hero and, it is this inner conflict which is of far greater importance in the case of the Shakespearean tragedy. In it there is invariably such as inner conflict in the mind of one or more of the characters. In **Macbeth**, according to Bradley, we find that —treasonous ambition in Macbeth collides with loyalty and patriotism in Macduff and Malcolm: here is the outward conflict. But these powers and principles equally collide in the soul of Macbeth of himself; here is the inner.

Catharsis: Shakespearean tragedy is cathartic. It has the power of purging and thus easing us of some of the pain and suffering which is the lot of us all in the world. Compared to the exceptionally tragic life of the hero before our eyes, our own sufferings begin to appear to us little and insignificant. In a Shakespearean tragedy the spectacle of the hero's sufferings is terrible and it arouses the emotions of pity and terror. It is truly cathartic, as it purges the audience of the emotions of self-pity and terror.

No Poetic Justice: Shakespearean tragedy is true to life. So, it excludes poetic justice which is in flagrant and obvious contradiction of the facts of life. Although villainy is never ultimately triumphant in Shakespearean tragedy, there is yet an idea that the fortunes of the persons should correspond to their deserts and dooms. We feel that Lear ought to suffer for his folly and for his unjust treatment of Cordelia, but his sufferings are out of all proportion to his misdeeds. In Shakespearean tragedy we find that the doer must suffer. We also find that villainy never remains victorious and prosperous at the end. Nemesis overtakes Macbeth and all evil characters in Shakespearean tragedy.

Moral Vision: Shakespearean tragedy is not depressing. It elevates, exalts and ennobles us. Shakespeare shows in his tragedies that man's destiny is always determined to a great extent by his own character. He is an architect of his own fate. It always reveals the dignity of man and of human endeavour over the power of evil, which is ultimately defeated. Shakespearean tragedy ends with the restoration of the power of the good.

Shakespeare's Historical Plays

The historical plays were immensely popular in Elizabethan England. They reflected the spirit of the age. The people were intensely patriotic and were very proud of the achievements of their ancestors or the foreign fields. The newly awakened spirit of patriotism and nationalism enables the people to take keen interest in the records of bygone struggle against foreign invasion and civil disunion.

Shakespeare's historical plays span a period of 350 years of English history, from 1200 to 1550. His famous historical plays are **Henry VI, Parts I, II & III, Richard II, Richard III, King John, Henry IV, Parts I & II** and **Henry V**. He borrowed the raw material of his historical plays from the chronicles of Hall, Showe and Holinshed.

Shakespeare's historical plays are suffused with the spirit of patriotism. They show his love for authority and discipline. He considers law and authority necessary for civilized life, he fears disorder for it leads to chaos.

Shakespeare's Last Plays

Shakespeare's last plays known as dramatic romances form a class apart. His last four plays – **Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale** and **The Tempest** are neither comedies nor tragedies. All of them end happily but all fetch happiness to shore out of shipwreck and suffering. These last plays have a lot in common. It is appropriate to call them —dramatic romances or tragicomedies. They contain incidents which are undoubtedly tragic but they end happily.

Shakespeare's last plays breathe a spirit of philosophic calm. They are stories of restoration, reconciliation, moral resurrection and regeneration.

Other Playwrights

Ben Jonson and *the Comedy of Humours*

Ben Jonson was a classicist in Elizabethan England, which was romantic both in character and temper. Jonson was the first great neo-classic. Like Donne, he revolted against the artistic principles of his contemporaries, and he sought a measure for the uncontrolled, romantic exuberance of Elizabethan literature in the classical literature. In all branches of his writings, he is the conscious artist and reformer. To him the chief function of literature was to instruct and educate the audience and readers.

All plays of Ben Jonson are neo-classic in spirit. They aim at reforming and instructing society and individuals. He is primarily a writer of the comedies of humour. His famous comedies are **The Case is Altered, Every Man in His Humour, Every Man Out of His Humour, Epicone**

or **The Silent Woman, The Alchemist, The Bartholomew Fair, The Devil is an Ass, The Light Heart, Humour Reconciled** and **A Tale of A Tub**. Ben Jonson also wrote two tragedies **Sejanus** and **Cataline**.

Jonson propounded the theory of the *comedy of humours*. To him the purpose of the comedy is corrective and cathartic. The corrective and moral tone necessitated the presence of satire in his comedies. The audience must laugh to some end and the play must deal with some folly and cure it by its ridiculous and comic presentation. To him a comedy was a —comical satire. He derived the idea of humours from medieval medical science. In the older physiology the four major humours corresponding with the four elements and possessing the qualities of moisture, dryness, heat and cold. These elements, in different combinations, formed in each body and declare his character. Variations in the relative strength of these humours showed the individual differences. The disturbance of the natural balance is dangerous and it results in different ailments of body. In order to restore the natural balance of the body many purging, bleedings and other painful reductions were affected in medieval times.

Ben Jonson used this term to include vices as well as follies, cruelty as well as jealousy. It was also used in the sense of mere caprice or trick of manner or peculiarity of chess. It also included vanity and affectation. In **Every Man Out of His Humour** he lucidly explained the term —humour. Jonson regarded it as one of the main functions of the comedy to expose the excesses, vanities and human affectations, which disturbed the balance of human personality. Jonsonian comedy of humours is classical and intellectual. He is the forerunner of the Restoration comedy of manners.

John Webster and the Revenge Tragedy

Webster's two tragedies **The White Devil** and **The Duchess of Malfi** have earned for him an outstanding place in British drama. In subtlety of thought and reality of tragic passion he is second to Shakespeare. Both his tragedies are based on the revenge motif. In them he emerges as a painstaking artist who had refined the material and motives of the earlier tragedies of blood and gloom. He had converted melodrama into tragedy. He imparted moral vision, psychological subtlety and emotional depth to the tragedy of revenge and horror.

Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher

Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher combined to produce a great number of plays. Their typical comedies are **A King and No King, The Knight of Burning Pestle** and **The Scornful Lady**. They wrote two tragedies – **The Maid's Tragedy** and **Philaster**.

George Chapman

George Chapman was a classicist like Jonson. His two comedies **All Fools' Day** and **Eastward Ho** are remarkable for Jonsonian humour. His historical plays dealing with nearly contemporary history are **The Blind Beggar of Alexandria**, **Charles, Duke of Byron** and **The Tragedy of Chabot**.

Thomas Middleton

Thomas Middleton was one of the most original dramatists of his time. His light farcical comedies like **A Mad World My Masters** and **A Chaste Maid in Cheapside** are remarkable for vivacity. His other memorable plays **Women Beware Women**, **Changeling** and **The Witch**. **The Spanish Gypsy** is a romantic comedy which reminds us of **As You Like It**.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

From the reading of this unit, you have come to know the period from Chaucer to Shakespeare. Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the father of English literature, wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, showcasing Middle English and diverse storytelling. This period saw the emergence of English as a literary language alongside Latin and French. This era witnessed the Renaissance and the Elizabethan Age, marked by the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Spenser, and Milton. It saw the flourishing of drama, poetry, and prose, with Shakespeare's plays becoming central to English literary canon.

1.7 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.

1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. The Catholic Church provided spiritual guidance, education, and acted as a political authority.
- b. Similar to feudal lords, the Church had a hierarchical structure with the Pope at the apex, bishops and abbots as vassals, and clergy as the lower ranks.

- c. Trade, commerce, and the development of markets in towns provided economic opportunities that feudal estates could not.
- d. The bourgeoisie, composed of merchants, craftsmen, and skilled workers, emerged as a new social class distinct from the feudal hierarchy.
- e. The Renaissance is generally described as taking place from the 14th century to the 17th century.
- f. The Renaissance promoted the rediscovery of classical philosophy, literature, and art, and is credited with bridging the gap between the Middle Ages and modern-day civilization.
- g. Leonardo da Vinci is known for painting "The Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper."
- h. Nicolaus Copernicus formulated the first modern scientific argument for a heliocentric solar system.
- i. The invention of the printing press significantly contributed to the spread of ideas during the Renaissance.
- j. Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.
- k. Johannes Gutenberg
- l. Mentz and Haarlem
- m. William Caxton
- n. *Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers*
- o. 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*.
- p. Songbooks, Ritualistic manuals, Ballads, Chronicles
- q. Christopher Marlowe.
- r. The revenge motif.
- s. John Lyly
- t. The Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods, also known as The Age of Shakespeare.
- u. George Whetstone
- v. Robert Greene.
- w. The Spanish Tragedy.

1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the role of the Catholic Church in medieval feudal society. How did the Church influence both spiritual and temporal aspects of life?
2. Evaluate the impact of feudalism on the growth of towns and cities in medieval Europe. What factors led to the emergence of urban centers, and how did towns challenge the feudal system?

3. How did Renaissance artists like Leonardo da Vinci and architects like Filippo Brunelleschi integrate scientific principles into their work, and what were some of the outcomes of this integration?
4. Discuss the role of humanism during the Renaissance in encouraging Europeans to question the Roman Catholic Church's authority. How did this intellectual movement contribute to the Protestant Reformation?
5. How did the Age of Discovery during the Renaissance expand European geographical knowledge and influence global trade and cultural exchanges? Provide examples of notable explorers and their contributions.
6. Write a note on how the printing press as a venture began in Europe.
7. Discuss the print revolution which began in England with reference to the role of William Caxton.
8. Comment on the impact of the print revolution on the culture of England.
9. Discuss the characteristics of Renaissance literature in England. How did the revival of classical learning and humanism influence literary expression during this period? Provide examples from the works of major playwrights and poets.
10. Discuss the contribution of the University Wits to the development of Renaissance drama in England. Who were the University Wits, and how did their works pave the way for Shakespeare and other playwrights?

