REV-00

SELF-LEARNING MATERIAL

MA ENGLISH

MEN 102 : ENGLISH POETRY I: CHAUCER TO JOHNSON

w.e.f Academic Session: 2024-25

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA
nirf India Ranking-2023 (151-200)
Accredited 'A' Grade by NAAC

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

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Self-Learning Material
Centre for Distance and Online Education
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MEGHALAYA

First Edition
Print Aug 2024
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This book is a distance education module comprising of collection of learning material for students of Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya, 9th Mile, G.S. Road, Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya – 793101.
Printed and Published on behalf of Centre for Distance and Online Education, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya - 793101

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the second paper of MA English Programme of First semester. In this paper, learners will be introduced to the poets from the Middle Ages to the 18th century covering writers like Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Pope and Johnson. These writers represent their particular ages and the works are representations of the society and culture of that period. Thus, this paper introduces the learners to the great poets of the 14th to 18th century England.

Unit 1 shall introduce the learners to the English poets of the 14th and 15th century namely Chaucer and Spenser. Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the "Father of English Literature," wrote during the Middle Ages and is celebrated for his seminal work, *The Canterbury Tales*. His writingexemplifies a blend of realism, humor, and social commentary, capturing the diversity of medieval English society through vivid characters and storytelling. Edmund Spenser, a prominent figure in the Elizabethan era, is renowned for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*. His writing style is characterized by its rich allegory, intricate verse forms (such as the Spenserian stanza), and profound exploration of moral and political themes. Spenser's work reflects the ideals of chivalry, virtue, and the Tudor monarchy, making a significant mark on English Renaissance literature.

Unit 2 shall introduce the learners to the poets William Shakespeare and John Donne. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is often hailed as one of the greatest writers in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, Shakespeare's body of work includes 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and two long narrative poems. Shakespeare's sonnets are also revered for their poetic mastery and profound exploration of human emotions. *Sonnet 18*, for instance, compares the beloved to a summer's day, illustrating the poet's ability to immortalize beauty and love through verse. His use of iambic pentameter and innovative language has left a lasting impact on English literature and continues to influence writers and poets worldwide. Shakespeare's works remain relevant today, resonating with audiences due to their universal themes and deep understanding of human nature. John Donne (1572-1631) was an English poet and cleric in the Church of England, renowned for his metaphysical poetry and sermons. Donne's later works, especially his holy sonnets and sermons, reflect his deep religious convictions and hispreoccupation with mortality and divine judgment. Poems like *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* and *Holy Sonnet 10* ("Death, be not proud") showcase his ability to blend intellectual rigor with emotional intensity. Donne's influence on poetry is significant; his innovative use of language, exploration of complex themes, and the dramatic monologues in his works have inspired countless poets and writers. His poetry, often marked by wit, paradox, and a conversational tone, offers a profound exploration of human experience and spirituality.

Unit 3 shall introduce the learners to writers like John Milton and John Dryden. John Milton (1608-1674) was an English poet, polemicist, and civil servant best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost.* Born in London, Milton was a scholar and an advocate for civil and religious

liberties, which heavily influenced his writings. *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, is considered one of the greatest works in English literature, depicting the Biblical story of the Fall of Man with profound complexity and depth. Milton's mastery of blank verse, his exploration of themes such as free will, obedience, and the nature of good and evil, and his vivid characterizations of Satan, Adam, and Eve, have cemented his place as a towering figure in literary history. John Dryden (1631-1700) was an influential English poet, playwright, and critic who dominated the literary scene of the late 17th century. Often regarded as the father of English literary criticism, Dryden's works encompassed a wide range of genres, including poetry, drama, and prose. As Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal, Dryden's influence extended beyond his own writings, shaping the direction of English literature and laying the groundwork for future generations of writers.

Unit 4 will introduce the learners to the poets Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a central figure in the English Enlightenment and one of the most celebrated poets of the 18th century. Known for his sharp wit, satirical prowess, and masterful use of the heroic couplet, Pope's works often critiqued contemporary society and literary norms. Despite suffering from poor health throughout his life, Pope's incisive voice and technical brilliance left an indelible mark on English literature. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), often referred to as Dr. Johnson, was an English writer who made significant contributions to literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, and lexicographer. His most notable achievement is the *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), which remained the preeminent English dictionary until the completion of the Oxford English Dictionary over a century later. Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* provides critical biographies that blend biography with literary criticism. Johnson's influenceon English prose and criticism, combined with his enduring wit and wisdom, made him a towering figure in 18th-century literary circles.

Thus, learners will be able to learn about the various poets across the ages and understand their writing styles and have an idea of that age.

UNIT 1.1 GEOFFREY CHAUCER: THE CANTERBURY TALES

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1.1 Learning objectives

1.1.2 Introduction

1.1.3 About the poet

1.1.4 Background of The Canterbury Tales

1.1.5 The Canterbury Tales

1.1.6 Let Us Sum Up

1.1.7 Further Reading

1.1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.1.9 Model Questions

1.1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

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

1.1.2 INTRODUCTION

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

1.1.3 ABOUT THE POET

Geoffrey Chaucer is a medieval English poet. He is also called the 'father of English literature' or the 'father of English poetry'. Other than his famous poem 'The Canterbury Tales', his also became renowned for his scientific and astronomical work 'A Treatise on the

Astrolabe', which he wrote for his son. His other works include: 'The Book of The Duchess', an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster; 'Anelida and Arcite', 'The House of Fame', 'The Parliament of Foules', The Legend of Good Women' and 'Troilus and Criseyde'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **What is the name of the elegy written by Chaucer?**

b. **How Chaucer is known as?**

1.1.4 BACKGROUND: THE CANTERBURY TALES

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

c. **Where the pilgrims were going to?**

1.1.5 THE CANTERBURY TALES

The poem 'The Canterbury Tales' begins with a prologue. The prologue introduces the readers with a group of pilgrims who gather to start their journey to Canterbury. These pilgrims are selected from different walks of life. Chaucer describes each of the pilgrims in

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

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

In The Canterbury Tales, the narrator, often identified as Chaucer-the-pilgrim, embodies a literary persona based on the author himself but presented as more naïve and trusting than the actual Chaucer likely was. This narrative style, reminiscent of earlier works like The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, and The Parliament of Fowls, showcases Chaucer-as-pilgrim's uncritical acceptance of the characters he encounters, even when they reveal themselves to be flawed or morally lacking. Through Chaucer-the-poet's adept storytelling, readers gain insight into these characters through their own words, the tales they choose to tell, their interactions with others, and the way they present themselves, thereby illuminating their habits, interests, vices, and virtues with subtle nuance.

The opening of The Canterbury Tales paints a vivid picture of spring's arrival, bringing nature back to life after winter's dormancy. This renewal of the natural world inspires pilgrims to embark on a journey to the shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury, a prominent pilgrimage site in medieval Britain. Chaucer, as the pilgrim-narrator, finds himself at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, preparing to journey alone until he joins a diverse group of fellow travellers who arrive to spend the night. During a communal dinner, they extend an invitation for him to accompany them, setting the stage for their journey together. Their jovialhost, Harry Bailey, proposes a storytelling competition to pass the time on the road: each pilgrim will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two on the return, with a promised reward of a free meal for the best tale.

The Tales represent nearly every variety of medieval story at its best. The special genius of Chaucer's work, however, lies in the dramatic interaction between the tales and the framing story. After the Knight's courtly and philosophical romance about noble love, the Miller interrupts with a deliciously bawdy story of seduction aimed at the Reeve, the Reeve takes revenge with a tale about the seduction of a Miller's wife and daughter. Thus, the tales develop the personalities, quarrels and diverse opinions of their tellers. The prologues and tales of the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner are high points of Chaucer's art. The Wife, an outspoken champion of her gender against the traditional anti-feminism of the Church, initiates a series of tales about sex, marriage and nobility. The Pardoner gives a chilling demonstration of how his eloquence in the pulpit turns the hope of salvation into a vicious confidence game. Although Chaucer in its way satirizes the abuses of the Church, he also includes a number of didactic and religious tales, concluding with the good person's sermon on penitence; this is followed by a personal confession in which Chaucer retracts all his secular writings, including Troilers, and those Canterbury Tales that "inclined towards sin".

Chaucer's art of characterization is unique and superb. Undoubtedly the plan of the Canterbury Tales is borrowed from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio. Moreover, Piers Plowman suggested the idea of the pilgrimage of Chaucer. But his technique and art of characterization is original. He transcended both the Italian and English poet with the result. His characters are not by his age but they are universal characters of all ages.

Chaucer's characters are not mere types. They lived too actively to be mere types. They are drawn with a vivid pen. Every sly line reveals some aspects of character. The description of each man's horse, manner and dress reveal the character. He describes them in a humorous way. They were not puppets, they lived, as displayed on the whole life of the Middle Ages, with all its colour and sound, its sweetness and bitterness.

His characters, though they are types of the 14th century, are highly idiosyncratic. Ha has combined in them individual and typical traits. For example, the Shipman, who is a typical figure of the 14th century, has been transformed by Chaucer into an individual in his description. These men and women in the Prologue stop before us just long enough to enable us to form an idea of their personality.

His characters form a picture gallery of the 14th century. When the prevailing tendency of the age to deal with allegory and abstractions is taken into consideration, it is astounding how alive these Chaucerian types are, for in the course of his life he had come in contact with them all. The Knight, the Squire, the Merchant, the Sailor, the Scholar, the Doctor and the Monk etc.–he knew them intimately and drew them from personal observation. We become acquainted with the medieval English man as he moved and lived, depicted with a breath of vision and a rich tolerant humour unsurpassed in English literature. Alarge-hearted charity in his treatment of the labouring class was depicted, as his picture of the Plowman would testify.

His power of vivid description has made his characters super. He brings a whole figure before us by one striking and apt comparison the young Squire is presented as a charming lover.

Chaucer's art of characterization is at its best on account of his ability of observation. He mixed freely with all types of mankind, and he used this opportunity of observing the little peculiarities of human nature. He had the *seeing eye,* the retentive memory, the judgement to select and the capacity to expand. Because of his power of observation, all the important classes of English society are thus represented.

Chaucer has differentiated all his characters very cleverly. The characters who are brought before us, one by one in the Prologue are cunningly planned to appear, one after another. The Miller and Reeve, the Summoner and the Friar, the Prioress and the Wife of Bath, illustrate one another admirably. They are not merely figures from whom certain stories proceed; they are characters in a drama, whose purpose is to show how certain types will appear when they are brought together in that most by trying of circumstances- a journey.

Chaucer's characters are so real that they can be easily recognised. His art of characterization is free from personal bias. He portrays his characters objectively, impartially and disinterestedly. He delights in presenting, playing man and woman, who reveal the quality not so much in their action as in their dress, manners or speech.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

d. How many pilgrims were there in 'The Canterbury Tales'?
e. How many stories are written by Chaucer in the poem?
f. What is the unique feature of Chaucer's work in "The Canterbury Tales"?
g. How does Chaucer's art of characterization stand out?
h. Which Italian work and English idea influenced the plan of "The Canterbury Tales"?
i. How does Chaucer's technique of character description reveal their traits?

1.1.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit you have learnt about the famous medieval poet Geoffrey Chaucer. You have also understood the background of The Canterbury Tales and the poet's scheme to write a collection of stories in verse. We may summarise Chaucer's achievement by saying that he is earliest of the great moderns. In comparison with the poems of his own time, and with those of the succeeding century, the advance he makes is almost startling.

1.1.7 FURTHER READING

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

Geoffrey Chaucer (ed. Larry D. Benson). The Canterbury Tales (in The Riverside Chaucer). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987

Robert P. Miller. Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds. Oxford: OUP, 1977

1.1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. 'The Book of The Duchess'

b. 'Father of English poetry'

c. Canterbury, to see the holy tomb of St. Thomas.

d. 31

e. 24

f. The unique feature of Chaucer's work lies in the dramatic interaction between the tales and the framing story, where the tales develop the personalities, quarrels, and diverse opinions of their tellers.

g. Chaucer's art of characterization is unique and superb, as he vividly portrays his characters with individual and typical traits, making them active and alive rather than mere types.

h. The plan of "The Canterbury Tales" is borrowed from Boccaccio's "Decameron," and the idea of the pilgrimage was suggested by "Piers Plowman."

i. Chaucer's technique reveals characters' traits through their horse, manner, dress, and humorous descriptions, bringing each character to life with vivid and striking details.

1.1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Geoffrey Chaucer as a medieval poet.
2. Write a note on the scheme of the poet for the poem ‘The Canterbury Tales’.
3. Discuss the significance of the interaction between the tales and the framing story in "The Canterbury Tales." How does this interaction enhance the overall narrative and characterization?
4. Examine Chaucer's portrayal of different social classes in "The Canterbury Tales." How does his background and personal experience influence his depiction of characters from various strata of medieval society?
5. Analyse the role of humour in Chaucer's characterizations. How does humour contribute to the depth and realism of his characters, and what does it reveal about Chaucer's perspective on human nature and society?