UNIT 2: MILTON TO JOHNSON

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Religion and Literature in the Seventeenth century
- 2.4 Restoration Theatre
- 2.5 Women's Writing in the Seventeenth century
- 2.6 The Rise of the Novel
- 2.8 The Enlightenment.
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Further Reading
- 2.11 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.12 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Form an idea regarding how the seventeenth century in England
- Understand the background of seventeenth century literature
- Learn about its impact of various revolutions held in this century upon literature and culture

- Assess the influence of Restoration theatre on subsequent literary and theatrical traditions, including its role in the development of modern drama.
- Discuss the impact of seventeenth-century women's writing on later literary traditions and feminist literary criticism.
- Form an idea regarding the factors contributing to the rise of the novels in 18th Century
- Understand the occurrence of sudden rise of the novel as popular genre
- Find out the impact of the rise of the novels
- Discuss the defining characteristics of the novel, such as realism, psychological depth, and the use of narrative voice.
- Assess how Enlightenment writers used literature to critique social, political, and religious institutions and promote ideas of reform and progress.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The 17th century marked a significant transition from an age of faith to an age of reason, reflected vividly in its literature. This period of turbulence saw profound societal, religious, and monarchical upheavals. Religious controversies and civil wars dramatically altered the lives of English people, reshaping their roles within society, their perspectives on faith, and the social structures of England. The literature of the time captures this dynamic shift, chronicling the reformation of individual roles and the evolving nature of societal and religious beliefs. The seventeenth century was a period of profound religious and political upheaval in Europe, characterized by intense theological debates, the rise of Puritanism, and the English Civil War. This era's literature reflects and responds to the tumultuous religious landscape, exploring themes of faith, providence, and morality. Writers grappled with the implications of religious doctrine, using their works to navigate and critique the shifting spiritual and ideological currents of the time. In this context, literature served not only as a means of personal expression but also as a vehicle for exploring and challenging the prevailing religious orthodoxy. This exploration will delve into how seventeenth-century literary figures like John Milton and John Bunyan addressed religious themes and how their works both influenced and were influenced by the era's religious controversies.

The Restoration period in English theatre, spanning from 1660 to 1710, marked a vibrant and transformative chapter in the history of drama. Following the closure of theatres during the Interregnum, the Restoration era saw the reopening of playhouses and the reestablishment of theatrical performance under the newly restored monarchy of Charles II. This period is renowned for its innovations in stagecraft, its embrace of comedic and satirical themes, and the significant contributions of playwrights such as William Congreve and Aphra

Behn. Restoration theatre not only reflects the sociopolitical changes of the time but also set new standards for dramatic structure, character development, and audience engagement. This examination will explore the distinctive features of Restoration drama, its major playwrights, and its lasting impact on the theatrical tradition.

The seventeenth century also witnessed a growth of female literary voices, despite the considerable societal constraints faced by women writers of the time. Figures such as Aphra Behn, Margaret Cavendish, and Anne Bradstreet emerged as pioneering voices, contributing significantly to the literary landscape of the period. Their works, ranging from poetry and prose to drama, reveal not only their personal artistic visions but also offer insight into the gendered experiences and challenges of their era. As women navigated the expectations and limitations imposed upon them, their writing became a means of asserting their intellectual and creative agency. This exploration will examine the themes, genres, and socio-cultural contexts of seventeenth-century women's writing, highlighting their contributions to the literary canon and their role in shaping literary traditions.

The rise of the novel in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries represents one of the most significant developments in the history of literature. This period saw the emergence of a new literary form that combined intricate storytelling, character development, and thematic exploration in ways that had not been seen before. Pioneering novelists such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding crafted works that addressed contemporary social issues, human psychology, and the complexities of individual experience. The novel's evolution reflects broader changes in society, including the rise of the middle class and shifts in reading practices. This introduction will explore the formative characteristics of the novel, its early practitioners, and the ways in which this genre laid the groundwork for modern literary narrative.

The Enlightenment, spanning roughly from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, was an intellectual and cultural movement that championed reason, empirical evidence, and the pursuit of knowledge. This era, also known as the Age of Reason, saw the emergence of new ideas about human nature, society, and governance that challenged traditional authorities and established norms. Philosophers and writers such as Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and David Hume contributed to a vibrant discourse on liberty, rationality, and progress. The Enlightenment's emphasis on critical thinking and individual rights significantly shaped modern Western thought and culture. This exploration will delve into the core principles of Enlightenment philosophy, its key figures, and its enduring impact on literature, politics, and intellectual life.

2.3 RELIGION AND LITERATURE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the early 17th century, the conflict between King and Parliament centered significantly on religion, a crucial aspect of daily life at the time. Religious tolerance was virtually non-existent, with everyone legally required to belong to the Church of England, although many Roman Catholics, particularly in the Northwest, practiced their faith. In 1633, William Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud, with the strong backing of King Charles I, was vehemently opposed to the Puritans and sought to suppress their influence. He dispatched commissioners to enforce conformity within local churches and attempted to curtail the activities of Puritan preachers, known as lecturers, who operated independently of the Church of England.

Laud's emphasis on ceremonial practices and church decorations sparked significant opposition from the Puritans, who feared these changes were steps toward the reestablishment of Catholicism in England. This religious tension contributed to the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, a conflict between the King and Parliament that concluded in 1646 with the execution of Charles I in 1649.

Despite the official requirement to belong to the Church of England, the 17th century saw the emergence of independent churches. The first Baptist Church in England began meeting in 1612. Later, George Fox (1624-1691) founded the Quakers, advocating for the belief that everyone possessed an "inner light." During the 1660s and 1670s, Fox traveled extensively across England, although the Quakers faced persecution, and Fox himself was frequently imprisoned. Additionally, from the late 16th century, Congregationalists, or Independents, argued for each congregation's right to self-governance without external interference.

Charles II (1660-1685), although not overtly religious, leaned towards Roman Catholicism. During his reign, Parliament sought to re-establish Anglicanism as the state religion, passing the Clarendon Code to persecute non-conformists, or Protestants who did not belong to the Church of England. The Corporation Act of 1661 required all town officials to be Church of England members. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 mandated the use of the Book of Common Prayer by all clergy, resulting in the resignation of about 2,000 dissenting clergymen. The Conventicle Act of 1664 prohibited unauthorized religious meetings of more than five people, except those from the same household. The Five Mile Act of 1665 banned non-Anglican ministers from coming within five miles of incorporated towns. Despite these laws, non-conformists continued to meet and preach.

When Charles II died in 1685, his openly Catholic brother James II succeeded him. James II quickly alienated the populace by appointing Catholics to influential positions. In 1687, he issued a Declaration of Indulgence, suspending all laws against Catholics and Protestant non-Anglicans. The birth of his son in June 1688, ensuring a Catholic heir, was unacceptable to the English people. Consequently, James II was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The subsequent Bill of Rights in 1689 barred any Catholic from becoming king or queen and prohibited kings from marrying Catholics.

In 1689, Parliament also passed the Toleration Act, granting non-conformists the right to worship freely and allowing their teachers and preachers to practice openly. However, non-conformists were still barred from holding government positions or attending universities. These legislative changes marked significant steps towards religious tolerance, though full acceptance and equality were still distant goals.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. What was the main religious issue that caused conflict between King Charles I and Parliament in the early 17th century?**
- b. Who founded the Quakers, and what was one of their core beliefs?**
- c. What was the purpose of the Clarendon Code passed during the reign of Charles II?**

Writers of the 17th century, such as John Donne and John Milton, used their works to present their philosophies on the pressing issues of their time, significantly influencing public opinion. These authors explored common themes of love, religion, and political views, offering profound insights into English society and its evolving perspectives. Through their literature, they provided a reflective commentary on the societal and religious controversies, shaping and reflecting.

The 17th century in England was both an age of transition and revolution. Political and social struggles, such as the civil war and Oliver Cromwell's government, reflected the turmoil of the era. The unity of Elizabethan life dissipated, national pride waned, and the power dynamics shifted as a new middle class emerged. This period saw a movement from grand explorations to the exploitation of discoveries, with a growing focus on colonization and trade.

The 17th century marked a golden age for prose, characterized by a focus on scientific detail and clarity. Sir Francis Bacon's "Essays" set the stage, while writers like Sir Thomas

Browne and Robert Burton explored various beliefs and human behavior. Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" and "Holy Dying," Izaak Walton's "The Compleat Angler," and John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" were notable works that reflected the era's interest in precise observation and religious themes.

John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" was a prose masterpiece that depicted a Christian's journey through life's challenges, second only to the Bible in popularity for over two centuries. In contrast, Samuel Pepys' diary provided a vivid account of daily life in London, including significant events like the Great Plague and the Great Fire, offering a unique window into 17th-century England. John Milton was a prominent Puritan poet who served Cromwell and produced significant works despite his blindness. His masterpiece, "Paradise Lost," tells the story of the fall of the angels and humanity's first disobedience. Milton's other notable works include "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes," reflecting his profound literary contribution to the era.

Metaphysical poets like John Donne and George Herbert used complex similes and metaphors to explore themes of love and spirituality. Their poetry often startled readers into new awarenesses. In contrast, Cavalier poets such as Thomas Carew and Robert Herrick wrote with elegance and wit, supporting Charles I through their charming and playful literary style. John Dryden dominated the literary scene in the late 17th century with his satirical and lyrical poetry, leading dramas, and influential criticism. His works like "Absalom and Achitophel" and "Alexander's Feast" showcased his intellectual vigour and clarity, setting the stage for the virtues of 18th-century writing. Dryden's translation of Virgil's "Aeneid" remains celebrated for its poetic excellence, the thoughts and beliefs of the masses.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- d. How did writers like John Donne and John Milton influence public opinion in the 17th century?**
- e. What marked the 17th century as a golden age for prose, and who were some notable authors?**
- f. What are some of the significant themes explored by Metaphysical poets like John Donne and George Herbert?**

During the Interregnum, between 1642 and 1660, England experienced a significant decline in theatrical activity due to the Puritans' efforts to suppress what they deemed "sinful" entertainment. The period began on September 2, 1642, when Parliament decreed that, amid the ongoing period of national penance, public stage plays were to cease. This decree was followed by a law in 1642 that suspended performances for five years. When this law expired, Oliver Cromwell's government enacted further measures, declaring all actors to be rogues and vagrants. Many theatres were even dismantled during these eighteen years, resulting in a notable stasis in public theatrical life.

The term "Restoration" refers to the return of the monarchy to England following over a decade of Puritan rule. The restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660 marked a dramatic shift in English cultural life, bringing the theatre back into prominence. During his exile in France, Charles II developed a deep appreciation for French theatrical styles and entertainments. Consequently, shortly after his return, on August 21, 1660, he granted two patents to Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683) and Sir William Davenant (1606-1668), authorizing them to establish new theatres. Killigrew's The King's Company and Davenant's Duke's Men were founded, with each company representing different generations of actors. Despite this revitalization of theatrical opportunities, the monopolistic control held by these two companies under government patents limited the expansion and diversity of English theatre. The patentees quickly mobilized to recruit actors, divide the existing stock of plays, and stage new productions, marking the beginning of a new era in English theatre.

The relationship between the court and the theatre during the Restoration period was deeply intertwined, both legally and financially, as well as politically. Restoration playwrights and performers often reflected this close connection by satirizing Puritans, flattering the monarchy, and supporting the royal agenda. The theatre became a vibrant medium for celebrating the end of Puritan rule, which had been marked by strict moral codes and the suppression of public performances. To mark the reopening of the theatres, Restoration plays were characterized by their opulence and often defied Puritan standards of morality. They frequently poked fun at both royalists and Roundheads, showcasing a playful irreverence towards the previous regime. This light-hearted and extravagant style mirrored a society eager to embrace newfound freedoms and recover from years of division and unrest.