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UNIT 1.2: EDMUND SPENSER: SONNET 75

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.2.1 Learning objectives

1.2.2 About the poet

1.2.3 Sonnet 75

1.2.4 Summary and analysis

1.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

1.2.6 Further Reading

1.2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.2.8 Model Questions

1.2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

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

1.2.2 ABOUT THE POET

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

b. **Name one of Spenser’s works besides The Faerie Queen.**

1.2.3 SONNET 75

Amoretti LXXV: One Day I Wrote her Name

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,

But came the waves and washed it away:

Again I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.

"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay,

A mortal thing so to immortalize;

For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eke my name be wiped out likewise."

"Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devise

To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:

My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,

And in the heavens write your glorious name:

Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,

Our love shall live, and later life renew."

1.2.4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

"Sonnet 75" is also called "Amoretti 75". The Sonnet was published in 1595 as part of *Amoretti,* a cycle of 89 sonnets that recounted Spenser's courtship and marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem explores the power of poetry to immortalize its

subjects, that the wife of the poet, Elizabeth Boyle. The poem also showcases Spenser's unique stanza and sonnet style, which is later named as the Spenserian Stanza. He first perfected this particular stanza in his poem ‘The Faerie Queene’.

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

c. **What is the other name of ‘Sonnet 75’?**

d. **What is the name of the stanza perfected by Edmund Spenser?**

1.2.5 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you have learnt about Edmund Spenser. You have also understood what the sonnet 75 is all about. You have read here the central theme of the sonnet and about the unique structure it has."Sonnet 75," also known as "Amoretti 75," is partof Edmund Spenser's Amoretti, a collection of 89 sonnets published in 1595 that recount his

courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. The poem explores the theme of immortality through poetry. In the sonnet, Spenser writes his beloved's name in the sand, but it is repeatedly washed away by the waves. His beloved tells him that it is futile to try to immortalize a mortal being. However, Spenser believes that through his poetry, he can preserve her memory forever. The poem emphasizes the enduring power of art to transcend mortality.

1.2.6 FURTHER READING

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

Larsen, Kenneth J. Introduction. Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition. Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997. 1-66.

Prescott, Anne Lake. "Spenser's Shorter Poems". The Cambridge Companion to Spenser. Ed. Andrew Hadfield. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 143-161.

1.2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. The Faerie Queen.

b. The Shepheardes Calendar

c. "Amoretti 75"

d. Spenserian Stanza.

1.2.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

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

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UNIT 2.1 : ELIZABETHAN POETRY: SELECT WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1.1 Learning Objectives

2.1.2 Introduction

2.1.3 Shakespeare's sonnets

2.1.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.1.5 Further reading

2.1.6 Answers to Check your Progress

2.1.7 Model Questions

2.1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

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

2.1.2 INTRODUCTION

Although stylistically disparate, John Donne and William Shakespeare were both part of what is known as the Elizabethan Age of English history. The Elizabethan Age, strictly speaking, refers to the reign of the period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I who ruled for a

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

2.1.3 SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Introduction

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

What is a sonnet?

A sonnet is a lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. Literally meaning a "little song", the sonnet form is believed to have been developed by the 14th century Italian poet Franceso Petrarch. The

Italian or Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two sections: an octave (eight lines) rhyming ABBAABBAB followed by a sestet (six lines) rhyming CDECDE or CDCDCD. The standard subject for these poems were usually the hopes and pains of unrequited love. The Elizabethan poet and politician Thomas Wyatt was the first to introduce the form of the sonnet in the English language. The Petrarchan form was also later employed by later poets like John Milton (see "When I Consider How My Light is Spent") and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (see "How do I Love Thee"). Developed to accommodate the lyrical turns of phrases of the Italian language, the Petrarchan sonnet had to be modified in order to create similar effects in the English language, and as a result of such effects we see the emergence of what we now understand as the English sonnet.

Tudor poet Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, and a close associate of Thomas Wyatt, is credited to have introduced the form of the English sonnet, even though the form is now more commonly known as the Shakespearean sonnet, after its more famous practitioner. This sonnet form is divided into three quatrains (of four lines each), and a concluding couplet, which follows the rhyming pattern of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Another formal intervention was introduced by noted Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser in what is now known as the Spenserian sonnet, which follows the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. Besides formal variations, English poets also expanded the scope of the themes covered in the sonnets, which were previously limited to romance, but under more ambitious practitioners like John Donne and John Milton, the sonnet came to speak also of religion, nation and other matters of serious concern. In a comparative analysis of the Petrarchan and English sonnets, Abrams and Harpham have noted the following: "The rhyme pattern of the Petrarchan sonnet has on the whole favoured a statement of a problem, a situation, or incident in the octave, with a resolution in the sestet. The English form sometimes uses a similar division of material but often presents instead a repetition-with-variation of a statement in each of the three

quatrains; in either case, the final couplet in the English sonnet usually imposes an epigrammatic turn at the end.” Another trend in English poetry that followed the example of Petrarch, was the development of sonnet sequences or sonnet cycles, which was a series of sonnets linked together with a common theme, which was usually the exploration of varied aspects of a relationship between lovers. Sidney’s “Astrophel and Stella” (1580) and Spenser’s “Amoretti”(1595) are two of the most well-known examples of sonnet sequences inEnglish poetry.

Shakespeare did not write his sonnets for publication. Thomas Thorpe published them in 1609 without his permission.A 1598 reference within a kind of directory of contemporary wits mentioned Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets" that had been circulating only privately among friends. Two (138 and 144) were published in an anthology in 1599. Based on apparent topical allusions, connections with lines by other authors, and on comparisons with the plays -- some of which make much use of the sonnet format, the sonnets are often roughlydated from 1592 to early in the first decade of the 1600s, with most probably written in the early years. Shakespeare in his sonnets seems to follow the pattern of sonnet cycles as developed by Petrarch, that was mentioned above. Sonnets 1-126 seem to be addressed to an unnamed male friend considerably younger than the poet. At first (1-17) the poet seems driven or commissioned to urge this fellow to marry and breed. But the interpersonal friendship grows in intensity, and separation causes grief. The Young Man belongs to the upper class, is more than handsome, and is somewhat given to wantonness. The gender of thisunnamed lover has been the subject of much speculation. In a few instances, the poet obliquely mentions a rival for either the patronage or the affections of the Young Man, a situation which arouses jealousy, as this poet has "a worthier pen" and "a better spirit."Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to or concern a dark lady (dark in the sense of her hair, her facial features, and her character), and Sonnets 153-154 are fairly free adaptations of two

classical Greek poems.Attributing Sonnets 1-126 to a young man and Sonnets 127-152 to a dark lady is somewhat problematical, since in many of the poems the gender of the person addressed is not at all clear .We have no clear mandate to interpret poems invoking "my love" as referring necessarily to a male or to a female, since the term is used to refer to both sexes equally.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **Who introduced the sonnet form in the English language?**
b. **What is the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet?**
c. **In which year were Shakespeare's sonnets published without his permission?**
d. **What are Sonnets 127-152 primarily concerned with?**

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

SONNET 30

The text:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

I summon up remembrance of things past,

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,

And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:

Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,

For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,

And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,

And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,

And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er

The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,

Which I new pay as if not paid before.

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,

All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

Analysis:

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

crying. The poem ends on a note of acceptance and a hope that the grief he is experiencing will end soon.

SONNET 65

The text:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea

But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,

How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,

Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out

Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,

When rocks impregnable are not so stout,

Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack,

Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?

Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

O, none, unless this miracle have might,

That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Analysis:

This sonnet is a meditation upon time. The hardest metals and stones, the vast earth and sea — all submit to time "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea, / But sad mortality o'er-sways their power." "O fearful meditation!" he cries, where can the young man hide that time won't wreak on him the same "siege of batt'ring days"?In the last couplet, the poet searches for a medium through which his beloved could be immortalized by defeating the sad mortality and the fearful destructive giant i.e. time. Finally, he discovers that it is

verse that can serve as a miracle in fulfilling the intense desire of the poet. Then, he feels great happiness, joy and he gets very much excited for being able to find out the proper wayto make his dear friend and the sweet memories alive forever through his writings. His grief, worries, despair that made him suffered in the past have suddenly vanished while he has succeeded to immortalize his beloved and the memories of their lives that expected since many years back in the past.

SONNET 116

The text:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me prov'd,

I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Analysis:

Despite the confessional tone in this sonnet, there is no direct reference to the youth as we find in Sonnet 30 and Sonnet 65. The general context, however, makes it clear that the

poet's temporary alienation refers to the youth's inconstancy and betrayal, not the poet's, although coming as it does on the heels of the previous sonnet, the poet may be trying to convince himself again that "Now" he loves the youth "best." Sonnet 116, then, seems a meditative attempt to define love, independent of reciprocity, fidelity, and eternal beauty: "Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks / Within his bending sickle's compass come." After all his uncertainties and apologies, Sonnet 116 leaves little doubt that the poet is in love with love.

The sonnet begins without the poet's apparent acknowledgment of the compelling quality of the emotional union of "true minds". As Helen Vendler has observed, "This famous almost 'impersonal' sonnet on the marriage of true minds has usually been read as a definition of true love."The poetic language leaves the sort of love described somewhat indeterminate; "The 'marriage of true minds' like the 'power to hurt' is troublesomely vague open to a variety of interpretations." Interpretations include the potential for religious imagery and the love being for God, "Lines one and two echo the Anglican marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer." The concept of the marriage of true minds is thought to be a highly Christian; according to Erne, "The mental picture thus called up in our minds of the bride andbridegroom standing up front in a church is even reinforced by the insistence on the word alter/altar in the following line."The couplet of Sonnet 116 Shakespeare went about explaining in the inverse. He says the opposite of what it would be natural to say about love. For instance, instead of writing something to the effect of 'I have written and men have loved', according to Nelson, Shakespeare chose to write, "I never writ, nor no man ever loved."By restating his authority as poet and moral watch almost in a sacramental manner on the theme of love, by the use of a paradox, Shakespeare rejects that he may be wrong in stating that true love is immortal: the fact that he has indeed written a lot to the point of having reached sonnet 116 on the theme of love and acquired fame for that is self evident that

the opposite cannot be true, that is: what he says cannot be an error Men too have indeed loved as love is ingrained in poetry and only lyric poets can testify of men's faculty of experiencing true love.

2.1.4 LET US SUM UP

From this unit we have learnt that, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was a renowned English dramatist and poet, known for his rich dramas and prolific poetry. Shakespeare's sonnets, a form of lyric poetry consisting of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, follow the tradition of Petrarchan and English sonnets. His sonnets were published without his permission in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe. Sonnets 1-126 address a young male friend, while Sonnets 127-152 concern a dark lady. Shakespeare's sonnets explore themes of love, beauty, mortality, and the passage of time, often employing vivid imagery and emotional depth.

2.1.5 FURTHER READING

Auden, W. H. "Introduction." Shakespeare: The Sonnets. New York: Signet Classics, 1988. xvii-xxxix.

Booth, Stephen. An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969.

Herrnstein, Barbara, ed. Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets. New York, 1964.

Leishman, J. B. Themes and Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets. London: 1961.

2.1.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. Thomas Wyatt was the first to introduce the sonnet form in the English language.
b. The rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.
c. Shakespeare's sonnets were published without his permission in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe.

d. Sonnets 127-152 are primarily concerned with a "dark lady" in terms of her hair, facial features, and character.

2.1.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Briefly discuss the development of the sonnet form in the English language. How is it different from the Petrarchan sonnet?
2. Discuss the thematic differences and formal variations between Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets. How do these differences influence the way themes are explored in each form?
3. Analyze the role of gender ambiguity in Shakespeare's sonnets. How does the lack of clear gender reference in many of the sonnets affect their interpretation and the understanding of the relationships described?
4. When were Shakespeare's sonnets published? Who were they addressed to?
5. Discuss the exploration of grief in Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 and Sonnet 65.
6. How does Shakespeare explore love and marriage in Sonnet 116?

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2.2 JOHN DONNE AND METAPHYSICAL POETRY

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2.2 Introduction

2.2.3 Metaphysical Poetry

2.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.2.5 Further reading

2.2.6 Answers to Check your Progress

2.2.7 Model Questions

2.2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the features of the metaphysical school of poetry through close analysis of select works of John Donne, particularly his poems *Valediction:Forbidding Mourning* and *The Good Morrow*
- Understand the themes of Metaphysical poets and their writing styles.
- Have an idea of the writers and their works in detail.