Features of Restoration Drama

The Stage

With the onset of the Restoration, the theatre saw significant advancements, especially in stage technology and design. The Restoration stage was characterized by the proscenium theatre setup, featuring a deep forestage or apron that extended in front of the proscenium arch. The proscenium arch framed the stage and was integral for creating the scenic illusion. The forestage was the primary area for action, with entrances and exits facilitated by proscenium doors on either side. These doors allowed for versatile staging, enabling actors to enter and exit through different doors to signify changes in location or time. The stage's recessed area behind the arch was used for scenic effects, with sliding scenery and curtains for scene changes, which were often accompanied by music to obscure noise. The design also included perspective scenery, creating an illusion of depth.

The Scenery

Restoration drama saw the introduction of innovative scenic techniques. Theatres were fully enclosed and used artificial lighting, moving away from the more simplistic private playhouses of the past. Scenery was painted in perspective on wings, borders, and backdrops, enhancing the illusion of depth and space. The period marked the advent of movable and changeable scenery, allowing for more dynamic stage settings. Philip Jacques de Loutherbourg, a key designer of the 18th century, made significant contributions by breaking up the stage floor with scenic pieces and experimenting with lighting to create natural effects.

The Actors

In the Restoration era, the theatre was managed by businessmen who controlled acting companies. The leading actor, usually the manager, selected plays to showcase his talents, while the rest of the actors were employed on fixed salaries and did not share in the company's profits. Actors were hired for specific roles or "lines of business," focusing on particular types of parts. This specialization allowed them to hone their skills in their respective roles. Prominent actors of the time included Thomas Betterton, Colley Cibber, and David Garrick. The introduction of women onto the stage during this period marked a significant change, allowing for more sensual and provocative scenes, such as the "couch scene" and the "rape scene," reflecting the tastes of the audience.

The Playwrights

During the Restoration, playwrights were typically employed by theatre companies on fixed salaries. They received payment based on the number of performances, with the play's ownership transferring to the company after the initial run. Playwrights did not have copyright protection for their works, limiting their long-term earnings from their plays.

The Audiences

Restoration audiences were predominantly from the elite and upper classes of London. They appreciated high-brow humour and wit, reflecting the tastes of the period. The support of King Charles II for theatre influenced the repertoire, which initially focused on sophisticated and intellectual themes. However, as the merchant class grew and theatre became more commercial, audiences began to prefer spectacle over intellectual content. This shift led to adaptations of earlier plays, such as those by Shakespeare and Marlowe, to suit contemporary tastes and political contexts.

The Costumes

The 18th century stage was known for its elaborate costumes, reflecting the era's emphasis on visual spectacle. The management of theatres varied in their budget for costumes, but the general trend was towards opulence. Costumes were designed to impress and entertain, with significant investments in accessories and decorative elements. The costumes often included stock pieces and extravagant additions, tailored to the capabilities and preferences of each theatre company.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- g. What event in 1660 marked the beginning of the Restoration period in English cultural life?**
- h. Which two individuals were granted patents by Charles II to establish new theatres after his return?**
- i. During the Restoration, what new scenic techniques were introduced to enhance theatrical performances?**
- j. Who were some notable actors of the Restoration period known for their specialization in particular roles?**

Types of Restoration Drama

Tragedy

Restoration tragedy, distinct from its Elizabethan predecessors, evolved into a genre known as heroic tragedy. Unlike earlier tragic forms that often-blended various genres, Restoration

dramatists preferred a more defined separation between tragedy and comedy. Heroic tragedy, as described by Aristotle, involves serious actions with significant consequences, often resulting in a disastrous conclusion for the protagonist. These plays typically featured noble heroes engaged in conflicts between love and honour, and often involved dramatic reversals and violent action. Heroic tragedies were usually written in rhymed couplets, emphasizing poetic dialogue and heightened language. According to John Dryden, an influential dramatist of the period, heroic plays should mirror epic poems, focusing on themes of love and valour. The tragic hero in these plays was often a character of high moral standing, facing a crisis that elicited both pity and fear from the audience. Notable playwrights in this genre include John Dryden, known for works like *Tyrannic Love* and *All for Love*, Thomas Otway with *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserv'd*, and Nathaniel Lee, who collaborated with Dryden on *Oedipus*. Other significant figures include Nicholas Rowe with *The Ambitious Stepmother* and *Tamerlane*.

Comedy

Restoration comedy is renowned for its vibrant and diverse forms, including farce, comedy of manners, satire, and provincial humour. This genre was characterized by its focus on upper-class society and often portrayed the lives and behaviours of London's elite. Restoration comedies were designed to amuse and engage the audience with wit, sexual innuendo, and satire. The most popular type of Restoration comedy was the comedy of manners. These plays critiqued the social values and customs of the upper classes, using humour and irony to expose their hypocrisy. They often featured stock characters such as the boorish countryman, the witty gentleman, and the hypocritical Puritan. The comedies also explored themes of sexual attraction, marital discord, and societal norms. Key playwrights of Restoration comedy include George Etherege with *She Would if She Could* and *The Man of Mode*, William Congreve with *Old Bachelor* and *The Way of the World*, and William Wycherley with *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*. John Vanbrugh's works such as *The Provok'd Wife* and George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* also stand out for their sharp social commentary and engaging plots.

Some Restoration Playwrights

William Congreve

William Congreve, born in 1670 in Bardsey, West Yorkshire, is celebrated for his mastery in comedy. His career began with the successful play *The Old Bachelor* in 1692. Congreve specialized in raucous comedies, reflecting the promiscuous and witty nature of Restoration theatre. His notable play *The Mourning Bride* (1697) marked a departure from his usual

comedic style, being his sole tragedy and introducing the famous line, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Congreve's career waned as audience tastes shifted away from the comedy of manners. His final play, *The Way of the World* (1700), aimed to reaffirm his comedic prowess but faced mixed reactions.

George Farquhar

George Farquhar, born in 1677, began his theatrical career with *Love and a Bottle* in 1698, written at the young age of 20. His most renowned works, *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707), were penned later in his career. Farquhar is celebrated for his roguish humour, rakish characters, and clever dialogue. His final play, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, composed towards the end of his life, remains his most acclaimed work, reflecting his talent for light-hearted, witty drama.

William Wycherley

William Wycherley, born in 1640, was a prominent figure in Restoration drama, known for his sharp wit and spirited plots. His play *The Country Wife* (1675) exemplifies the sexual innuendo and lively language typical of Restoration comedies. The play's title itself is a double entendre, and its exploration of lewd themes mirrored the era's appetite for provocative humour. Wycherley's works, while popular in their time, have often faced challenges in modern performances due to their explicit content.

Popular Theatres

Duke's Company

One of the two major acting companies established by Charles II's patents was the Duke's Company, founded by Sir William Davenant in 1661. Initially performing at The Cockpit Theatre and later Lincoln's Inn Fields, the company moved to its permanent venue at Dorset Garden Theatre in 1671. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren, this theatre later relocated to Covent Garden in 1732, continuing to be a significant site for theatrical productions.

King's Company

The second royal patent was awarded to Thomas Killigrew, leading to the formation of the King's Company. Their theatre, Royal Drury Lane, opened on May 7, 1663. Like the Duke's Company's theatre, Royal Drury Lane was initially designed by Sir Christopher Wren. After a fire in 1672, Wren redesigned the theatre, which remains the oldest continuously operating theatre in London.

Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre

After the Duke's Company vacated Lincoln's Inn Fields, the former tennis court was transformed into a theatre in 1695 by Thomas Betterton and William Congreve. This small, resource-limited theatre struggled to succeed and was eventually replaced by a new venue built by Christopher Rich. The new theatre continued to serve as an influential Restoration venue until its closure and relocation in 1732.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

k. Who founded the Duke's Company, one of the major acting companies during the Restoration period?

l. Which theatre, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, was the permanent venue for the Duke's Company from 1671?

m. What is William Wycherley known for in Restoration drama?

2.5 WOMEN'S WRITING IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The 17th century was a transformative time for literature, marked by the rise of new forms, styles, and voices. Yet, despite the significant contributions of women writers during this era, their works were often overlooked, undervalued, or even attributed to their male counterparts. In recent years, however, scholars and literary enthusiasts have worked to rediscover and celebrate the achievements of these pioneering women. From Aphra Behn's groundbreaking novels to Margaret Cavendish's innovative poetry, the writings of 17th-century women offer a unique window into the social, political, and cultural landscape of the time. This article will briefly explore the lives, works, and legacies of these remarkable women, shedding light on their struggles, triumphs, and enduring impact on the literary world.

In the 17th century, English women writers made significant strides in carving out their place in the literary landscape, despite the social and cultural constraints they faced. During this era, a number of women overcame the barriers of gender and class to produce works that not only reflected their personal experiences but also grappled with the larger sociopolitical issues of the time.

One key factor that enabled the rise of women writers in the 17th century was the gradual shift in attitudes towards female education and intellectual pursuits. As the utilitarian mindset of the period gained traction, there was a growing appreciation for practical and "plain"

styles of writing, which aligned well with the literary contributions of many women. Indeed, as Lynne Agress has observed, 17th-century English women writers often employed a distinct "feminine irony" in their works, using language and perspective to challenge prevailing social norms. The diverse range of topics and genres explored by these women writers is a testament to their intellectual curiosity and creative expression.

In the 17th century England, very few women, compared with men, wrote for publication, their works form less than 1 percent of the total number of texts published in the period. Very few women outside the social elite had sufficient access to education to enable them to write. Those women, who were capable of writing, were discouraged, as writing was viewed as improper for the lady. Their attempt to enter the domain of literature, which was dominated by men, was considered "inappropriate." Despite all these hurdles, a nonetheless significant number of women managed not only to publish, but to break out of the expectations of what were acceptable subjects for women to write about.

Women were able to write not only religious or romantic works, but also philosophical, political, dramatic, and autobiographic works. Women now started to write for the sake of writing, and they began to say that they did not need a reason beyond themselves to write, and this establishment of a female identity which had distinct drives and dreams, and the growing desire for their ideas and works to be read outside, signalled the rise of the English Women Writer. Women were not provided academic education. Whatever they learnt, they learned it from the creative discourses of the nobility. While some were fortunate enough to become literate, they were not necessarily well versed in the art of writing. An Englishwoman had an educational disadvantage to a man; a woman had to have a much stronger drive and desire to write, as she had to surmount social prejudices regarding not only women writers but also educated women as whole. The failure of English society to provide women with education was due in part to the general assumption that a woman's place was in the household. The act of writing and of publication, sent a woman outside that domestic sphere, into the broader world of public conversation (much to the chagrin of social conservatives).