2.2.2 INTRODUCTION

John Donne (1572-1631) was born and brought up a Roman Catholic, and though he later argued himself into the Anglican position and ended his life as Dean of St. Paul's,his training as a Catholic in an age of religious polemic, together with the scholastic element that was still part of the university education of his day, helped to determine the set of his mind. In English literary studies, Donne is most visibly associated with the tradition of metaphysical poetry. The term metaphysical poets was first used for John Donne by John Dryden in the text "Discourse Concerning Satire" (1693) wherein he wrote that Donne's poetry "affects the

metaphysics". In Dryden's conceptualization, metaphysics meant the use of the terminology and arcane arguments of medieval philosophers. Another century later, Samuel Johnson coined the term "metaphysical poets" and clubbed Donne together with contemporaries Abraham Cowley and John Cleveland, as a movement that was marked with dense intellectual articulation, and which lacked artistic integrity. Most importantly, the metaphysical poets, including Donne, were against the lyricism of contemporary Elizabethan poets and their focus on an idealized view of human nature and of sexual love.

2.2.3 METAPHYSICAL POETRY

What is metaphysical poetry?

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

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **What religious background did John Donne have during his upbringing?**
b. **What role did John Donne eventually hold in the Anglican Church?**
c. **Who first used the term "metaphysical poets" to describe John Donne's work?**
d. **What does the term "metaphysical conceit" refer to in Donne's poetry?**
e. **What literary device is frequently used in Donne's poetry to model actual speech?**

THE GOOD MORROW

The text:

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

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

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,

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

Analysis:

The Good-Morrow was published in his 1633 collection *Songs and Sonnets.*Written while Donne was a student at Lincoln's Inn, the poem is one of his earliest works and is thematically considered to be the "first" work in Songs and Sonnets. Although referred to as a sonnet, the work does not follow the most common rhyming scheme of such works—a 14- line poem, consisting of an eight-line stanza followed by a six-line conclusion—but is instead21 lines long, divided into three stanzas.The poem describes the experience of being in loveas a new morning or waking up to a new life. This sonnet is a good example of Donne's interpretation of courtly love, wherein both lovers assume mutually significant positions. It arrives at this inextricable mutuality in cartographic terms-whereby the flat maps which only represent one half of the earth in a sphere-are better in the coming together of the two lovers as two perfect hemispheres of a single sphere. The two hemispheres begin to look like as a single sphere, each partaking of the other hemisphere in its newly recognized completeness.

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

The fixed gaze of the each in the other's eye becomes for the lovers a stratagem of resistance against their own mortality. Mortality becomes merely a fact of the body against the new unity that they 'wake upto' - their 'waking souls' holding the promise of permanence: The experience of reciprocation is reinforced as indispensable to love, in emphasising the

equality of the degree of reciprocation - 'so alike'. The ‘equal mutuality’ is for the two lovers to judge by the intensity and absorption of their experience.

A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

The text:

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

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

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

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.
But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

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

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

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

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

Analysis:

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

This poem is noted for Donne's use of a metaphysical conceit. Donne consoles the beloved departure - forbidding her from mourning his using an otherwise banal, rugged

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

2.2.4 LET US SUM UP

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

2.2.5 FURTHER READING

Bloom, Harold (2004). *The Best Poems of the English Language: From Chaucer Through Frost*. New York: HarperCollins. *ISBN 978-0-06-054041-8*.

Bloom, Harold (2009). John Donne : comprehensive research and study guide. Broomall, PA: Chelsea House. *ISBN 9781438115733*.

Brooks, Cleanth (2004). "The Language of Paradox". In Rivkin, Julie; Ryan, Michael (eds.). Literary Theory: An Anthology (2nd ed.). Wiley. pp. 28–39. ISBN 978-1-4051-0696-2.

2.2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. John Donne was brought up as a Roman Catholic.

b. John Donne was brought up as a Roman Catholic.

c. Samuel Johnson coined the term "metaphysical poets" to describe John Donne's work.

d. The term "metaphysical conceit" refers to an extended metaphor that makes an outstretched comparison between a person's spiritual faculties and a physical object in the world.

e. Donne’s poetry frequently uses give-and-take arguments between lovers, friends, or between man and God, or within oneself.

2.2.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the main elements of metaphysical poetry.
2. What is metaphysical conceit? Discuss with examples
3. How does John Donne play with the tradition of courtly love? Discuss with references to his poems.
4. Discuss the impact of John Donne's Catholic upbringing and subsequent conversion to Anglicanism on his metaphysical poetry. How do these religious influences shape the themes, tone, and use of metaphysical conceits in his work? Provide specific examples from his poems to support your analysis.
5. Analyze the use of metaphysical conceit in John Donne's poetry. How does Donne employ extended metaphors to explore complex ideas about love, spirituality, and human experience? Compare and contrast the use of metaphysical conceits in Donne's poems with those of other metaphysical poets like Abraham Cowley and John Cleveland, highlighting both similarities and differences.

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UNIT 3.1 PARADISE LOST (BOOK 1) (LINES 1-150)

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1.1 Learning Objectives

3.1.2 Introduction

3.1.3 John Milton (1608-1674)

3.1.4 Paradise Lost

3.1.5 Let us sum up

3.1.6 Further Reading

3.6.7 Answer to check your progress

3.6.8 Model Questions

3.1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading unit 3 you will be able to:

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

3.1.2 INTRODUCTION

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

Milton first published his seminal epic poem, Paradise Lost, in 1667. A “Revised and Augmented” version, which is the one read more widely today, was published in 1674, with

this following introduction. In it, Milton explains why he has chosen to compose his long poem in English heroic verse without the use of rhyme, following the models of Homer and Virgil. Milton argues that rhyme is particularly unnecessary in longer poems, and that its unquestioned use by his peers, “carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worst than they would have exprest them.” Milton sees an inflexible application of rhyme and meter as in danger of becoming rote and mathematical, and he defends the liberty he found in releasing his poem from rhyme’s limitations.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **What makes Paradise Lost an epic poem?**
b. **What is the writing style that Milton has adopted in this poem?**

3.1.3 JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

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

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

Milton's poetry was slow to see the light of day, at least under his name. His first published poem was "On Shakespeare" (1630), anonymously included in the Second Folio edition of William Shakespeare's plays in 1632. An annotated copy of the First Folio has been suggested to contain marginal notes by Milton. Milton collected his work in 1645

Poems in the midst of the excitement attending the possibility of establishing a new English government. The anonymous edition of Comus was published in 1637, and the publication of Lycidas in 1638 in Justa Edouardo King Naufrago was signed J. M. Otherwise. The 1645 collection was the only poetry of his to see print until Paradise Lost appeared in 1667.

3.1.4 PARADISE LOST (BOOK 1) (LINES 1-150)

The text:

OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, [5]
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,
In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: Or if Sion Hill [10]
Delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues [15]
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread [20]
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence, [25]
And justifie the wayes of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off [30]
From thir Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd [35]
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High, [40]
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie [45]
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms.
Nine times the Space that measures Day and Night [50]
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
Confounded though immortal: But his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain [55]
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:
At once as far as Angels kenn he views
The dismal Situation waste and wilde, [60]

A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd onely to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace [65]
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place Eternal Justice had prepar'd [70]
For those rebellious, here thir Prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and thir portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n
As from the Center thrice to th' utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell! [75]
There the companions of his fall, o'rewhelm'd
With Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and weltring by his side
One next himself in power, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd [80]
Beelzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

If thou beest he; But O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who in the happy Realms of Light [85]
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine
Myriads though bright: If he Whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the Glorious Enterprize,
Joynd with me once, now misery hath joynd [90]
In equal ruin: into what Pit thou seest
From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew

The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those,
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage [95]
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre; that fixt mind
And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit,
That with the mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along [100]
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd
In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost? [105]
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might [110]
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deifie his power,
Who from the terrour of this Arm so late
Doubted his Empire, that were low indeed,
That were an ignominy and shame beneath [115]
This downfall; since by Fate the strength of Gods
And this Empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event
In Arms not worse, in foresight much advanc't,
We may with more successful hope resolve [120]
To wage by force or guile eternal Warr
Irreconcileable, to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the Tyranny of Heav'n.

So spake th' Apostate Angel, though in pain, [125]
Vaunting aloud, but rackt with deep despare:
And him thus answer'd soon his bold Compeer.

O Prince, O Chief of many Throned Powers,
That led th' imbattelld Seraphim to Warr
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds [130]
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'ns perpetual King;
And put to proof his high Supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or Chance, or Fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat [135]
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty Host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as Gods and Heav'nly Essences
Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns, [140]
Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conquerour, (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Then such could hav orepow'rd such force as ours) [145]
Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of Warr, what e're his business be [150]

Summary

Milton opens Paradise Lost by formally declaring his poem's subject: humankind's first act of disobedience toward God, and the consequences that followed from it. The act is Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, as told in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the first line, Milton refers to the outcome of Adam and Eve's sin as the "fruit" of the forbidden tree, punning on the actual apple and the figurative fruits of

their actions. Milton asserts that this original sin brought death to human beings for the first time, causing us to lose our home in paradise until Jesus comes to restore humankind to its former position of purity.

Summary: Lines 1–26: The Prologue and Invocation

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

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

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

Summary: Lines 27–150: Satan and Hell

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

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

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

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

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

Satan addresses his comrades and acknowledges their shame in falling to the heavenly forces, but urges them to gather in order to consider whether another war is feasible. Instantly, the

legions of devils dig into the bowels of the ground, unearthing gold and other minerals. With their inhuman powers they construct a great temple in a short time. It is called Pandemonium (which means “all the demons” in Greek), and the hundreds of thousands of demonic troops gather there to hold a summit. Being spirits, they can easily shrink from huge winged creatures to the smallest size. Compacting themselves, they enter Pandemonium, and the debate begins.

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

c. What is the subject of Milton's ‘Paradise Lost’?

d. Who does Milton invoke at the beginning of ‘Paradise Lost’ to inspire his poem?

e. Who is the primary antagonist introduced in the early part of ‘Paradise Lost’?

f. What does Satan propose to his fellow fallen angels after their defeat in Heaven?

g. What is the name and significance of the great hall constructed by the fallen angels in Hell?

Paradise Lost Summary

"Paradise Lost" actually opens from Satan's perspective. Having just been cast out of Heaven for rebellion, Satan finds himself in a lake of fire, where he fumes over his defeat (Book I). He then gathers together all of his fellow fallen angels and they devise a plan. They will take their vengeance on God by tempting God's newest creation, mankind, to sin - and

then God, who is the eternal judge, will have no choice but to also destroy his new beloved creation.

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

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

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

After he sneaks into the paradise designed for mankind, called The Garden of Eden, Satan observes Adam and Eve, the first humans. He learns that they are free to do whatever they please but have one commandment they must not disobey on punishment of death: They may not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan also listens to Eve describe the back story of her creation from one of Adam's ribs and her temptation to love her own reflection more than Adam or God.

3.1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt that the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, the poem begins with an invocation to the Muse for inspiration as the poet intends to explore the fall of humanity and the loss of Paradise. The poem shifts to describe Satan and his fallen angels who have been cast out of Heaven into Hell after rebelling against God. Satan, a once glorious angel, now lies in fiery ruin along with his followers. Despite their dire situation, Satan gathers his courage and resolves to seek revenge against God by corrupting God's

newest creation: humanity. Satan decides to explore the newly created Earth and find a wayto bring about the downfall of Adam and Eve, thus continuing the cosmic battle between good and evil.

3.1.6 FURTHER READING

Durham, Charles W. "'To Stand Approv'd in Sight of God': Abdiel, Obedience, and Hierarchy in Paradise Lost." Milton Quarterly 26 (1992): 15-20.

Hill, Christopher. "*Paradise Lost and the English Revolution*." William Zunder, ed. Paradise Lost. New York: St. Martin's, 1999, 15-27.

Newlyn, Lucy. *Paradise Lost and the Romantic Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993

3.1.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. Paradise Lost is considered an epic poem due to its grand scope, heroic characters, lofty themes (like the fall of mankind), and its use of elevated language and epic conventions.
b. Milton's writing style in Paradise Lost is characterized by its use of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), elaborate syntax, classical allusions, and epic similes. It combines elements of biblical language with classical epic traditions.
c. The subject of *Paradise Lost* is humankind's first act of disobedience toward God—Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit—and its consequences.
d. Milton invokes the Holy Spirit, which inspired Moses to write Genesis, rather than the classical muses.
e. Satan is introduced as the primary antagonist, having been cast into Hell after rebelling against God in Heaven.
f. Satan proposes to gather their forces and consider another attack against God, despite their recent defeat.
g. The fallen angels construct a great hall called Pandemonium, meaning "all the demons" in Greek, where they convene to hold a council.

3.1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the tone of lines 12 - 16.
2. What does Satan vow to do after being cast out?