Aphra Behn (1640-1689)

Aphra Behn was a controversial figure, despite considerable success as a writer for the theatre. She was accused of lewdness and of plagiarism. She was also politically active, and, in general, was an uncomfortable presence in the prevailing moral climate of the late seventeenth century. Perhaps it was this which led to her being ignored in literary history for many years.

The first English woman to make a living as a writer, and also as a spy. The most prolific dramatist of her time, she was also an innovative writer of fiction and a translator of science and French romance.

Virginia Woolf: *“All women together ought to let flowers fall on the tomb of Aphra Behn... For it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.”*

Behn was a lyrical and erotic poet, expressing a frank sexuality that addressed such subjects as male impotence, female orgasms, bisexuality, and the indeterminacies of gender. She had the reputation of a respected professional writer, and also of a *“punk-poetess”*. Behn was a Royalist spy in Netherlands and South America. She also served as a political propagandist for the courts of Charles II and James II. She wrote under the pastoral pseudonym ‘Astrea’. Her early works were tragicomedies in verse. In 1670, her first play, **The Forc’d Marriage** was produced, and **The Amorous Prince** followed a year later. Her sole tragedy, **Abdelazer; or, The Moor’s Revenge** (an adaptation of the 1600 tragedy *Lust’s Dominion*) was staged in 1676.

She turned to light comedy and farce towards the 1670s. **The Rover or The Banish’d Cavaliers** (a play in two parts), (1667,1681) was very successful. It depicts the adventures of a small group of English Cavaliers in Madrid and Naples during the exile of the future Charles II. **The Emperor of the Moon** (1687) based on Italian commedia dell’arte, presaged the *harlequinade*, a form of comic theatre that evolved into the English pantomime.

Behn is mostly remembered for her iconic prose fiction i.e. her short novel **Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave** (1688) tells the story of an enslaved African prince whom Behn claimed to have known in South America. Its engagement with the themes of slavery, race, and gender were important enough to make it her best work. Behn’s other fictions included the multipart epistolary novel **Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister** (1684-87) and **The Fair Jilt** (1688). She also wrote poetry, the bulk of which was collected in **Poems Upon Several Occasions, with A Voyage to the Island of Love**, having some autobiographical elements (1684) and **Lycidus; or The Lover in Fashion** (1688).

Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673)

This Duchess of Newcastle was a philosopher, poet, playwright, and essayist. She produced more than twelve original works which made her visible in the realm of literature which dominated by men. Her philosophical writings were mostly concerned with issues of metaphysics and natural philosophy. Like Hobbes and Descartes, she rejected the opinions of the Scholastics. She argued for *panpsychism*, the view that all things in nature possess minds

or mental properties. Cavendish was an advocate for women's education. She challenged the contemporary belief that women were inferior to men.

Cavendish was a staunch Royalist and aristocrat; she argued that each person in society has a particular place and distinctive activity, furthermore, social harmony only arises when people know their proper places and perform their defining actions.

Poems and Fancies and Philosophical Fancies (1653); her first collection of writings which comprises of epistles, poems and some prose. The publisher was the official publisher for the Royal Society. They also published – **The World's Olio** (1655), **Philosophical and Physical Opinions** (1655), **Nature's Pictures drawn by Fancy's Pencil to the Life** (1656), is one of her most ambitious works where she tries to blend different modes and genres. **A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life** (1656) is an autobiographical memoir, which is also her defence against her critics. In this work, she shares her views on gender, class, as well as politics.

She wrote a fantastic Utopian fiction- **The Description of A New World, Called the Blazing World** (1688), which is one of the earliest examples of science-fiction. **Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy** (1666), was her most famous work on natural philosophy. In this work she defends the belief that all nature is composed of free, self-moving, rational matter.

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1652)

One of the first Englishwoman to write a complete sonnet sequence as well as an original work of prose fiction. An English noblewoman from a distinguished literary family, she wrote secular love poetry and romances. Her works were celebrated by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and others. Her uncle's name was Sir Philip Sidney, who was an inspiration for her. Her works were heavily influenced by her uncle *Philip Sidney's Astrophil and Stella*. **Love's Victory** (1620), a five-act pastoral closet drama. She did a role in the first masque designed by Ben Jonson in collab with Inigo Jones, **The Masque of Blackness** (1605). She joined Queen Anne in the performance. She also appeared with the Queen in **The Masque of Beauty** (1608). Anne Locke's *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560), a translation of John Calvin's sermons, is the first sonnet sequence in English.

Katherine Philips (1632-1664)

She is famously known as *The Matchless Orinda*. She wrote poetry, letters, verse drama, translations. She was one of the first women to become well known as a poet during her lifetime. In more recent years her works have begun to be appreciated, in particular for its

vivid description of female friendships. Writers like John Dryden and John Keats have displayed high regard for her writings after her death.

She wrote a poem “*Upon the double Murther of K. Charles I*” (1654-52) which sympathized with the Royalists. She is well known for her poems on friendship, mostly female friendships which are private, personal relationships. She was at the centre of a literary coterie, a ‘Society of Friendship’ (inspired from the cult of Neoplatonic love) whose participants wrote letters and poems under the pseudonyms adopted French pastoral romances of Cavalier dramas-

Philips was ORINDA

Anne Owens was LUCASIA

Mary Aubrey was ROSANIA

James Philips(husband) was ANTENOR.

“**The Matchless Orinda**” was often considered to be the ideal female writer who is virtuous, proper and chaste; stark opposite to Aphra Behn, who was more daring and open. One authorized edition of her Poems was published in January 1664. In 1667, another edition was published. Her dramatic translation of Pierre Corneille’s **Pompey** (from Corneille’s *La Mort de Pompee*) was published in 1667 with great success. This became the first play written by an Englishwoman to be performed on the professional stage. She wrote a series of letters to Charles Cotterell, that were published after her death as **Letters From Orinda to Poliarchus** (1705). She was referred to as “the Incomparable” (1664) or “the Matchless Orinda” (1667) by her contemporaries. One of her most famous poems is- “*To My Excellent Lucasia, On Our Friendship*”, which describes the relationship that existed between her and Anne Owens (Lucasia).

Anne Killigrew (1660-1685)

One of the most famous personalities during her time; Anne Killigrew, unfortunately lived a very short life due to smallpox. Her poetry was celebrated by her contemporaries, but none were published during her lifetime. She was a well-educated woman, who studied the Bible, Greek Philosophy and mythology. She employed the method called ‘shifting voices’ in her own poetry, a technique that owes much to theatre, and mythological themes are fairly common throughout her work. She was much inspired from other women writers, mostly from Katherine Philips. She wrote around 33 poems, which were published posthumously; and she is also attributed with 15 paintings. She was referred to as “A Grace for Beauty, and a Muse for Wit,” by her contemporaries. She was eulogized by John Dryden in the ode “*To the Pious*

Memory Of the Accomplished Young Lady, Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting,” (1686) which introduced the volume of her poems.

Killigrew tried her hand at a variety of poetic genres- heroic, pastoral, epigrammatic, occasional, panegyric- being the prominent among them. She commented on court settings and conventions, from various stances- old and young, male or female, engaged by or disenchanted by the court. She was an accomplished painter, trying her hand at a *self-portrait in Berkley Castle*, and a *portrait of James II of England*. Not surprisingly she had her critics with one, the eminent poet of her time Alexander Pope describing her work as “crude” and “unsophisticated.” It is certainly evident, from her own words, that she struggled to complete poems such as her unfinished work *Alexandreis*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- n. Who was the first English woman known for making a living as a writer and also served as a spy?**
- o. Who was known as *The Matchless Orinda* and became famous for her poems on female friendships during her lifetime?**
- p. Which poet, celebrated by her contemporaries like John Dryden, tragically died of smallpox and had her poems published posthumously?**

2.6 RISE OF THE NOVEL

Novel or non-fictional works are very popular genre of literature all over the world. However, the emergence of novel did not attract a crowd of readers in England before 18th Century. The rise of the novel as a literary form is a significant development in literary history, particularly occurring during the 18th century. Before the novel emerged as a prominent genre, literary works primarily consisted of poetry, drama, and philosophical treatises. There are some important factors that contributed to the rise which are discussed in this chapter.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- q. When did the rise of novel occur in England?**

Background

Here are some key factors that contributed to the rise of the novel:

1. **Social Change and Urbanization:** The growth of cities and the expansion of the middle class created a new audience for literature. Novels often depicted everyday life and social interactions that resonated with this emerging urban audience.
2. **Individualism and Realism:** Unlike epic poetry or drama, novels focused on the individual experience and portrayed characters with psychological depth. This shift towards realism allowed authors to explore human emotions, relationships, and societal issues in a more nuanced way.
3. **Printing Press:** The invention of the printing press made books more accessible and affordable to a wider audience. This technological advancement contributed to the popularity and spread of novels.
4. **Rise of the Middle Class:** As literacy rates increased among the middle class, there was a growing demand for literature that reflected their own experiences and concerns. Novels provided a means for readers to explore issues of identity, morality, and social dynamics.
5. **Political and Philosophical Changes:** The Enlightenment period encouraged critical thinking, exploration of new ideas, and questioning of traditional authority. Novels became a platform for discussing these intellectual and social changes.
6. **Female Writers:** Women writers, such as Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters, played a crucial role in the development of the novel. Their works often focused on domestic life, gender roles, and relationships, offering new perspectives within the genre.
7. **Genre Diversity:** The novel encompassed a wide range of subgenres, from Gothic fiction to Bildungsroman (coming-of-age novels) to social satire. This diversity allowed authors to experiment with narrative techniques and themes.

Overall, the rise of the novel marked a shift towards literature that was more accessible, reflective of contemporary society, and capable of exploring the complexities of human experience in greater depth than earlier forms of literature. This evolution laid the foundation for the novel as a dominant literary form that continues to thrive and evolve today.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- r. Name any two female writers who contributed to the rise of the novels.
- s. Name any two genre of novels present in the 18th century.

The rise of the novel, often referred to as the "rise of the novel," is a significant period in literary history when the novel emerged as a dominant literary form. This development primarily occurred in the 18th century in England. Here are key points about this period:

1. Historical Context of the Rise of the Novels: The 18th century was a time of social and economic changes, including the rise of the middle class, increased literacy rates, and the expansion of the printing industry. These factors created a larger audience for literature.

2. Early Novels: Some of the earliest English novels include Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** (1719), Samuel Richardson's **Pamela** (1740), and Henry Fielding's **Tom Jones** (1749). These works helped shape the novel as a genre, emphasizing realistic narratives and complex characters.