3. With what Literary element does the epic open?
4. What is the central idea of the poem "Paradise Lost"?
5. How does Milton use the character of Satan in "Paradise Lost" to challenge traditional heroic ideals found in earlier epics like those of Homer? Provide specific examples from the text to illustrate Milton's critique of glorified war and the portrayal of Satan as a military hero.
6. Analyze Milton's depiction of Satan's character development in the early chapters of "Paradise Lost." How does Satan's defiance and pride contribute to the poem's exploration of themes such as free will, rebellion, and the consequences of sin? Support your analysis with references to Satan's speeches and actions as described in the text.
7. Discuss Milton's invocation of the Holy Spirit and the muse at the beginning of "Paradise Lost." How does Milton redefine the traditional role of the muse in classical literature, and what significance does this reinterpretation have for the Christian themes and narrative structure of the poem? Use specific lines and references from the text to support your analysis.

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UNIT 3.2 JOHN DRYDEN: MACFLECKNOE

Unit Structure

3.2.1 Learning Objectives

3.2.2 Introduction

3.2.3 John Dryden: About the Author

3.2.4 Explanation of the Poem *Mac Flecknoe*

3.2.5 Themes

3.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

3.2.7 Further Reading

3.2.8 Answer to Check your Progress

3.2.9 Model Questions

3.2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this unit you are going to learn about

- Identify and analyze the epic characteristics of "Paradise Lost," including its invocation to the Muse, its use of elevated language, and its grand narrative scope.
- Study the characterization of Satan in Book 1, examining his transformation from a majestic angel to a vengeful and determined adversary of God, and discuss the implications of his characterization on the overall narrative.
- Analyze the significance of the poet's invocation to the Muse and explore Milton's intentions in writing "Paradise Lost," including his exploration of theodicy, human nature, and the concept of disobedience.

3.2.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

3.2.3 JOHN DRYDEN: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Dryden (1631 – 1700) was an English poet, literary critic, translator, and playwright of the Restoration Age in England. He was appointed England's first Poet Laureate of England in 1668. After the Restoration of King Charles II, Dryden quickly established himself as the leading poet and literary critic of his day, he transferred his allegiances to the new government. Along with *Astraea Redux*, Dryden welcomed the new regime with two more panegyrics: *To His Sacred Majesty: A Panegyric on his Coronation* (1662) and *To My Lord Chancellor* (1662). These poems suggest that Dryden was looking to court a possible patron, but he was to instead make a living in writing for publishers, not for the aristocracy, and thus ultimately for the reading public. During his lifetime, Dryden had written several dramatic works and poems. His best known works include *Mac Flecknoe*, *Absolam and Achitophel, All for Love, Toilus and Cressida, A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day, among others.*

MAC FLECKNOE

The Text

A Satire upon the True-blue Protestant Poet T.S.

All human things are subject to decay,

And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey:

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young

Was call'd to empire, and had govern'd long:

In prose and verse, was own'd, without dispute

Through all the realms of Non-sense, absolute.

This aged prince now flourishing in peace,

And blest with issue of a large increase,

Worn out with business, did at length debate

To settle the succession of the State:

And pond'ring which of all his sons was fit

To reign, and wage immortal war with wit;

Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for nature pleads that he

Should only rule, who most resembles me:

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,

Mature in dullness from his tender years.

Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he

Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.

The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,

But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,

Strike through and make a lucid interval;

But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,

His rising fogs prevail upon the day:

Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,

And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty:

Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,

And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,

Thou last great prophet of tautology:

Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,

Was sent before but to prepare thy way;

And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came

To teach the nations in thy greater name.

My warbling lute, the lute I whilom strung

When to King John of Portugal I sung,

Was but the prelude to that glorious day,

When thou on silver Thames did'st cut thy way,

With well tim'd oars before the royal barge,

Swell'd with the pride of thy celestial charge;

And big with hymn, commander of an host,

The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets toss'd.

Methinks I see the new Arion sail,

The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.

At thy well sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore

The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar:

Echoes from Pissing-Alley, Shadwell call,

And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall.

About thy boat the little fishes throng,

As at the morning toast, that floats along.

Sometimes as prince of thy harmonious band

Thou wield'st thy papers in thy threshing hand.

St. Andre's feet ne'er kept more equal time,

Not ev'n the feet of thy own Psyche's rhyme:

Though they in number as in sense excel;

So just, so like tautology they fell,

That, pale with envy, Singleton forswore

The lute and sword which he in triumph bore

And vow'd he ne'er would act Villerius more.

Here stopt the good old sire; and wept for joy

In silent raptures of the hopeful boy.

All arguments, but most his plays, persuade,

That for anointed dullness he was made.

Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,

(The fair Augusta much to fears inclin'd)

An ancient fabric, rais'dt'inform the sight,

There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight:

A watch tower once; but now, so fate ordains,

Of all the pile an empty name remains.

From its old ruins brothel-houses rise,

Scenes of lewd loves, and of polluted joys.

Where their vast courts, the mother-strumpets keep,

And, undisturb'd by watch, in silence sleep.

Near these a nursery erects its head,

Where queens are form'd, and future heroes bred;

Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry,

Where infant punks their tender voices try,

And little Maximins the gods defy.

Great Fletcher never treads in buskins here,

Nor greater Jonson dares in socks appear;

But gentle Simkin just reception finds

Amidst this monument of vanish'd minds:

Pure clinches, the suburbian muse affords;

And Panton waging harmless war with words.

Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,

Ambitiously design'd his Shadwell's throne.

For ancient Decker prophesi'd long since,

That in this pile should reign a mighty prince,

Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense:

To whom true dullness should some Psyches owe,

But worlds of Misers from his pen should flow;

Humorists and hypocrites it should produce,

Whole Raymond families, and tribes of Bruce.

Now Empress Fame had publisht the renown,

Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.

Rous'd by report of fame, the nations meet,

From near Bun-Hill, and distant Watling-street.

No Persian carpets spread th'imperial way,

But scatter'd limbs of mangled poets lay:

From dusty shops neglected authors come,

Martyrs of pies, and reliques of the bum.

Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there lay,

But loads of Shadwell almost chok'd the way.

Bilk'd stationers for yeoman stood prepar'd,

And Herringman was Captain of the Guard.

The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,

High on a throne of his own laboursrear'd.

At his right hand our young Ascanius sat

Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.

His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,

And lambent dullness play'd around his face.

As Hannibal did to the altars come,

Sworn by his sire a mortal foe to Rome;

So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,

That he till death true dullness would maintain;

And in his father's right, and realm's defence,

Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.

The king himself the sacred unction made,

As king by office, and as priest by trade:

In his sinister hand, instead of ball,

He plac'd a mighty mug of potent ale;

Love's kingdom to his right he did convey,

At once his sceptre and his rule of sway;

Whose righteous lore the prince had practis'd young,

And from whose loins recorded Psyche sprung,

His temples last with poppies were o'er spread,

That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head:

Just at that point of time, if fame not lie,

On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.

So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,

Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.

Th'admiring throng loud acclamations make,

And omens of his future empire take.

The sire then shook the honours of his head,

And from his brows damps of oblivion shed

Full on the filial dullness: long he stood,

Repelling from his breast the raging god;

At length burst out in this prophetic mood:

Heavens bless my son, from Ireland let him reign

To far Barbadoes on the Western main;

Of his dominion may no end be known,

And greater than his father's be his throne.

Beyond love's kingdom let him stretch his pen;

He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.

Then thus, continu'd he, my son advance

Still in new impudence, new ignorance.

Success let other teach, learn thou from me

Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.

Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;

Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit.

Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage,

Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage;

Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,

And in their folly show the writer's wit.

Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,

And justify their author's want of sense.

Let 'em be all by thy own model made

Of dullness, and desire no foreign aid:

That they to future ages may be known,

Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own.

Nay let thy men of wit too be the same,

All full of thee, and differing but in name;

But let no alien Sedley interpose

To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.

And when false flowers of rhetoric thou would'st cull,

Trust Nature, do not labour to be dull;

But write thy best, and top; and in each line,

Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.

Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill,

And does thy Northern Dedications fill.

Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,

By arrogating Jonson's hostile name.

Let Father Flecknoe fire thy mind with praise,

And Uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.

Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part;

What share have we in Nature or in Art?

Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,

And rail at arts he did not understand?

Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,

Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain?

Where sold he bargains, whip-stitch, kiss my arse,

Promis'd a play and dwindled to a farce?

When did his muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,

As thou whole Eth'ridge dost transfuse to thine?

But so transfus'd as oil on waters flow,

His always floats above, thine sinks below.

This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,

New humours to invent for each new play:

This is that boasted bias of thy mind,

By which one way, to dullness, 'tis inclin'd,

Which makes thy writings lean on one side still,

And in all changes that way bends thy will.

Nor let thy mountain belly make pretence

Of likeness; thine's a tympany of sense.

A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,

But sure thou 'rt but a kilderkin of wit.

Like mine thy gentle numbers feebly creep,

Thy Tragic Muse gives smiles, thy Comic sleep.

With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write,

Thy inoffensive satires never bite.

In thy felonious heart, though venom lies,

It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.

Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame

In keen iambics, but mild anagram:

Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command

Some peaceful province in acrostic land.

There thou may'st wings display and altars raise,

And torture one poor word ten thousand ways.

Or if thou would'st thy diff'rent talents suit,

Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.

He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,

For Bruce and Longvil had a trap prepar'd,

And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.

Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,

Born upwards by a subterranean wind.

The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,

With double portion of his father's art.

3.2.4 EXPLANATION OF THE POEM *MAC FLECKNOE*

The play is narrated by the poet (Dryden) in the third-person perspective and is introduced as “A Satire on the True-blue Protestant T.S.,” or Thomas Shadwell.The poet introduces Flecknoe, who like the Roman ruler Augustus, was called to rule when he was

young. He rules the peaceful realm of Nonsense now, but is growing old and decides that Fate wants him to settle the business of the State.

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

There has never been his like – it is as if a new Arion is sailing. Treble and bass sound out, the name Shadwell resounds from Pissing-Alley and Aston Hall. Little fishes surround the boat, clamoring as they would on morning toast.
St. Andre’s feet never kept equal time like this, nor did Shadwell’s own *Psyche*. Like tautology they collapsed. The jealous Singleton forswears his lute and sword, and will never act like Villerius again.Flecknoe stops talking for a moment. He weeps for joy of his son, knowing that Shadwell’s plays persuade “that for anointed dullness he was made” (line 63).
The narrator then describes that near the walls of London (called Augusta) there once stood a barbican and a watch tower, but now it is just a pile of ruins. There are brothel houses that rise from the rubble; mother-strumpets keep court there. A nursery rises as a birthplace for queens and future heroes; “unfledg’d actors learn to laugh and cry” (line 76).

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

Empress Fame publishes the account of Shadwell’s name. Nations hearing of him meet together. There are no Persian carpets lining the street, only “scatter’d limbs of mangled

poets" (line 99). Writers like Heywood, Shirley, and Ogleby lay in the street, but it is mostly Shadwell that clogs it up.Finally, the prince appears in all his majesty, sitting atop a throne of his labors. Flecknoe compares Shadwell to Ascanius, son of Aeneas, who famously sat at his father's right hand and inherited the kingdom. Shadwell's brows are like thick fogs, and dullness swirls about his visage.Shadwell swears he will maintain dullness until his death. He will never make peace with wit and never sign a truce with sense.

The king, having made his own unction of ale, places a mug of it in his son's hand. He conveys the right to rule over his son who had, since a young age, practiced the "righteouslore" (line 124). The king seems to consecrate his son's head, and at that very moment it is as if twelve owls fly off from his left hand. The admiring crowd shouts acclamations.
Then, Flecknoe, his forehead dewy with oblivion, shakes his head and scatters the drops on his son. He stands there in a prophetic mood and declares that Heaven shall bless his son and he shall reign from Ireland to Barbados; there will be no end to his dominion and it will be greater than his father's.Flecknoe pauses to let the people cry "Amen!" He continues, proclaiming admiringly that his son still advances in impudence and ignorance. Others can learn success, but from Flecknoe, Shadwell has learned "pangs without birth, and fruitless industry" (line 148).