3. Literary Characteristics of the novels of 18th Century: The early novels often focused on individual experiences and personal development, which resonated with the emerging middle-class readers. They were characterized by detailed settings, realistic plots, and the exploration of contemporary social issues.

4. Key Authors of 18th Century England: Besides Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, other significant authors of this period include Laurence Sterne (**Tristram Shandy**), Tobias Smollett (**Roderick Random**), and later Jane Austen, whose works in the early 19th century further cemented the novel's popularity.

5. Impact of the Rise of the Novels: The novel's rise marked a shift from earlier literary forms such as poetry and drama. It became a platform for exploring human psychology, social dynamics, and moral dilemmas, influencing subsequent literary developments.

The rise of the novel represents a crucial evolution in literature, reflecting and contributing to the broader cultural and social transformations of the time.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

t. Name the popular fiction written by Laurence Sterne.

Characteristics of the Novels of 18th Century

The 18th century saw the emergence and development of the novel as a distinct literary form, characterized by several key features that distinguished it from earlier forms of literature. Here are some of the literary characteristics of 18th century novels:

1. Realism and Mimesis: 18th century novels aimed to depict realistic portrayals of everyday life and human behavior. They often focused on ordinary people and their domestic or social interactions, reflecting the rising middle class's interests and concerns. This emphasis on realism contrasted with the more stylized and idealized forms of literature that preceded it.

2. Epistolary Form: A significant number of novels in the 18th century were written in the form of letters exchanged between characters. This epistolary form allowed for intimate insights into characters' thoughts, feelings, and motivations. Examples include Samuel Richardson's "Pamela" and "Clarissa."

3. Development of Character: 18th century novels explored characters with psychological depth and complexity. Authors delved into characters' inner thoughts, emotions, and motivations, contributing to a deeper understanding of human nature. This development of character contrasts with earlier literary forms where characters often served as archetypes or representations of moral virtues.

4. Moral and Didactic Purposes: Many novels of the 18th century had explicit moral or didactic purposes. They aimed to instruct readers on proper behavior, morality, and social norms. For example, Henry Fielding's "Tom Jones" incorporates moral lessons amidst its comic narrative.

5. Satire and Social Critique: Some 18th century novels employed satire to critique social institutions, political corruption, or moral hypocrisy. Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" is a notable example, using satire to expose and criticize aspects of contemporary society.

6. Plot Complexity and Intrigue: 18th century novels often featured intricate plots with multiple subplots, twists, and turns. Authors employed suspense and dramatic tension to keep readers engaged, contributing to the novel's popularity as a form of entertainment.

7. Narrative Style and Point of View: Authors experimented with different narrative styles and points of view. While some novels used a third-person omniscient narrator, others employed first-person narratives or multiple narrators to provide diverse perspectives on events.

8. Exploration of Social Issues: Novels of the 18th century frequently explored social issues such as class divisions, gender roles, marriage, education, and the impact of social change. These themes reflected the period's intellectual and cultural concerns.

2.7 THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Age of Enlightenment

The Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Enlightenment, was a significant philosophical movement that flourished in Europe during the 18th century. It centered on the idea that reason and rational thought should be the primary sources of authority and legitimacy. Enlightenment thinkers championed ideals such as liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, and the separation of church and state. This era emphasized the importance of the scientific method and reductionism, leading to an increased skepticism of religious orthodoxy.

Core Ideas

The Enlightenment laid the intellectual foundations for many modern democratic principles. Ideas such as civil society, human and civil rights, and the separation of powers can be traced back to this period. Additionally, the development of the sciences and academic disciplines, including social sciences and humanities, was profoundly influenced by Enlightenment principles. The focus on empirical methods and rational analysis became central to academic inquiry.

Historical Context

The Enlightenment is often associated with the period starting from the early 18th century, around 1701, although some historians trace its origins back to the mid-17th century, around 1650. In France, the era is typically defined as spanning from 1715, with the beginning of Louis XV's reign, until the French Revolution in 1789. Key early works that influenced the Enlightenment include René Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1637) and Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* (1687). Descartes' shift from external authority to internal certainty marked a significant epistemological change.

Major Enlightenment Ideas

Philosophical Innovations

In the mid-18th century, Europe experienced a surge in philosophical and scientific activity that questioned established doctrines. Prominent philosophers like Voltaire and Jean-Jacques

Rousseau championed a society grounded in reason rather than religious faith. They argued for a new civil order based on natural law and emphasized science based on experimentation and observation. Montesquieu, a key political philosopher, introduced the concept of separating government powers, an idea later incorporated into the U.S. Constitution.

Radical vs. Moderate Enlightenment

Enlightenment thought divided into two main streams. The Radical Enlightenment, inspired by Spinoza, advocated for democracy, individual liberty, freedom of expression, and the elimination of religious authority. In contrast, the Moderate Enlightenment, supported by thinkers like René Descartes, John Locke, and Isaac Newton, sought a balance between reform and traditional systems of power and faith.

Role of Science

Science played a crucial role in Enlightenment discourse. Many Enlightenment thinkers had scientific backgrounds and associated scientific progress with the challenge to religious and traditional authority. The emphasis on empiricism and rational thought was central to the Enlightenment's vision of progress. However, the benefits of science were not universally acknowledged, and the movement's focus on scientific advancement was sometimes met with resistance.

Political and Intellectual Foundations

The Enlightenment significantly shaped modern Western political and intellectual culture. It introduced democratic values and institutions, laying the groundwork for modern liberal democracies. Enlightenment thinkers developed key concepts such as individual rights, natural equality, separation of powers, and representative government based on consent. These ideas contributed to the development of liberal political thought and the distinction between civil society and the state.

Religious Commentary

In response to a century of religious conflict, Enlightenment thinkers sought to limit the political power of organized religion to avoid further intolerance and war. New ideas emerged, including deism, which acknowledged a Creator without referencing religious texts, and atheism, though the latter had few proponents. Many Enlightenment figures, like Voltaire, believed that without a divine moral enforcer, societal morals could be undermined.

Rise of Print Media

The Enlightenment era saw a significant increase in the consumption of reading materials, facilitated by the Industrial Revolution. The production of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and journals expanded, making information more accessible. Edward Cave's founding of *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731 exemplified this trend, offering a monthly digest of news and commentary to an educated public interested in a wide range of topics.

End of the Enlightenment

The conclusion of the Enlightenment is generally associated with the late 18th century. Many scholars pinpoint the French Revolution of 1789 or the onset of the Napoleonic Wars (1804–15) as the end of this influential period. The dramatic political and social changes that followed marked a transition from Enlightenment ideals to new forms of political and social organization.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

Overall, the 18th century novel marked a significant departure from earlier literary forms by emphasizing realism, character development, moral instruction, and social critique. It laid the groundwork for the modern novel as a versatile and dynamic literary genre capable of exploring a wide range of human experiences and societal issues.

2.9 FURTHER READING

- Abrams M.H and Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. (2015). *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Eleventh Edition). Delhi: Cengage Learning
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- Fisk, Deborah Payne. (2000). *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Page 1-126
- Hudson, William Henry. (2015). *an Outline History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd Page 101-107
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2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. The main religious issue was the suppression of Puritans and the enforcement of conformity to the Church of England, led by Archbishop William Laud.
- b. George Fox founded the Quakers, and one of their core beliefs was that everyone had an "inner light."
- c. The purpose of the Clarendon Code was to persecute non-conformists and re-establish Anglicanism as the state religion.
- d. Writers like John Donne and John Milton influenced public opinion by exploring common themes of love, religion, and political views in their works, offering profound insights and reflective commentary on societal and religious controversies.
- e. The 17th century was marked as a golden age for prose due to its focus on scientific detail and clarity. Notable authors included Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Robert Burton, Jeremy Taylor, Izaak Walton, and John Bunyan.
- f. Metaphysical poets like John Donne and George Herbert explored themes of love and spirituality, using complex similes and metaphors to provoke new awarenesses in their readers.
- g. Charles II's return to the throne.
- h. Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant.
- i. Perspective scenery, movable scenery, and artificial lighting.
- j. Thomas Betterton, Colley Cibber, and David Garrick.
- k. Sir William Davenant.
- l. Dorset Garden Theatre.
- m. He is known for sharp wit and spirited plots, exemplified in his play "The Country Wife" (1675).
- n. Aphra Behn.
- o. Katherine Philips.
- p. Anne Killigrew.
- q. 18th Century
- r. Jane Austen and Emily Bronte
- s. Gothic fiction and Bildungsroman fiction
- t. Tristram Shandy.

2.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. How did William Laud's actions as Archbishop of Canterbury contribute to the religious tensions that eventually led to the English Civil War? Discuss the measures he implemented and their impact on the Puritan community.
2. Examine the changes in religious tolerance and legal restrictions in England from the reign of Charles II to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. How did laws such as the Clarendon Code and the Declaration of Indulgence reflect the shifting power dynamics between the monarchy and Parliament?
3. Analyze the significance of the Bill of Rights (1689) and the Toleration Act (1689) in shaping religious freedom and the relationship between the church and state in post-revolutionary England. What were the limitations of these acts for non-conformists and Catholics?
4. How did the political and social struggles of the 17th century, such as the English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell's government, influence the literature of the time? Discuss the impact on both prose and poetry.
5. Analyze the contrasting literary styles and themes of Metaphysical poets like John Donne and Cavalier poets like Robert Herrick. How did their works reflect their differing political and religious affiliations?
6. In what ways did John Milton's works, especially "Paradise Lost," reflect his Puritan beliefs and the political landscape of 17th-century England? Consider his roles both as a poet and as a public servant under Cromwell.
7. Write a note on the factors that contributed to the rise of the novels in England.
8. What are the characteristics of the novels of 18th Century England?

UNIT 3 : WORDSWORTH TO HARDY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Romantic Literature and Culture
- 3.4 Industrial Revolution
- 3.5 Darwinism
- 3.6 The spread of the British Empire
- 3.7 Victorian Literature
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Further Reading
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.11 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Form an idea regarding how the Romantic literature and culture
- Understand the background of the industrial revolution and Darwinism
- Learn about the spread of British Empire and Victorian literature

3.2 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 18th century, a new literary movement emerged in England known as Romanticism, which stood in stark contrast to the prevailing ideas of the earlier century. Romanticism was founded on a transformed view of humanity, advocating that humans are inherently good and that societal influences corrupt them. Proponents of this movement believed that by altering the social environment, widespread happiness could be achieved. They championed numerous reforms, such as improved treatment for individuals in prisons and alms houses, the reduction of death penalties for minor offenses, and the expansion of charitable institutions. Through these changes, Romanticists aspired to create a more compassionate and equitable society.

3.3 ROMANTIC LITERATURE AND CULTURE

The Romanticists held that all people are inherently connected and deserve the fundamental rights of life, liberty, and equal opportunity. These principles echoed the

American Declaration of Independence. In 1789, the French Revolution ignited a wave of hope among many English people, who believed that the new democracies in France and the United States would pave the way for global reform. Alongside democracy and individualism, Romanticism also promoted the idea that a simple, humble life, close to nature, was ideal. Consequently, the movement opposed industrialization and progress as defined by technological advancement.

This emphasis on nature and simplicity led authors to explore old legends, folk ballads, antiquities, ruins, "noble savages," and rustic characters. Writers began to rely more on their senses and imaginations, creating vibrant and realistic depictions of nature. They delighted in describing rural scenes, graveyards, majestic mountains, and roaring waterfalls, and often wrote about eerie or supernatural elements such as ghosts, haunted castles, fairies, and mad folk.

Romanticism is characterized by several key attitudes: a profound appreciation for the beauties of nature, an exaltation of emotion over reason and the senses over intellect, and a deep introspection into human personality, moods, and mental potential. Romanticists were preoccupied with the genius, hero, and exceptional figures, focusing on their passions and inner struggles. They viewed the artist as an individual creator whose creative spirit was paramount, often prioritizing imagination as a gateway to transcendent experiences and spiritual truths. Romanticism also embraced an intense interest in folk culture, national and ethnic origins, and the medieval era, alongside a fascination with the exotic, remote, mysterious, and even the monstrous, occult, and satanic. This movement marked a departure from strict formal rules, celebrating creativity, individuality, and the exploration of the human soul.

Pre Romantic Writers

The works of the pre-romantic poets also called transitional poets, marks the beginning of a reaction against the rational, intellectual, formal, artificial and unromantic poetry of the age of Pope and Dryden. It was marked by a strong reaction against stereotyped rules. They derived inspiration from Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. It is the poetry of countryside, of common and ordinary people and not of the fashionable aristocratic society and town life, as was the Augustan poetry. It was marked by the development of naturalism; love of nature and human life characterise their work. There was simplicity of expression and their poetry appealed to emotion and imagination. One of the main characteristics of the pre-romantic poets is "Return to Nature". The pre-romantic poets returned to nature and plain humanity for its material. So, it is in marked contrast to **Classicism**, which had confined itself

to the clubs and drawing rooms and to the social and political life of London. They returned to the real nature of earth and air and not to the bookish nature of the artificial pastoral. The growth of the love of nature and a feeling for the picturesque, characterized English poetry between Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth.

LET US KNOW

Classicism is an artistic and literary movement that emphasizes order, balance, simplicity, and adherence to the enduring values and forms of ancient Greece and Rome. This approach celebrates the achievements of these ancient civilizations through a commitment to structured and refined expression. In creative writing, classicism traces its roots to seminal works like Homer's *The Iliad* and Virgil's *The Aeneid*. These epics are revered as foundational texts in Western literature, embodying the principles of classical artistry.

Classical writers championed a disciplined approach to composition, favoring concise language, clear organization, and adherence to established forms. This included meticulous attention to meter, rhyme, and other technical aspects of poetry and prose. Despite its rigid adherence to tradition, classicism seeks to capture universal human experiences and shared values. By balancing simplicity with tradition, it creates works that are both aesthetically elegant and profoundly meaningful. This legacy continues in modern literature, inspiring writers to craft works that resonate with timeless significance.

Some notable writers of this period who dealt with this theme of returning to nature are mentioned below:

- a) **James Thomson** known for his poems *Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence* where he displays his treatment of nature with full acute observation and joy which he found in nature.
- b) **Oliver Goldsmith's** treatment of nature and rural life, note of human sympathy and simplicity of expressions in his poetry are the characteristics of his new poetry, for example: *The Deserted Village ; An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog*
- c) **Thomas Gray's** poetic career show a progress of Gray's emancipation from the classical rules which had so long governed English literature. His poems reveal the study of nature, not for its own beauty or truth but rather as a suitable background for the play of human emotions. The use of nature, though employed as a background, is

handled with fidelity and sympathy as in his poem *The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

- d) **William Collins** also shared with the other pre-romantic poets the reawakened interest in nature, common and medieval culture. His poems include *Ode to Evening*, *In the Downhill Of Life*, *Ode Written In the Beginning Of The Year 1746*, etc.
- e) **William Cowper**, had feelings for nature and his lyrical gifts, was an immediate forerunner of the romantics. In his longest poem *The Task*, his descriptions of homely scenes, of woods and brooks, of ploughmen and tea masters indicate a dawn of a new era in poetry.
- f) **George Crabb**'s description of nature and human life are characterised by sincerity and minute accuracy of observation like in his poems *In The Village*, *The Borough*, etc.
- g) **Robert Burns** in his poems show the perfect mingling of man and nature. His pictures of man and nature are remarkable for their vividness. He carries into his scenic pictures the same tenderness he shows in dealing with the people living there.
- h) **William Blake**'s poetry deals with simple and ordinary things- the love of the country, of simple life, of childhood and of home. He became the leader in the naturalistic kind of poetry, which found its greatest exponent in Wordsworth. He potentially deals with flowers, hills, streams, the blue sky, the brooding clouds, birds and animals. He glorifies the common objects of Nature and human life.

Another precursor to Romanticism was the Gothic literary movement, which specialized in stories of terror and imagination, often referred to as "spine chillers." Key novels in this genre include *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe, and *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis. These works are characterized by their sensationalism, featuring unreal characters, supernatural events, and highly imaginative plots. This genre reached its zenith with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a novel that epitomizes the Gothic fascination with the macabre and the supernatural.

The First Great Romanticists

- **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**: Known for beautiful, melodic verse and haunting supernaturalism; notable works include *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and *Christabel* (1816).
- **William Wordsworth**: Close friend of Coleridge; co-authored *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which marked the beginning of English Romanticism; found beauty in nature and believed it taught moral lessons.

- **Charles Lamb:** Schoolmate of Coleridge; known for playful essays and rewritings of Shakespeare's plays for children; famous works include *Dissertation on Roast Pig* (1822) and *Tales from Shakespear* (1807).
- **Sir Walter Scott:** Interested in the past, people, and rugged scenery; notable works include *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and novels like *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *Ivanhoe* (1819).
- **Jane Austen:** Gifted writer of realistic novels about the English middle class; best-known work is *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).
- **Robert Southey:** Poet laureate of England; author of *The Story of the Three Bears* and *The Battle of Blenheim*; known for his industrious writing.
- **William Hazlitt:** Earned his living by lecturing and writing for critical magazines like *The Edinburgh Review*.

The Younger Romanticists

- **George Gordon Byron:** Critic of contemporary evils; hopeful for human perfection but often disillusioned; known for satirical works like *Don Juan* (1819–24) and narrative poems like *The Corsair* (1814) and *Mazeppa* (1819); influential among the youth with "Byronism".
- **Percy Bysshe Shelley:** Rebellious member of a conservative family; wrote sonnets, songs, and poetic dramas; notable works include *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind*, and *Adonais* (1821).
- **John Keats:** Believed in finding happiness in art and natural beauty; famous for poems like *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819) and *Ode to a Nightingale* (1819); emphasized the enduring joy of beauty as in *Endymion* (1818).
- **Leigh Hunt:** Known for *Abou Ben Adhem*.
- **Thomas Moore:** Famous for *Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms*.
- **Thomas De Quincey:** Best known for *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822); distinguished between "literature of knowledge" and "literature of power."

Romanticism, therefore, evolved as a rich tapestry of ideas and beliefs, not easily defined by a single set of principles. No one Romantic writer embodied all its aspects, but each embraced enough of these ideals to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. The Romanticists were driven by emotion and imagination, guided by inspiration and intuition. They believed in democracy, humanity, and the potential for a better world.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. Which poet is known for his work *The Deserted Village*?
- b. Which poem by Thomas Gray is noted for using nature as a background to human emotions?
- c. Name one Gothic novel mentioned in the passage.
- d. Which two poets co-authored *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798?
- e. Who is known for the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?
- f. Which Romantic poet wrote *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn*?
- g. Who wrote the Gothic novel *Frankenstein* in 1818, a work that exemplifies the Gothic fascination with the macabre and supernatural?
- h. Which Romantic novelist is celebrated for works like *Pride and Prejudice*, which depict realistic portrayals of the English middle class?

3.4 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution, which occurred during the late 18th and 19th centuries, marked a series of profound changes in traditional practices of agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation. This period saw the development of new mechanical technologies that transformed the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of the Western world. In the United Kingdom, and subsequently in Europe and the United States, the economic system transitioned from manual and animal-based labour to machine manufacturing. This shift was accompanied by the development of more navigable roads, canals, and railroads, enhancing trade and connectivity. The advent of steam power, along with the creation of metal tools and complex machines for manufacturing, significantly boosted production capacity and efficiency.

The Industrial Revolution profoundly transformed society in the United Kingdom, giving rise to the working and middle classes, which helped overcome long-standing economic oppression by the gentry and nobility. While it increased employment opportunities and allowed middle-class individuals to become business owners, the working conditions in factories were often brutal and unsafe, with many workers, including children, labouring long hours for meagre wages. This period also saw the rise of the **Luddites**, who protested against

industrialization's inhumane aspects. Despite the technological advancements and urbanization that came with industrialization, it often resulted in reduced living standards for workers. However, it also spurred the growth of capitalism, increased population, and cultural developments, such as the cheaper production of books and more accessible consumer goods.

LET US KNOW

The **Luddites** emerged in early 19th-century England as a protest movement among textile workers who opposed the introduction of automated machinery. Originating in Nottingham and spreading across the North West and Yorkshire from 1811 to 1816, they were named after **Ned Ludd**, a fictional figure used as a symbol in threatening letters to mill owners and government authorities. The Luddites feared that these new machines would lead to lower wages and diminish the quality of their work. Their resistance often involved organized raids where they destroyed the offending machinery.

In response to these actions, mill and factory owners employed harsh measures, including shooting protesters and employing legal and military forces to suppress the movement. Accused and convicted Luddites faced severe penalties such as execution or penal transportation. Despite the movement's eventual suppression, the term "Luddite" has since come to symbolize opposition to industrialization, automation, and technological advancements, reflecting broader concerns about the social and economic impacts of progress.