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

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

Shadwell's genius does not lie in iambics but rather in simple anagrams. He should not, Flecknoe counsels, worry about plays; instead, he should focus on acrostics. In those he can be famous and torture words in thousands of ways. If not those, then perhaps songs set to a lute.As Flecknoe speaks, his words fall away because Bruce and Longville spring their trap:

Flecknoe sinks down, leaving his robe behind, and born upward by flatulence, the mantle settles on the son who possesses “double portion of his father’s art” (line 217).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **Who is the play's narrator and to whom is the play directed?**
b. **What is the peaceful realm ruled by Flecknoe, and what does he decide to do as he grows older?**
c. **How does Flecknoe describe Shadwell's intellectual capabilities?**
d. **Where is Shadwell prophesied to rule, according to Flecknoe's plan?**
e. **What is Shadwell urged to trust in, according to Flecknoe's final advice?**
f. **What literary technique does Flecknoe advise Shadwell to focus on instead of plays?**

3.2.5 THEMES

Wit versus Humour

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

Debasing of Poetry and Art

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

Nature

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

3.2.6 LET US SUM UP

From this Self Learning Material, you came to know about John Dryden and his contribution as a satirical writer. You have learnt about the poem *Mac Flecknoe*, its themes and significance. In his satirical poem "Mac Flecknoe," the aging poet Flecknoe decides to passon his throne in the realm of Nonsense to his successor, Thomas Shadwell. Flecknoe, resembling Augustus Caesar, selects Shadwell because of his profound dullness, which he views as an asset in perpetuating their style of poetry. The poem mocks Shadwell's lack ofwit and praises his ability to maintain dullness as a virtue. Flecknoe ceremoniously crowns Shadwell as his heir, likening him to Ascanius inheriting Aeneas's kingdom. The satire highlights Shadwell's mediocrity and criticizes contemporary poets, culminating in a comedicand scathing portrayal of literary standards in Dryden's time.

3.2.7 FURTHER READING

Alssid, Michael W. "Shadwell's MacFlecknoe." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 7.3 (1967): 387-402.

Castrop, Helmut. "Dryden and Flecknoe: A Link." *The Review of English Studies* (New Series), 23.92 (1972): 455-58.

Archer, Stanley. "Mac Flecknoe." *Masterplots, Fourth Edition* 1-3, 2010. *Literary Reference Center*, *EBSCOhost.* Accessed 14 August 2017.

3.2.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. The play is narrated by the poet Dryden and is directed at Thomas Shadwell**.**

b. Flecknoe rules the realm of Nonsense. As he grows older, he decides to choose his successor to continue warring with wit.

c. Flecknoe describes Shadwell as confirmed in full stupidity, having no sense at all, and admitting no ray of wit.

d. Shadwell is prophesied to rule from a pile of ruins near the walls of London, where brothel houses and nurseries for actors are located.

e. Shadwell is urged to trust in his own dull nature and to beware of false friends who invoke Ben Jonson's name.

f. Flecknoe advises Shadwell to focus on acrostics rather than plays, suggesting they will suit his talents better.

3.2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is a satire? Discuss the contribution of John Dryden as a satirist.
2. Explain the poem *Mac Flecknoe.*
3. Discuss the themes present in the poem *Mac Flecknoe.*
4. Discuss the significance of the satirical elements in "Mac Flecknoe" by John Dryden, particularly in the portrayal of Thomas Shadwell. How does Dryden use satire to criticize Shadwell's literary style and reputation? Provide examples from the text to support your analysis.
5. In "Mac Flecknoe," John Dryden employs various literary techniques to mock and deride Thomas Shadwell. Analyze how Dryden uses irony and allegory to create a humorous yet critical depiction of Shadwell's poetic abilities and his place in the literary world. How does Dryden's portrayal of Shadwell as Flecknoe's successor reflect broader themes of literary rivalry and the changing standards of wit during Dryden's time?

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UNIT 4.1 ALEXANDER POPE: *AN EPISTLE TO DOCTOR ARBUTHNOT*

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1.1 Learning Objectives

4.1.2 Introduction

4.1.3 Explanation of the Lines

4.1.4 Critical Appreciation

4.1.5 Major Themes of the Poem

4.1.6 Let us sum up

4.1.7 Further Reading

4.1.8 Answers to Check your Progress

4.1.9 Model Questions

4.1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

4.1.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

The ***Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*** is a satire in poetic form written by Alexander Pope and

addressed to his friend John Arbuthnot, a physician. It was first published in 1735 and composed in 1734, when Pope learned that Arbuthnot was dying. Pope described it as a memorial of their friendship.It has been calledPope's "most directly autobiographical work", in which he defends his practice in the genre of satire and attacks those who had been his opponents and rivals throughout his career.

EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT

The Text

Nequesermonibusvulgidederiste, nec in præmiisspemposueris rerum tuarum; suis teoportetillecebrisipsavirtustrahat ad verum decus. Quid de te alii loquantur, ipsivideant, sedloquenturtamen.

(Cicero, De Re Publica VI.23)

["... you will not any longer attend to the vulgar mob's gossip nor put your trust in human rewards for your deeds; virtue, through her own charms, should lead you to true glory. Let what others say about you be their concern; whatever it is, they will say it anyway."]

Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd, I said,

Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.

The dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,

All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:

Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,

They rave, recite, and madden round the land.

What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?

They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide;

By land, by water, they renew the charge;

They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.

No place is sacred, not the church is free;

Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me:

Then from the Mint walks forth the man of rhyme,

Happy! to catch me just at dinner-time.

Is there a parson, much bemus'd in beer,

A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer,

A clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,

Who pens a stanza, when he should engross?

Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls

With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls?

All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain

Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.

Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,

Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:

Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,

And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.

Friend to my life! (which did not you prolong,

The world had wanted many an idle song)

What drop or nostrum can this plague remove?

Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?

A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped,

If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.

Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!

Who can't be silent, and who will not lie;

To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,

And to be grave, exceeds all pow'r of face.

I sit with sad civility, I read

With honest anguish, and an aching head;

And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,

This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."

"Nine years!" cries he, who high in Drury-lane

Lull'd by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,

Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before Term ends,

Oblig'd by hunger, and request of friends:

"The piece, you think, is incorrect: why, take it,

I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it."

Three things another's modest wishes bound,

My friendship, and a prologue, and ten pound.

Pitholeon sends to me: "You know his Grace,

I want a patron; ask him for a place."

Pitholeonlibell'd me—"but here's a letter

Informs you, sir, 'twas when he knew no better.

Dare you refuse him? Curll invites to dine,

He'll write a Journal, or he'll turn Divine."

Bless me! a packet—"'Tis a stranger sues,

A virgin tragedy, an orphan muse."

If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage!"

If I approve, "Commend it to the stage."

There (thank my stars) my whole commission ends,

The play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends.

Fir'd that the house reject him, "'Sdeath I'll print it,

And shame the fools—your int'rest, sir, with Lintot!"

"Lintot, dull rogue! will think your price too much."

"Not, sir, if you revise it, and retouch."

All my demurs but double his attacks;

At last he whispers, "Do; and we go snacks."

Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door,

"Sir, let me see your works and you no more."

'Tis sung, when Midas' ears began to spring,

(Midas, a sacred person and a king)

His very minister who spied them first,

(Some say his queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst.

And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case,

When ev'ry coxcomb perks them in my face?

"Good friend, forbear! you deal in dang'rous things.

I'd never name queens, ministers, or kings;

Keep close to ears, and those let asses prick;

'Tis nothing"—Nothing? if they bite and kick?

Out with it, Dunciad! let the secret pass,

That secret to each fool, that he's an ass:

The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?)

The queen of Midas slept, and so may I.

You think this cruel? take it for a rule,

No creature smarts so little as a fool.

Let peals of laughter, Codrus! round thee break,

Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack:

Pit, box, and gall'ry in convulsions hurl'd,

Thou stand'stunshook amidst a bursting world.

Who shames a scribbler? break one cobweb through,

He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew;

Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain,

The creature's at his dirty work again;

Thron'd in the centre of his thin designs;

Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines!

Whom have I hurt? has poet yet, or peer,

Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer?

And has not Colley still his lord, and whore?

His butchers Henley, his Free-masons Moore?

Does not one table Bavius still admit?

Still to one bishop Philips seem a wit?

Still Sappho— "Hold! for God-sake—you'll offend:

No names!—be calm!—learn prudence of a friend!

I too could write, and I am twice as tall;

But foes like these!" One flatt'rer's worse than all.

Of all mad creatures, if the learn'd are right,

It is the slaver kills, and not the bite.

A fool quite angry is quite innocent;

Alas! 'tis ten times worse when they repent.

One dedicates in high heroic prose,

And ridicules beyond a hundred foes;

One from all Grub Street will my fame defend,

And, more abusive, calls himself my friend.

This prints my Letters, that expects a bribe,

And others roar aloud, "Subscribe, subscribe."

There are, who to my person pay their court:

I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short,

Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,

Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir! you have an eye"—

Go on, obliging creatures, make me see

All that disgrac'd my betters, met in me:

Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,

"Just so immortal Maro held his head:"

And when I die, be sure you let me know

Great Homer died three thousand years ago.

Why did I write? what sin to me unknown

Dipp'd me in ink, my parents', or my own?

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.

I left no calling for this idle trade,

No duty broke, no father disobey'd.

The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,

To help me through this long disease, my life,

To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,

And teach the being you preserv'd, to bear.

But why then publish? Granville the polite,

And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;

Well-natur'd Garth inflamed with early praise,

And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my lays;

The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,

Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head,

And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)

With open arms receiv'd one poet more.

Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!

Happier their author, when by these belov'd!

From these the world will judge of men and books,

Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.

Soft were my numbers; who could take offence,

While pure description held the place of sense?

Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry theme,

A painted mistress, or a purling stream.

Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill;

I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.

Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;

I never answer'd, I was not in debt.

If want provok'd, or madness made them print,

I wag'd no war with Bedlam or the Mint.

Did some more sober critic come abroad?

If wrong, I smil'd; if right, I kiss'd the rod.

Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,

And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.

Commas and points they set exactly right,

And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite.

Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel grac'd these ribalds,

From slashing Bentley down to pidling Tibbalds.

Each wight who reads not, and but scans and spells,

Each word-catcher that lives on syllables,

Ev'n such small critics some regard may claim,

Preserv'd in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name.

Pretty! in amber to observe the forms

Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms;

The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,

But wonder how the devil they got there?

Were others angry? I excus'd them too;

Well might they rage; I gave them but their due.

A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find,

But each man's secret standard in his mind,

That casting weight pride adds to emptiness,

This, who can gratify? for who can guess?

The bard whom pilfer'd pastorals renown,

Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown,

Just writes to make his barrenness appear,

And strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year:

He, who still wanting, though he lives on theft,

Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left:

And he, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,

Means not, but blunders round about a meaning:

And he, whose fustian's so sublimely bad,

It is not poetry, but prose run mad:

All these, my modest satire bade translate,

And own'd, that nine such poets made a Tate.

How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe?

And swear, not Addison himself was safe.

Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires

True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires,

Blest with each talent and each art to please,

And born to write, converse, and live with ease:

Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,

Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,

View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,

And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,

And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;

Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,

Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;

Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,

A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;

Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieg'd,

And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd;

Like Cato, give his little senate laws,

And sit attentive to his own applause;

While wits and templars ev'ry sentence raise,

And wonder with a foolish face of praise.

Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?

Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

What though my name stood rubric on the walls,

Or plaister'd posts, with claps, in capitals?

Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load,

On wings of winds came flying all abroad?

I sought no homage from the race that write;

I kept, like Asian monarchs, from their sight:

Poems I heeded (now berhym'd so long)

No more than thou, great George! a birthday song.

I ne'er with wits or witlingspass'd my days,

To spread about the itch of verse and praise;

Nor like a puppy, daggled through the town,

To fetch and carry sing-song up and down;

Nor at rehearsals sweat, and mouth'd, and cried,

With handkerchief and orange at my side;

But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate,

To Bufo left the whole Castalian state.

Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,

Sat full-blown Bufo, puff'd by every quill;

Fed with soft dedication all day long,

Horace and he went hand in hand in song.

His library (where busts of poets dead

And a true Pindar stood without a head,)

Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race,

Who first his judgment ask'd, and then a place:

Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his seat,

And flatter'dev'ry day, and some days eat:

Till grown more frugal in his riper days,

He paid some bards with port, and some with praise,

To some a dry rehearsal was assign'd,

And others (harder still) he paid in kind.

Dryden alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,

Dryden alone escap'd this judging eye:

But still the great have kindness in reserve,

He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.

May some choice patron bless each grey goose quill!

May ev'ry Bavius have his Bufo still!

So, when a statesman wants a day's defence,

Or envy holds a whole week's war with sense,

Or simple pride for flatt'ry makes demands,

May dunce by dunce be whistled off my hands!

Blest be the great! for those they take away,

And those they left me—for they left me Gay;

Left me to see neglected genius bloom,

Neglected die! and tell it on his tomb;

Of all thy blameless life the sole return

My verse, and Queensb'ry weeping o'er thy urn!

Oh let me live my own! and die so too!

("To live and die is all I have to do:")

Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,

And see what friends, and read what books I please.

Above a patron, though I condescend

Sometimes to call a minister my friend:

I was not born for courts or great affairs;

I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs;

Can sleep without a poem in my head,

Nor know, if Dennis be alive or dead.

Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light?

Heav'ns! was I born for nothing but to write?

Has life no joys for me? or (to be grave)

Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save?

"I found him close with Swift"—"Indeed? no doubt",

(Cries prating Balbus) "something will come out".

'Tis all in vain, deny it as I will.

"No, such a genius never can lie still,"

And then for mine obligingly mistakes

The first lampoon Sir Will. or Bubo makes.