During the Industrial Revolution, child labour was prevalent, with labour laws permitting employers to pay children significantly less than adults. Often starting as young as four years old, these children endured long hours and sometimes succumbed to exhaustion. Orphans and abandoned children frequently found themselves sold to workhouses, where they faced harsh and exploitative conditions. Blake in his works, *The Chimney-Sweeper* and *London* reflect the harsh conditions faced by child workers during the Industrial Revolution. In *The Chimney-Sweeper*, the contrast between Tom's vision of a heavenly green plain and the grim reality of children "*locked up in coffins of black*" highlights the exploitation of child labour and the false hope of religious salvation maintaining the oppressive system. Similarly, *London* critiques the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and urbanization, noting how the Thames and streets are "*charter'd*" and how individuals bear "*Marks of weakness, marks of woe.*" Blake underscores the idea that these oppressive conditions are perpetuated by "*mind-*

forg'd manacles," indicating that the intellectual and material processes meant to liberate people have instead enslaved them.

During the Industrial Revolution, rapid urbanization transformed jobs and living conditions. Factories led to the decline of individual craftsmanship, prompting a mass migration to cities. This surge in population resulted in overcrowding and poor living conditions, with many people living in dirty, cramped homes amidst pollution. Factory jobs were underpaid, contributing to economic hardships. In *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, William Wordsworth reflects on the joy and sublime feelings he experienced in nature, contrasting them with the dismal urban environment that makes him nostalgic for happier times. Wordsworth's sonnet *Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802* presents a vision of London as a place of potential renewal and connection with nature, achievable in the calm of early morning. The city's structures—ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples—are described as "*bright and glittering in the smokeless air,*" appearing harmonious with the natural world. Unlike Blake's "*charter'd*" Thames, here "*The river glideth at his own sweet will.*" This sonnet highlights the Romantic belief in the importance of consciousness and perspective, suggesting that a deeper connection to nature is possible even amidst urbanization, and that this connection is essential to countering the imbalance caused by industrialization.

The Industrial Revolution generated immense wealth and elevated the middle classes, providing some working-class individuals with more stable lives. However, it also subjected many to appalling working conditions, ruined the livelihoods of others, and inflicted severe damage on the natural environment. British Romantic poets and thinkers, such as Blake and Wordsworth, vehemently opposed the Industrial Revolution. Their poetry critiqued the economic hardships imposed on workers, including children, and condemned the reduction of human consciousness to a mere instrumental view of nature and people. Additionally, they mourned the degradation of nature brought about by industrialization. In response to the urbanization and industrialism in Great Britain, many poets critiqued the Industrial Revolution through their works. Shelley, Blake, and Keats emphasized the beauty and simplicity of nature. In *Ode to the West Wind*, Shelley uses the wind as a symbol of nature's life-giving force, contrasting it with the death brought by urbanization. Similarly, Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* highlights the speaker's envy of the bird's happiness, suggesting that true beauty lies in the simplicity of nature rather than the chaotic, ever-changing urban life.

Social Impact of the Industrial Revolution

On one hand, Industrialisation increased wealth and well-being for some. But on the other hand, it adversely affected the poor and working class, leading to harsh working conditions and discrimination. Mentioned below are some of the impacts of Industrial Revolution:

❖ **Working Conditions**

- Urban Migration: Rapid urbanisation led people to cities seeking opportunities, but resulted in overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.
- Poor Living Standards: Overcrowded cities faced high pollution levels, inadequate drinking water, and poor sanitation.

❖ **Pollution**

- Fossil Fuel Usage: Industrial machines consumed large amounts of energy, primarily from burning fossil fuels like petroleum and coal, leading to air pollution and smog.
- Chemical Pollution: Industrial chemicals further polluted the environment.
- Environmental Destruction: Farmlands and forests were destroyed for railroads, and waste was dumped into rivers, worsening pollution effects in densely populated areas.

❖ **Child Labour**

- Demand for Workers: The Industrial Revolution increased the demand for labour, leading to the exploitation of orphans and poor children.
- Dangerous Conditions: Children were forced into hazardous jobs, often resulting in brutal accidents due to their small size, such as fixing running machines.
- Lack of Education: Working long hours prevented children from accessing education.

❖ **Discrimination Against Women**

- Gender Inequality: The Industrial Revolution entrenched gender inequalities in the workplace.
- Devaluation of Women's Work: Industrialisation of the textile industry devalued traditional women's work, which was previously done by hand at home.
- Lower Wages: Women were forced to work in factories and mines for half the pay of men, as factory owners assumed they didn't have families to support.

Few Novelists and their works

- **Charles Dickens:** Charles Dickens, one of the most renowned Victorian writers, was deeply disturbed by the impacts of the Industrial Revolution.

- ❖ *Oliver Twist* (1838) : In his second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1838), Dickens critiques the harsh treatment of the poor, especially orphaned children. This social novel exposes the cruelty of workhouses, the exploitation of child labour, and the grim reality of poverty. The protagonist, an orphan named Oliver Twist, embodies Dickens's criticism of Victorian attitudes that blamed the poor for their suffering. Born in a workhouse, Oliver is subjected to brutal conditions with minimal food and safety. After a bold request for more food, he is sold into a harsh apprenticeship, from which he eventually escapes, only to be thrust into the criminal underworld.
- ❖ *A Christmas Carol* (1843) : Dickens's novella *A Christmas Carol* (1843) critiques the ruthless factory owners of the Industrial Revolution and their obsession with wealth. The miserly protagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge, epitomizes this cold-heartedness. Despite his vast fortune, Scrooge hoards his wealth, refusing to donate to the poor or adequately pay his overworked clerk. Through supernatural visits from his former business partner and the spirits of Christmas, Scrooge is forced to confront his greed and learn the value of kindness.
- **Elizabeth Gaskell:** Elizabeth Gaskell's literary work was profoundly influenced by the Industrial Revolution. After spending her childhood in rural Cheshire, she married Unitarian minister William Gaskell and moved to Manchester, the world's first industrial city.
 - ❖ *Mary Barton* (1848) : Gaskell's debut novel, *Mary Barton* (1848), draws from the dire working and living conditions of Manchester's working class. The story follows the Barton and Wilson families as they struggle against the inequitable distribution of power and wealth.
 - ❖ *North and South* (1854) : In her third novel, *North and South* (1854), Gaskell shifts perspective to comment on factory owners through the eyes of a Southern England protagonist. Much like Gaskell herself, Margaret Hale moves from the countryside to an industrial town, witnessing the chaos wrought by the Industrial Revolution. The novel, set in the fictional town of Milton (inspired by Manchester), delves into the complexities of labour relations, depicting strikes and the resulting conflicts between workers and employers.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

i. Which poet's works, *The Chimney-Sweeper* and *London*, critique the harsh conditions faced by child workers during the Industrial Revolution?

j. In which poem does William Wordsworth describe London as "bright

3.5 DARWINISM

For a clearer understanding, it's beneficial to start with Charles Darwin's original formulation of Darwinism as presented in his 1859 work, *On the Origin of Species*. Though not a philosopher in the contemporary sense, Darwin was often regarded as one during his lifetime. The enduring relevance of Darwinism today stems from a combination of scientific and philosophical principles articulated by Darwin, which continue to be embraced by those who identify as Darwinists. This foundational understanding is essential, especially considering the critiques from evolutionary biologists who distinguish themselves as non-Darwinian in various respects.

Darwinism and Literature of England

Darwinism refers to the theories of evolution and natural selection proposed by Charles Darwin in the mid-19th century. Darwin's seminal work, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), revolutionized the understanding of biological evolution, emphasizing that species evolve through natural selection, where the most adaptable organisms survive and reproduce. Darwin's ideas fundamentally challenged traditional views on creation and human nature, impacting various fields, including literature.

Impact on Victorian Literature

The rise of Darwinism had a profound influence on English literature, especially during the Victorian era. Writers grappled with the implications of Darwin's theories on human nature,

society, and morality. Darwinism prompted a re-evaluation of themes such as human identity, progress, and the role of nature in shaping individuals.

Literary Reflections of Darwinism

1. Themes of Evolution and Survival

Victorian literature frequently explored themes related to evolution and survival. Novels and poems depicted the struggle for existence and the impact of natural selection on human life. For instance, Thomas Hardy's works, such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), illustrate characters struggling against societal and natural forces, reflecting Darwinian concepts of survival and adaptation.

2. Social Darwinism

The concept of Social Darwinism, which applies Darwinian principles to social and economic contexts, also influenced literature. This notion suggested that societal progress depended on the survival of the fittest, which authors like H.G. Wells critiqued. In *The Time Machine* (1895), Wells examined the consequences of unchecked social evolution and class disparity, presenting a dystopian vision of future societies.

3. Character Development and Psychological Insight

Darwinian theory impacted character development and psychological insight in literature. Authors began to focus on the biological and psychological motivations of their characters, exploring how instincts and evolutionary pressures influenced behaviour. For example, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) delves into the darker aspects of human nature, reflecting Darwinian ideas about the primal instincts lurking beneath civilized society.

4. Religious and Philosophical Themes

Darwinism also spurred literary debates on religion and philosophy. The conflict between Darwinian theory and religious beliefs is evident in works that question traditional religious narratives. In *The Inheritors* (1901) by William Golding, the clash between evolutionary and religious perspectives is explored through a fictional account of early human beings.

Post-Victorian Literature

As literature progressed into the 20th century, Darwinism continued to influence literary themes and styles. Modernist writers incorporated Darwinian ideas into their explorations of human psychology and existential concerns. Works by authors such as Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence often reflect an awareness of evolutionary theories and their implications for understanding human experience.

Conclusion

Darwinism significantly shaped English literature, prompting writers to explore new themes related to evolution, survival, and human nature. The integration of Darwinian concepts into literary works provided a framework for examining the complexities of human existence and societal development. As literature evolved, the influence of Darwinism remained evident in the exploration of psychological and existential themes, demonstrating the enduring impact of Darwinian thought on literary expression.

3.6 THE SPREAD OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the British Empire, despite losing thirteen North American colonies in the early 1780s, retained a vast and diverse collection of territories. It maintained control over Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and Quebec in North America. In Australia, it had established the penal colony of New South Wales in 1788. The Empire also held several colonies in the West Indies, including Barbados and Jamaica, a settlement in Sierra Leone, and various trading posts in West Africa. Additionally, Britain had seized the Cape Colony from the Dutch in 1795 during the French Revolutionary Wars for strategic purposes. By the late eighteenth century, British territorial expansion in India had been significantly advanced by the East India Company, which had dominated trade with Asia since the early 1600s.

The White Settler Colonies

During the nineteenth century, Britain's white settler colonies, including Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand, played a significant role in the Empire's expansion. These colonies, characterized by their expansionist impulses, grew rapidly both in size and population. By 1901, the settler colonies had a combined population of 11.5 million, a substantial increase from 550,000 in 1815, achieved through both natural growth and significant immigration from Britain. Unlike other colonies, which were ruled directly by Britain, these settler colonies were granted varying degrees of self-governance. "Responsible government," allowing for internal self-rule, was first introduced in Canada in the 1840s and 1850s, and later extended to Australia, New Zealand, and the Cape Colony. The formation of

the Dominion of Canada in 1867 and the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 marked the transition of these territories from distant outposts to confident, prosperous, and self-governing entities by the end of the century.

Reasons for Expansion

The British Empire's dramatic expansion in the nineteenth century, particularly after 1870, was driven by a mix of strategic, economic, and ideological factors. Initially, the growth of the Empire was more a byproduct of efforts to secure free trade and protect existing territories rather than a result of deliberate, aggressive expansion. Although some questioned the value of maintaining the colonies, arguing they were costly and offered little return, others saw the Empire as crucial for asserting Britain's global power, strategically valuable, and beneficial for accommodating its growing population. Many Britons also felt a moral obligation to spread their perceived superior civilization, including their religion and governance.

By the 1870s, Britain entered what was termed the 'Age of Imperialism,' marked by rapid and aggressive expansion. This period saw British territories transition from informal spheres of influence to formal rule, fueled by rising foreign rivalries, especially with Germany, France, and Russia. Expansion was also driven by Imperialists who advocated for closer ties within the Empire and sought to secure British interests globally. While the Conservative party embraced imperialism, the Liberal party, led by figures like William Gladstone, often opposed it. Despite political disagreements, most leaders agreed on the necessity of protecting and expanding the Empire to safeguard British interests and maintain global influence.

Conclusion

During the nineteenth century, the British Empire expanded significantly, earning the moniker "the empire on which the sun never sets." Yet, the impact of this vast empire on British politics, economics, and culture was not as uniform or straightforward as one might assume. The newspaper press of the time reveals this complexity: while newspapers like *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express* ardently supported the Empire, others maintained a more critical or ambivalent stance. This diversity in public opinion underscores the multifaceted nature of the British Empire's influence. Ultimately, the Empire's effects on Britain were complex and varied, reflecting a wide range of perspectives and experiences within British society.

3.7 VICTORIAN LITERATURE

Cultural and Historical Background

The Victorian Age, spanning from 1837 to 1901 during Queen Victoria's reign, was a time of profound transformation. This period was heavily influenced by the Industrial Revolution, which brought rapid mechanization and urbanization, changing the British landscape significantly. The shift from rural to industrial economies led to economic prosperity but also stark inequalities, impacting social structures and labour conditions.

Urbanization during the Victorian era saw cities expand rapidly, creating issues like overcrowding and poor sanitation. This migration from the countryside to urban areas led to the rise of slums and a burgeoning middle class, reflecting the period's complex social dynamics. Technological advancements and increased literacy rates transformed communication and transportation, fostering a culture of reading and intellectual discourse.

The era was also marked by a strong sense of moral values, largely influenced by Queen Victoria's personal reputation for high moral standards. These values permeated Victorian literature and social norms, emphasizing decorum, responsibility, and respectability.

Literature of the Victorian Age

During the Victorian era, novels emerged as the dominant literary form, reflecting the period's focus on social realism and the human condition. Prominent novelists like Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, and Thomas Hardy explored the complexities of their rapidly changing society.

Charles Dickens, known for works such as "Oliver Twist" and "Great Expectations," highlighted the harsh realities of urban life and class struggles. His vivid characters and societal satire brought attention to issues of poverty and child labour. Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre" delved into themes of love, class, and female freedom, offering a profound exploration of the emotional and psychological depth of its characters. Thomas Hardy, on the other hand, focused on rural settings and the impacts of fate and circumstance, as seen in novels like "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Far from the Madding Crowd."

Poetry and Romantic Revival

Although novels gained prominence, poetry remained a significant aspect of Victorian literature, influenced by a Romantic Revival that revisited earlier Romantic themes of nature and spirituality. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning were key figures in this movement. Tennyson's poetry, including "In Memoriam," explored themes of loss and faith, while "The Lady of Shalott" blended nature with spirituality.

Robert Browning, known for his dramatic monologues, examined complex moral and psychological motivations. His poem “The Ring and the Book” used multiple perspectives to explore themes of justice and human nature. The Romantic Revival also influenced the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which used art and poetry to explore beauty, sensuality, and spirituality.

Social and Political Essays

The Victorian era saw a surge in social and political essays that addressed pressing issues such as class, gender, and imperialism. John Stuart Mill, with works like “On Liberty” and “The Subjection of Women,” advocated for individual freedom and gender equality, challenging societal norms and promoting reform. Thomas Carlyle, through “Past and Present” and “Chartism,” critiqued socioeconomic class disparities and the impacts of industrialization.

These essays provided a platform for intellectual discourse and influenced the social and political climate of the time. They contributed to shaping public awareness and fostering discussions on societal changes, leaving a lasting legacy in politics, literature, and social reform.

Key Themes and Characteristics

Victorian literature was characterized by a dedication to social realism, focusing on the realities of everyday life and social inequalities. Authors like Charles Dickens used their fiction to highlight the struggles of the working class and the dark side of industrialization. Dickens’ works, such as “Oliver Twist” and “Hard Times,” showcased the harsh conditions faced by the impoverished.

Similarly, Thomas Hardy and Elizabeth Gaskell addressed social issues through their novels. Hardy’s works like “Tess of the d’Urbervilles” examined rural life and gender injustices, while Gaskell’s “North and South” explored the clash between industrial capitalism and workers’ rights. These authors depicted the challenges and ambitions of ordinary people, contributing to the era’s focus on social realism.

Exploration of Gender and Feminism

The Victorian era saw significant exploration of gender roles and feminist themes. Authors such as Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and George Eliot contributed to this discourse. Browning’s poetry, including “Sonnets from the Portuguese” and “Aurora Leigh,” addressed issues of love, identity, and women’s independence, reflecting a progressive stance on gender equality.

Victorian literature increasingly focused on the emotional lives and struggles of female characters. Novels like George Eliot's "Middlemarch" and Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre" provided nuanced portrayals of women's experiences, aspirations, and societal constraints, contributing to the broader feminist discourse of the time.

Moral and Ethical Inquiry

The Victorian era was marked by deep moral and ethical inquiry, reflecting the period's engagement with theological and scientific developments. The publication of Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" challenged traditional religious beliefs and provoked discussions about humanity's moral responsibilities.

Novels such as Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure" explored themes of fate, moral judgment, and the human condition, depicting protagonists grappling with complex moral dilemmas. Victorian literature also reflected a rise in religious skepticism, with writers like Matthew Arnold expressing a sense of spiritual crisis and the erosion of established religious certainties.

Notable Figures of the Victorian Age

The Victorian Age was home to several notable figures who left a lasting impact on English literature and culture. **Charles Dickens**, a prolific novelist and social critic, is renowned for works such as "Oliver Twist" and "Great Expectations," which addressed social inequalities and class divisions.

Charlotte Bronte, author of "Jane Eyre," is celebrated for her exploration of love, class, and female independence. **Alfred Lord Tennyson**, the "Poet Laureate of the Victorian Age," is known for his reflective and romantic poetry, including "The Lady of Shalott" and "In Memoriam." Queen Victoria herself, with her long reign and moral principles, significantly influenced the culture and ideals of the time, contributing to the era's intellectual and artistic vitality.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- n. Which British colony was established as a penal colony in Australia in 1788?**
- o. Who is the author of *Jane Eyre*, a novel that explores themes of love, class, and female freedom during the Victorian era?**
- p. What term describes the period after 1870 when Britain's territorial acquisition became more aggressive and formal?**
- q. Which Victorian novelist is known for vividly portraying the struggles of the working class in works such as *Oliver Twist*?**

3.8 LET US SUM UP

From Wordsworth's celebration of nature and individual emotion to Hardy's exploration of social and personal struggles, the evolution of English literature from Romanticism to Victorian realism reflects a deepening engagement with the changing realities of the 19th century. The shift from the idealistic and introspective to the realistic and socially conscious highlights literature's response to the complexities of modern life and the enduring quest to understand the human condition.

3.9 FURTHER READING

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- Dutta, Kalyannath. Some Aspects of The History of English Literature. Debi Book Concern, 2011
- Fisk, Deborah Payne. (2000). The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Page 1-126
- Hudson, William Henry. (2015). an Outline History of English Literature. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd Page 101-107

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- a. Oliver Goldsmith.
- b. The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.
- c. The Castle of Otranto (1764)
- d. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth.
- e. Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
- f. John Keats.

- g. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.
- h. Jane Austin.
- i. William Blake.
- j. Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802.
- k. Oliver Twist (1838)
- l. North and South (1854)
- m. Children were forced into hazardous jobs, often resulting in brutal accidents.
- n. New South Wales
- o. Charlotte Bronte
- p. The Age of Imperialism
- q. Charles Dickens

3.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Romanticism celebrated nature as a source of inspiration and solace amidst societal changes. Discuss how Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge depicted nature in their works. How did their views contrast with the industrialization of their time?
2. Compare and contrast the treatment of nature with poets like James Thomson, William Cowper, and William Collins and Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley. How did these pre-Romantic poets pave the way for the Romantic movement?
3. Compare the themes and styles of Gothic literature, as exemplified by works like "The Castle of Otranto" and "Frankenstein," with Romantic poetry. How did Gothic themes influence Romantic poets, and in what ways did they diverge from traditional Romantic ideals?
4. Discuss how Romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth critiqued industrialization in their works. How did their poetry reflect concerns about urbanization, environmental degradation, and social inequality? Use specific poems and examples to illustrate your points.
5. Discuss the impact of Darwinism on Victorian literature.
6. Examine the role of Social Darwinism in Victorian literature.
7. Compare the treatment of religious and philosophical themes in Victorian literature before and after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.

8. Discuss the portrayal of gender and feminism in Victorian literature.

UNIT 4: CONRAD TO THE PRESENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Learning Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Modernism in literature and arts
- 4.4 Decolonization

4.5 Postmodern Culture and Literature

4.6 Globalization

4.7 Literature and the new media

4.8 Let us sum up

4.9 Further reading

4.10 Answers to check your progress

4.11 Model questions

4.1 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.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

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.

4.3 MODERNISM IN LITERATURE AND ART

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.

4.4 DECOLONIZATION

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.

4.5 POSTMODERN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

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.

4.6 GLOBALIZATION

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?

4.7 LITERATURE AND THE NEW MEDIA

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?**

4.8 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.

4.9 FURTHER READING

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4.10 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.

4.11 MODEL QUESTIONS:

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?