Poor guiltless I! and can I choose but smile,

When ev'ry coxcomb knows me by my style?

Curs'd be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,

That tends to make one worthy man my foe,

Give virtue scandal, innocence a fear,

Or from the soft-ey'd virgin steal a tear!

But he, who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,

Insults fall'n worth, or beauty in distress,

Who loves a lie, lame slander helps about,

Who writes a libel, or who copies out:

That fop, whose pride affects a patron's name,

Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame;

Who can your merit selfishly approve,

And show the sense of it without the love;

Who has the vanity to call you friend,

Yet wants the honour, injur'd, to defend;

Who tells what'er you think, whate'er you say,

And, if he lie not, must at least betray:

Who to the Dean, and silver bell can swear,

And sees at Cannons what was never there;

Who reads, but with a lust to misapply,

Make satire a lampoon, and fiction, lie.

A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,

But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.

Let Sporus tremble—"What? that thing of silk,

Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk?

Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?

Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?"

Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,

This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings;

Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,

Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'r enjoys,

So well-bred spaniels civilly delight

In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.

Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,

As shallow streams run dimpling all the way.

Whether in florid impotence he speaks,

And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;

Or at the ear of Eve, familiar toad,

Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,

In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,

Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.

His wit all see-saw, between that and this ,

Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss,

And he himself one vile antithesis.

Amphibious thing! that acting either part,

The trifling head, or the corrupted heart,

Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board,

Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.

Eve's tempter thus the rabbins have express'd,

A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;

Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust,

Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

Not fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,

Not lucre's madman, nor ambition's tool,

Not proud, nor servile, be one poet's praise,

That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways;

That flatt'ry, even to kings, he held a shame,

And thought a lie in verse or prose the same:

That not in fancy's maze he wander'd long,

But stoop'd to truth, and moraliz'd his song:

That not for fame, but virtue's better end,

He stood the furious foe, the timid friend,

The damning critic, half-approving wit,

The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit;

Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had,

The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad;

The distant threats of vengeance on his head,

The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed;

The tale reviv'd, the lie so oft o'erthrown;

Th' imputed trash, and dulness not his own;

The morals blacken'd when the writings 'scape;

The libell'd person, and the pictur'd shape;

Abuse, on all he lov'd, or lov'd him, spread,

A friend in exile, or a father, dead;

The whisper, that to greatness still too near,

Perhaps, yet vibrates on his sovereign's ear:—

Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the past:

For thee, fair Virtue! welcome ev'n the last!

"But why insult the poor? affront the great?"

A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state:

Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail,

Sporus at court, or Japhet in a jail,

A hireling scribbler, or a hireling peer,

Knight of the post corrupt, or of the shire;

If on a pillory, or near a throne,

He gain his prince's ear, or lose his own.

Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,

Sappho can tell you how this man was bit:

This dreaded sat'rist Dennis will confess

Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress:

So humble, he has knock'd at Tibbald's door,

Has drunk with Cibber, nay, has rhym'd for Moore.

Full ten years slander'd, did he once reply?

Three thousand suns went down on Welsted's lie.

To please a mistress one aspers'd his life;

He lash'd him not, but let her be his wife.

Let Budgell charge low Grub Street on his quill,

And write whate'er he pleas'd, except his will;

Let the two Curlls of town and court, abuse

His father, mother, body, soul, and muse.

Yet why? that father held it for a rule,

It was a sin to call our neighbour fool:

That harmless mother thought no wife a whore,—

Hear this! and spare his family, James Moore!

Unspotted names! and memorable long,

If there be force in virtue, or in song.

Of gentle blood (part shed in honour's cause,

While yet in Britain honour had applause)

Each parent sprung—"What fortune, pray?"—Their own,

And better got, than Bestia's from the throne.

Born to no pride, inheriting no strife,

Nor marrying discord in a noble wife,

Stranger to civil and religious rage,

The good man walk'd innoxious through his age.

No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,

Nor dar'd an oath, nor hazarded a lie:

Un-learn'd, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,

No language, but the language of the heart.

By nature honest, by experience wise,

Healthy by temp'rance and by exercise;

His life, though long, to sickness past unknown;

His death was instant, and without a groan.

O grant me, thus to live, and thus to die!

Who sprung from kings shall know less joy than I.

O friend! may each domestic bliss be thine!

Be no unpleasing melancholy mine:

Me, let the tender office long engage

To rock the cradle of reposing age,

With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,

Make langour smile, and smooth the bed of death,

Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,

And keep a while one parent from the sky!

On cares like these if length of days attend,

May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my friend,

Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene,

And just as rich as when he serv'd a queen.

Whether that blessing be denied or giv'n,

Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n.

4.1.3 EXPLANATION OF THE LINES

(Lines 1-6)

In this stanza, Pope expresses a desire for privacy and retreat from the frenetic activities of

the world. Pope simply wants a break from the chaos and noise around him. He vividly describes the intense atmosphere and compares it to madness being unleashed. The poet is essentially asking for a break from the chaotic influences around, suggesting a need for solitude and peace.

(Lines 7- 14)

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

(Lines 15-26)

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

(Lines 27-40)

In this stanza, the poet thinks about how their creative work, inspired by a friend, affects their life. They face a tough choice between dealing with fools' anger or the complications of love.

The burden of judgment and the challenge of staying silent or truthful add to their struggles. Balancing humor and seriousness is hard, and reading becomes unpleasant. The poet reluctantly suggests waiting nine years before sharing their work, highlighting the difficulties of expressing oneself creatively while dealing with societal expectations.

(Lines: 41-46)

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

(Lines:47-50)

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

(Lines: 51-54)

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

(Lines:55- 68)

Here the poet, narrates an amusing situation where they receive a play from an unknown person. The poet receives a packet containing a new play, described as a "virgin tragedy" and

an "orphan muse." The poet faces a dilemma disliking it may lead to curses, but if they approve, they are urged to recommend it for the stage. The poet, fortunate not to be friends with the players, decides to print the play if it's rejected by the theatre, intending to shame thecritics. The stanza humorously depicts the negotiations with an enthusiastic but persistent writing, culminating in the poet's decision to end the interaction and avoid further entanglements. These lines provide a humorous and insightful glimpse into the challenges, pressures, and negotiations involved in navigating the reception and publication of creative works, offering a witty commentary on the complexities of the literary world.

(Lines:- 69-74)

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

(Lines: 75 -82)

In these lines, the speaker advises their friend to avoid discussing risky subjects like queens, ministers, or kings. Instead, they suggest talking about safer topics, like ears, particularly those of asses. The speaker seems to downplay the importance of discussing ears, calling it "nothing." However, they quickly add a playful twist by questioning if it's truly harmless, especially when fools might get offended by seemingly innocuous topics. The speaker then introduces a secret revealed in the "Dunciad," a satirical poem. The secret is that everyone, especially fools, is essentially foolish themselves. This injects humour and satire into the lines, suggesting that the real danger lies in not recognizing one's own foolishness. Overall, these lines cleverly comment on the delicate nature of certain discussions and highlight the theme of folly. The passage refers to King Midas who was cursed by Apollo to have ass's ears, to indicate his stupidity in the decision he made as an umpire a musical contest. But the

King naturally tried his best to hide his ears. Pope means to get similar relief only after he circulates the truth and proclaims that each fool is an ass. It throws light on Pope's mental attitude, one of restlessness till he publisher his unpleasant attacks even against asses as he calls them, and whatever their truth be.

(Lines 83-108)

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

(Lines:109-114)

The poet reflects on the varied responses they face from different quarters in response to their work. One individual dedicates lavish praise in elaborate prose but simultaneously ridicules numerous enemies. Another, under the guise of friendship, defends the poet by mocking those who oppose them. Within the realm of Grub Street, a symbolic space for struggling writers, some vehemently defend the poet's reputation, even resorting to abusive language. The poet acknowledges the presence of those driven by personal motives; for example, someone prints their letters with an expectation of a bribe. Furthermore, there are those who actively promote subscriptions, emphasizing the commercial aspect of garnering public support. The poet paints a picture of the intricate and occasionally conflicting responses they encounter—from praise to defense, criticism, and commercial expectations. These diverse

reactions contribute to the complex dynamics surrounding the poet's work and reputation.

(Lines 115—24)

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

(Lines: 125 -34)

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

(Lines 135-46)

In these lines, Alexander Pope reflects on his decision to publish his writings. He mentions the support and praise he received from influential and knowledgeable figures such as Granville, Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, Rochester, and St. John. These individuals, held in high regard in both society and literature, acknowledged Pope's talent and welcomed him into the esteemed circle of poets. The poet expresses his gratitude for the approval and encouragement of these esteemed figures, finding joy in being recognized and appreciated by them. He contrasts this genuine appreciation with the critiquesof historians and critics like Burnet, Oldmixon, and Cooke, suggesting that a true assessment of both individuals and their works should come from those who possess a deep

understanding and appreciation of literature, rather than relying solely on the perspectives of biased or less informed critics. Pope here emphasizes the importance of receiving praise and validation from respected literary figures as a motivating factor for publishing, considering their endorsements more meaningful than the judgments of certain historians and critics.

(Lines 147- 156)

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

(Lines 157-72)

In these lines, Pope makes fun of critics who focus too much on grammar and punctuation but lack important qualities like spirit, taste, and sense. The poet humorously acknowledges their attention to details like commas and points, playfully suggesting it would be a mistake not to give them credit for such precision. Despite their carefulness, Pope argues that these critics, from Bentley to Tibbalds, never achieved any recognition or praise. Pope casually dismisses those who only scan and spell words, suggesting that even these small critics might gain some respect if they associate themselves with the names of literary giants like Milton orShakespeare. In the closing lines, Pope uses a metaphor involving amber to criticize those who obsess over trivial details, wondering how such unimportant things ended up there. Here the poet makes fun of overly meticulous and picky critics, pointing out their lack of true literary insight and achievement.

(Lines 173-92)

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

(Lines:193-214)

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

(Lines: 215-230)

In these lines, Pope rejects the idea of seeking attention for his name being widely displayed. He mentions the possibility of his name being celebrated publicly but asserts that he doesn't desire acknowledgment from the writing community. Pope likens himself to Asian monarchs who prefer to stay away from public attention. He expresses indifference to poems, even

those that have praised him for a long time, comparing this indifference to how a birthday song may mean little to someone important like George. Pope avoids the company of fellow writers and critics, steering clear of the busy literary scene. He contrasts himself with those who eagerly promote their own verses, describing them as resembling puppies running around town to fetch and carry their sing-song. Pope declares his disinterest in attending rehearsals, leaving the entire realm of poetic pursuits to someone named Bufo. Pope conveysa disdain for public attention and self-promotion in literary circles, preferring to distance himself from the fuss and leave the world of poetry to someone else.

(Lines 231-48)

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

(Lines: 149-60)

In these lines, Pope expresses a desire for patrons to support the endeavours of less accomplished poets and hopes that each mediocre writer finds their own critic. He envisions a scenario where inept poets, represented by Bavius and Bufo, are paired with each other, allowing them to be dismissed when statesmen require defence or when envy and pride demand flattery. Pope acknowledges the significance of great patrons and expresses gratitude for those he has had. He mentions Gay, an unrecognized genius who passed away without receiving the acknowledgment he deserved. The poet reflects on his own verses and the grief of Queensberry, who mourns over Gay's unmarked tomb as the sole recognition of his virtuous life. These lines emphasize the struggles faced by overlooked talents and the influential role of patrons in shaping the destiny of poets.

(Lines 269-70)

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

(Lines271-82)

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

(Lines 283-304)

In these lines, Pope strongly condemns the use of poetry that damages a person's character or virtue. He curses any verse that turns a worthy individual into an adversary, spreads scandal about virtue, instils fear in innocence, or brings tears to a gentle virgin. Pope criticizes those who disrupt a neighbour’s peace, insult those who have fallen from grace or distressed beauty, propagate lies, write harmful pieces, or replicate damaging content. He particularly targets individuals who, while pretending to be patrons, harm an author's honest reputation in their absence and selfishly approve of merit without genuine affection. Pope highlights the

vanity of those who claim friendship but lack the honour to defend when necessary. He exposes those who disclose private thoughts and words, and, if not outright lying, at least betraying trust. The poet further criticizes individuals who swear falsely, misapply literature, turn satire into lampoons, and distort fiction into lies. Pope asserts that his critique is directed at such talkative fools, sparing honest individuals from undue fear. Here, the poet strongly condemns the misuse of poetry to harm others and underscores the consequences for those who engage in such behaviour. The passage is an example of pleasing alliteration and is fullof force and precision.

(Lines:305- 33)

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

(Lines:333-359)

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

trials.

(Lines: 360- 67)

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

(Lines: 368- 387)

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

(Lines: 388-405)

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

(Lines: 406-419)

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

4.1.4 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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

The poem's predominant tone is satirical, marked by mockery and defiance as Alexander Pope sharpens his language to criticize and ridicule his detractors. His writing style in "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is distinguished by wit, satire, and various rhetorical devices. Employing techniques like allusion, metaphor, irony, and wordplay, Pope crafts a pointed message that resonates with his sharp commentary. Throughout the poem, the satirical tone intensifies, particularly when Pope targets a clerk who neglects his duties in favor of writing poetry and an individual resorting to charcoal when denied traditional writing materials. Popesarcastically portrays himself as an entertaining and vain figure for these individuals, highlighting their dependence on him to sustain their madness or vanity. It is a rich blend of

satire, introspection, and emotional intensity, offering a nuanced and multi-layered reading experience. Amid the satirical elements, there is a sense of vulnerability as Pope reflects on his mortality and the transient nature of fame. The poem, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" encapsulates the complexity of human emotions and relationships within the context of literary and societal challenges. The satirical elements provide a sharp critique, while moments of introspection convey a deeper emotional resonance. The poem becomes a tapestry of wit, vulnerability, and biting commentary, inviting readers to navigate the intricatelayers of Pope's exploration of the human condition.

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **What predominant tone characterizes Alexander Pope's "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"?**
b. **What literary techniques does Pope employ in "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"?**
c. **What aspects of human behavior does the poem explore?**
d. **What broader themes does "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" touch upon besides literary criticism?**
e. **What does Pope criticize through his publication of "The Dunciad"?**

4.1.5 MAJOR THEMES OF THE POEM

Friendship and Gratitude:

Through the poem "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," Alexander Pope explores the theme of friendship and gratitude in his relationship with Dr. Arbuthnot. Pope expresses profound gratitude for Arbuthnot's loyal support and portraying their friendship as a source of sustenance in both personal and literary aspects of his life. The poem emphasizes the mutual understanding shared between them. Arbuthnot not only as a loyal friend but also as a

defender against criticism. Pope's appreciation and admiration show how genuine friendship is like a powerful source of strength, comfort, and inspiration for navigating life's challenges and creative pursuits.

Role of the Poet:

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

Critique of Literary and Social Norms:

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

Satire and Mockery:

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

nature of the poem.

4.1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have learnt that, Alexander Pope's "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is a multifaceted poem that blends satire, introspection, and sharp criticism. Pope defends his poetry while exploring human behaviour, artistic rivalries, and societal issues of the 18th century. Through wit, irony, and classical references, he critiques his detractors and reflects on fame's fleeting nature. The poem delves into themes of friendship, betrayal, and the complexities of literary life, offering a rich tapestry of emotions and commentary that remains relevant to contemporary issues.

4.1.7 FURTHER READING

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4.1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. The poem's predominant tone is satirical.
b. Pope uses techniques like wit, satire, allusion, metaphor, irony, and wordplay.
c. The poem explores jealousy, envy, friendship, loyalty, and betrayal among artists.
d. The poem also touches on politics, power struggles, corruption, and societal values.
e. Pope criticizes foolish writers and asserts that each fool is an ass, advocating for exposing their inadequacies.

4.1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

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

4. In "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," Alexander Pope employs satire to critique not only the literary and artistic community of his time but also broader societal and political issues. How does Pope use specific examples and rhetorical devices to convey his criticism of the literary figures and societal norms he targets? Explore how Pope's satirical approach serves both as entertainment and as a vehicle for social commentary.
5. Discuss the role of friendship and loyalty among artists as depicted in "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot." How does Pope navigate themes of jealousy, betrayal, and camaraderie within the context of the competitive literary environment of the 18th century? Provide specific examples from the poem to support your analysis.
6. Alexander Pope's "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is often seen as a multi-layered work that blends satire with introspection and emotional depth. How does Pope's portrayal of himself and his critics reflect his views on fame, mortality, and the complexities of human nature? Analyze how Pope uses his poetic skill and classical references to create a nuanced exploration of these themes in the poem.

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UNIT 4.2: SAMUEL JOHNSON: VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES(LINE 1 TO 120)

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.2.1 Learning Objectives

4.2.2 Introduction

4.2.3 Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

4.2.4 Vanity of Human Wishes (Line 1 to 120)

4.2.5 Let's sum up

4.2.6 Further Reading

4.2.7 Answer to check your progress

4.2.8 Model Questions

4.2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Talk about the poet Samuel Johnson.
- Discuss and appreciate "Vanity of human wishes".
- Analyse Johnson's writing style.
- Talk about Jonson as an English writer who made lasting contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, sermonist, biographer, editor, and lexicographer.

4.1.2 INTRODUCTION

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

opposition to the Walpole government and its corruption, “The Vanity of Human Wishes” is more moralistic and philosophical, pondering the place of desire in human life.

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

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

4.2.3 SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson (18 September 1709 – 13 December 1784), often called Dr Johnson, was an English writer who made lasting contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, sermonist, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography calls him "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". Johnson displayed signs of great intelligence as a child, and his parents, to his later disgust, would show off his "newly acquired accomplishments". His education beganat the age of three, and was provided by his mother, who had him memorise and recite passages from the Book of Common Prayer. When Samuel turned four, he was sent to a nearby school, and, at the age of six he was sent to a retired shoemaker to continue his education. A year later Johnson went to Lichfield Grammar School, where he excelled in Latin. For his most personal poems, Johnson used Latin. During this time, Johnson started to

exhibit the tics that would influence how people viewed him in his later years, and which formed the basis for a posthumous diagnosis of Tourette syndrome. He excelled at his studies and was promoted to the upper school at the age of nine. During this time, he befriended Edmund Hector, nephew of his "man-midwife" George Hector, and John Taylor, with whom he remained in contact for the rest of his life.

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

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

4.2.4 VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES (LINES 1-120)

The text

Let observation with extensive view,

Survey mankind, from China to Peru;

Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,

And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;

5Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,

O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,

Where wav'ring man, betray'd by vent'rous pride,

To tread the dreary paths without a guide;

As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,

10*Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.*

How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,

Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,

How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,

When vengeance listens to the fool's request.

15*Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,*

Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,

With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,

With fatal sweetness elocution flows,

Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,

20*And restless fire precipitates on death.*

But scarce observ'd the knowing and the bold,

Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;

Wide-wasting pest! that rages unconfin'd,

And crowds with crimes the records of mankind;

25*For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,*

For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;

Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,

The dangers gather as the treasures rise.

Let hist'ry tell where rival kings command,

30*And dubious title shakes the madded land,*

When statues glean the refuse of the sword,

How much more safe the vassal than the lord,

Low sculks the hind beneath the rage of pow'r,

And leaves the wealthy traytor in the Tow'r,

35*Untouch'd his cottage, and his slumbers sound,*

Tho' confiscation's vulturs hover round.

The needy traveller, serene and gay,

Walks the wild heath, and sings his toil away.

Does envy seize thee? crush th' upbraiding joy,

40*Increase his riches and his peace destroy,*

New fears in dire vicissitude invade,

The rustling brake alarms, and quiv'ring shade,

Nor light nor darkness bring his pain relief,

One shews the plunder, and one hides the thief.

45*Yet still one gen'ral cry the skies assails,*

And gain and grandeur load the tainted gales;

Few know the toiling statesman's fear or care,

Th' insidious rival and the gaping heir.

Once more, Democritus, arise on earth,

50*With chearful wisdom and instructive mirth,*

See motly life in modern trappings dress'd,

And feed with varied fools th' eternal jest:

Thou who couldst laugh where want enchain'd caprice,

Toil crush'd conceit, and man was of a piece;

55*Where wealth unlov'd without a mourner dy'd;*

And scarce a sycophant was fed by pride;

Where ne'er was known the form of mock debate,

Or seen a new-made mayor's unwieldy state;

Where change of fav'rites made no change of laws,

60*And senates heard before they judg'd a cause;*

How wouldst thou shake at Britain's modish tribe,

Dart the quick taunt, and edge the piercing gibe?

Attentive truth and nature to decry,

And pierce each scene with philosophic eye.

65*To thee were solemn toys or empty shew,*

The robes of pleasure and the veils of woe:

All aid the farce, and all thy mirth maintain,

Whose joys are causeless, or whose griefs are vain.

Such was the scorn that fill'd the sage's mind,

70*Renew'd at ev'ry glance on humankind;*

How just that scorn ere yet thy voice declare,

Search every state, and canvass ev'ry prayer.

Unnumber'd suppliants crowd Preferment's gate;

Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great;

75*Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,*

They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.

On ev'ry stage the foes of peace attend,

Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end.

Love ends with hope, the sinking statesman's door

80*Pours in the morning worshipper no more;*

For growing names the weekly scribbler lies,

To growing wealth the dedicator flies,

From every room descends the painted face,

That hung the bright Palladium of the place,

85*And smoak'd in kitchens, or in auctions sold,*

To better features yields the frame of gold;

For now no more we trace in ev'ry line

Heroic worth, benevolence divine:

The form distorted justifies the fall,

90*And detestation rids th' indignant wall.*

But will not Britain hear the last appeal,

Sign her foes doom, or guard her fav'rites zeal;

Tho' Freedom's sons no more remonstrance rings,

Degrading nobles and controuling kings;

95*Our supple tribes repress their patriot throats,*

And ask no questions but the price of votes;

With weekly libels and septennial ale,

Their wish is full to riot and to rail.

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,

100Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:

To him the church, the realm, their pow'rs consign,

Thro' him the rays of regal bounty shine,

Still to new heights his restless wishes tow'r,

Claim leads to claim, and pow'r advances pow'r;

105'Till conquest unresisted ceas'd to please,

And rights submitted, left him none to seize.

At length his sov'reign frowns — the train of state

108Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.

Where-e'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,

110His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;

At once is lost the pride of aweful state,

The golden canopy, the glitt'ring plate,

The regal palace, the luxurious board,

The liv'ried army, and the menial lord.

115With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,

He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.

Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,

And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine,

120Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end be thine?

Summary

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

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

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

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

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

Lines 1–10

The speaker's use of metaphor and simile in these lines from the poem emphasizes his critical view of human nature and the complexities of navigating life. By likening pride to a "treacherous" phantom, the speaker suggests that pride is deceptive and misleading, much like a ghost that appears real but is intangible and elusive. This comparison underscores the idea that pride can lead individuals astray, blinding them to reality and causing them to make misguided decisions. Furthermore, describing fate as a "clouded maze" implies that life is filled with uncertainty and challenges, where individuals must navigate through unclear pathsand make decisions without clear direction. This metaphor highlights the speaker's belief that life's journey is intricate and often perplexing, requiring careful thought and consideration to avoid pitfalls and achieve clarity amidst ambiguity. Together, these literary devices deepen the speaker's exploration of human behaviour and the inherent struggles faced in understanding oneself and the world.

Lines 11-20

In these lines, the speaker continues to paint a bleak picture of human existence, emphasizing the destructive consequences of irrationality and unchecked desires. The metaphor likening fate's afflictions to a flying dart underscores the swift and unavoidable nature of misfortune that can strike unexpectedly, regardless of one's wishes or intentions. This metaphorical image suggests that even the most well-meaning actions or aspirations can lead to negative outcomes, highlighting a pervasive sense of inevitability and futility in human endeavours. Additionally, the use of consonance, particularly with the repeated S

sound in "sink," "schemes," "oppressed," "vengeance," and "fool's," not only creates a rhythmic flow but also emphasizes the speaker's disdain for the destructive cycle fueled by vengeance and foolish decisions. This repetition serves to underscore the speaker's critical tone and reinforces the idea that human folly and emotional impulses often override reason, leading to widespread calamity and downfall on both individual and national scales. Thus, through these literary devices, the speaker effectively conveys a profound scepticism about humanity's capacity for rationality and foresight, suggesting a world where noble qualities and efforts can easily be perverted or undermined by human frailties and the capriciousness of fate.

Lines 21-28

In these lines, the speaker delves into a critique of the pervasive influence of wealth and materialism on human behaviour and society. The metaphorical comparison of money to "a pest" vividly portrays how the relentless pursuit of wealth can infest and corrupt every aspect of human life, leading individuals to compromise their morals and commit crimes in pursuit of financial gain. This imagery suggests that money, like a pest, spreads its influence insidiously, undermining integrity and fostering a culture of greed and deceit. Furthermore, the speaker highlights the systemic corruption that arises from the obsession with wealth, noting how individuals in positions of power, such as judges, manipulate the law for personal gain. This portrayal underscores the speaker's disillusionment with societal norms and institutions, portraying them as compromised and untrustworthy in the face of monetary influence. Additionally, the speaker's assertion that wealth cannot purchase truth or safety emphasizes a deeper critique of the illusions of security and fulfilment that money promises but ultimately fails to deliver. Instead, the accumulation of wealth paradoxically increases vulnerability and exposes individuals to greater risks and moral compromises. Through these observations, the speaker challenges the conventional notions of success and prosperity, urging readers to reconsider the ethical implications of their pursuit of wealth in a world where its allure often leads to moral decay and societal injustice.

Lines 29-36

In these lines, the speaker continues their critique of power dynamics and social hierarchy, advocating for the simplicity and security of a humble existence over the turmoil and risks associated with positions of authority and wealth. The speaker contrasts the strife and constant conflict among "rival kings" and lords who vie for power, suggesting that such

positions lead inevitably to destructive competition and violence. The phrase "statutes glean the refuse of the sword" metaphorically illustrates how laws and regulations are shaped and manipulated by those who wield military might or political influence, implying that justice and governance are often warped to serve the interests of the powerful. By extolling the benefits of being a "vassal" or a "hind," individuals who are far removed from the corridors of power, the speaker highlights the relative safety and peace that comes with obscurity and modest means. Despite acknowledging the vulnerability of even the humblest dwellings to confiscation or injustice, the speaker presents a bleak but pragmatic view of life, suggesting that avoiding the pursuit of wealth and power may offer a quieter and more secure existence, free from the constant strife and peril that accompany higher social status. This perspective challenges conventional aspirations of ambition and success, offering a cautionary reflection on the pitfalls of societal hierarchy and the enduring allure of simplicity and peace of mind.

Lines 37-44

In these lines, the speaker explores the precarious state of the poor traveller's happiness and peace of mind. Initially, the traveler is portrayed as content and carefree, finding solace in the solitude of the wilderness and singing away his troubles. However, the personification of envy disrupts this tranquillity, illustrating how the traveller's newfound awareness of his own poverty in comparison to others breeds discontent and unhappiness. As the traveller's wealth increases, instead of bringing security, it ironically intensifies his anxieties and fears. The imagery of rustling leaves and shadows evokes a sense of paranoia and vulnerability, as every sound and movement becomes a potential threat. Light, which traditionally symbolizes clarity and safety, now serves to illuminate losses and thefts sufferedby the traveler, while darkness conceals the identities of those who would exploit his misfortune. This bleak portrayal underscores the speaker's commentary on the corrosive effects of envy and the precariousness of material wealth, suggesting that peace of mind is elusive regardless of one's circumstances, and that external factors constantly threaten to undermine personal security and happiness. Thus, the speaker paints a stark picture of human vulnerability and the fragility of contentment in the face of envy and adversity.

Lines 45–48

In this passage, the speaker continues to critique the relentless pursuit of wealth and power, highlighting the discontent and anxieties that accompany these aspirations. The figurative language comparing the wind to the cries for more profit and power emphasizes the

pervasive nature of these desires in society, suggesting that they echo ceaselessly like the wind across the landscape. Despite the speaker's earlier warnings about the troubles that wealth brings, people remain fixated on accumulating more. The speaker then shifts focus to the statesman or politician, portraying them as burdened with concerns beyond mere material gain. The statesman's worries include navigating political rivalries and the strategic manoeuvring of ambitious competitors who seek to undermine or surpass him. Additionally, the anxiety over succession and the preservation of his legacy underscore the personal and professional pressures faced by those in positions of authority. Through this depiction, the speaker underscores the complexities and sacrifices inherent in the pursuit of power and status, suggesting that the quest for wealth and influence exacts a toll not only on the individual but also on their relationships and peace of mind. Thus, the speaker continues to explore the theme of human ambition and its consequences, offering a critical perspective on the price paid for aspirations that extend beyond material wealth.

Lines 49-56

The speaker nostalgically invokes Democritus, hoping for his return to witness and satirize the contrast between ancient Greek society and contemporary Britain. In Democritus' time, the speaker suggests, society was characterized by a simplicity and lack of materialism that kept arrogance in check and fostered a more genuine integrity among people. Hard work was valued over wealth, and sycophancy was not prevalent. In contrast, the speaker portrays modern Britain as overrun with greed, arrogance, and insincere flattery, creating a society that would likely disappoint the wise and cheerful philosopher if he were to witness it today.

Lines 57-60

In this continuation of critique, the speaker highlights various dysfunctions within British society. The mention of fake debates suggests a superficial engagement with issues, where discussions may lack genuine substance or meaningful deliberation. The inauguration of mayors with elaborate rituals harkens back to a time of pomp and circumstance that may overshadow genuine leadership qualities. The assertion that laws change based on political favouritism implies a lack of consistency and integrity in governance, where legal principles may be compromised for personal or partisan gain. Furthermore, the criticism of courts prejudging cases before hearing all evidence underscores concerns about fairness and justice within the judicial system. Collectively, these observations paint a picture of a society where appearances and political manoeuvring often take precedence over genuine debate, ethical

governance, and impartial justice, highlighting the speaker's disillusionment with the state of affairs in contemporary Britain.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. **According to the speaker, what literary device does he use to liken pride to a deceptive entity?**
b. **How does the speaker metaphorically describe fate in the poem?**
c. **What literary device is exemplified by the repeated "S" sound in the lines "sink," "schemes," "oppressed," "vengeance," and "fool's"?**
d. **In the poem, how does the speaker metaphorically portray money?**
e. **According to the speaker, what does the metaphorical "gate" of "Preferment" represent?**
f. **How does the speaker personify hate in the poem?**

Lines 61-68

If Democritus were to observe British society with his keen philosophical insight, he would likely deliver scathing critiques of its flaws and contradictions. Known for his sharp wit and astute observations on human nature, Democritus would see through the superficiality of societal norms and cultural pretensions. His philosophical perspective would lead him to dismiss pleasure and sorrow as fleeting illusions, mere "robes of pleasure" and "veils of woe" that disguise deeper truths about human existence. Democritus would maintain his equanimity and good spirits, transcending the ephemeral highs and lows of worldly experiences to focus on deeper philosophical truths. His critical gaze would pierce through the veneer of British society, exposing its contradictions and highlighting the disconnect between appearance and reality, challenging individuals to confront the essence of truth and authenticity amidst the distractions of pleasure and sorrow.

Lines 69-72

The speaker aligns with Democritus's disdain for humanity, suggesting that a critical examination of any "state," whether referring to a nation or a mental condition, reveals deserving targets for scorn. This perspective implies that regardless of the context—be it societal, political, or personal—human desires and aspirations often fall short of noble ideals. By characterizing Democritus as justified in his scorn, the speaker emphasizes a pessimistic

view of human nature, asserting that the objects of people's prayers and wishes, when scrutinized, reveal flaws and shortcomings that warrant criticism. This interpretation underscores a cynical assessment of humanity's tendencies and ambitions, aligning with Democritus's sceptical outlook on the inherent qualities of human behaviour and aspirations.

Lines 73-76

In this passage, the speaker critiques the relentless pursuit of advancement, wealth, and power among individuals who eagerly seek "Preferment." The metaphorical depiction of Preferment as a gate underscores the competitive and crowded nature of ambitions, where many aspire to pass through to achieve recognition and success. The speaker suggests that while fortune initially favours some, allowing them to rise and shine in their pursuits, this success is fleeting and ultimately deceptive. The metaphor of Preferment as a gate implies that the path to advancement is narrow and competitive, with many vying for limited opportunities. Furthermore, the speaker's commentary on the transitory nature of success highlights the precariousness of relying on external validation and material gains as measuresof fulfilment. Ultimately, this portrayal underscores the speaker's critique of the superficialityand volatility inherent in the pursuit of Preferment, cautioning against placing undue importance on fleeting achievements and external validation.

Lines 77-82

In this continuation, the speaker elaborates on the pitfalls of pursuing wealth and power, portraying them as magnets for trouble and discontent. Those who seek these ambitions often attract troublemakers and enemies who disrupt their peace, while hate personified follows them persistently. When their fortunes decline, they become subjects of ridicule and mockery, losing not only material wealth but also the respect and admiration they once enjoyed. Ambitious individuals also risk losing genuine love and hope, as their priorities become consumed by the pursuit of status and influence. The speaker also critiques the integrity of writers who compromise their honesty and artistic integrity to cater to the whims of the powerful and wealthy, betraying their own principles in favour of personal gain.This depiction underscores the speaker's cynical view of the corrosive effects of ambition andmaterialism, highlighting the personal and social consequences of prioritizing external success over ethical and emotional fulfilment.

Lines 83-90

In this vivid imagery, the speaker critiques the superficiality and insincerity inherent in the depiction of powerful individuals through portraits adorned with painted faces. The comparison of these portraits to a "bright Palladium" suggests they are intended to confer a sense of protection or prestige, akin to the ancient symbol associated with Athena. However, the speaker employs metaphor to reveal deeper layers of meaning, suggesting that these painted faces not only adorn walls but also symbolize the shallow values and distorted virtuesof their subjects. Despite their golden frames that enhance their appearance, these portraitsfail to reflect true heroic worth or benevolence, instead revealing the deceit and moral bankruptcy of those they depict. Ultimately, the speaker suggests that the downfall of these powerful figures is inevitable, as their lack of authenticity and the resentment they provoke among people lead to the eventual removal of their false representations from prominence. Thus, the imagery of painted faces on walls serves as a potent metaphor for the fleeting nature of superficial power and the eventual exposure of moral shortcomings and hypocrisy.

Lines 91-98

In this impassioned plea, the speaker implores Britain, personified as a collective entity, to confront and dismantle its enemies—specifically, the corrupt and power-hungry individuals who wield influence at the expense of justice and integrity. The speaker laments that those who once championed freedom and righteousness have become complacent and complicit, failing to challenge the misconduct of nobles and kings. The portrayal of Britain's populace as weak-willed and apathetic underscores the speaker's frustration with a society that prioritizes personal gain and political expediency over moral courage and civic responsibility. The accusation that the British people engage in falsehoods and revelry, seeking only to incite chaos and unrest, reflects the speaker's disdain for the perceived moral decay and social discord within the nation. Ultimately, the speaker's critique serves as a call to action, urging Britain to reject corruption and reclaim its moral and ethical principles before it succumbs further to the destructive forces of greed and complacency.

Lines 99-103

The speaker uses Cardinal Thomas Wolsey as a historical example to illustrate the immense power and influence wielded by individuals in positions of authority. As a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and a key political figure during the reign of King Henry VIII in the mid-1500s, Wolsey held considerable sway over both church affairs and the English

realm. His authority extended to dictating laws and decisions that affected the lives of many. Under Wolsey's administration, the wealth and resources of the kingdom were at his disposal, allowing him to distribute favour and honour as he saw fit. The speaker emphasizes Wolsey's ability to confer security and prestige with a mere nod or smile, highlighting the profound impact that individuals in positions of power can have on society and the lives of others. This portrayal underscores the speaker's broader critique of how power, when concentrated in the hands of the few, can be wielded to both benefit and manipulate those under its influence, reflecting themes of authority and corruption in historical and contemporary contexts alike.

Lines 104-112

But still Wolsey wasn't satisfied with all he had, and he was greedy for more power. Everyone submitted their rights to him, until there were no more rights for him to take, andhe still wasn't satisfied. Wolsey goes so far in his greed for more power that the king beginsto be displeased. The rest of the country notices the king's displeasure, and waits for a sign from him to begin hating Wolsey. Suddenly, everywhere Wolsey turns he finds that he is dealing with strangers. The people who had come to him to seek help now scorn him, and his followers turn their backs on him.

Lines 113-120

All at once Wolsey's pride is shaken. His golden canopy, his fancy cutlery and plates, his royal palace, his luxurious lifestyle, his army, and everything else is taken away from him.Wolsey is oppressed by age and worries and illness, and so he seeks to recover by leading a monastic life. But his grief makes his illness worse. The memory of all his mistakes stings him. And with his last breath he reproaches (criticizes) treacherous kings. It's not a good way to go out.The speaker questions a soldier's pride in Stanza 14, since factors out of his control drastically affect outcomes. He uses the example of the Great Northern War, in which a young Charles XII of Sweden surprises enemies and allies alike with early decisive victories. Charles XII defeats a coalition of Danish, German, and Polish opponents and then, greedy for more power, attempts to invade Russia. The speaker recounts how, as a result, his army endures famine and the Russian winter before losing decisively at Poltava—rendered here as Pultowa—in 1709. Sweden's power goes into decline, and Charles XII dies childless attempting to retake Fredrikshald, Norway, in 1718. The speaker concludes that Charles ended ingloriously, leaving his name as a cautionary tale as his most significant mark on the world.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

g. **How does the speaker characterize Democritus' philosophical perspective on pleasure and sorrow?**
h. **According to the speaker, what metaphorical representation does the pursuit of "Preferment" take?**
i. **How does the speaker criticize the portrayal of powerful individuals through painted faces on walls?**
j. **What historical figure does the speaker use as an example to illustrate the corrupting influence of power?**

4.2.5 LET US SUM UP

Samuel Johnson's 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' is a reflective and critical exploration of the ceaseless pursuit of worldly desires and ambitions. Through vivid imagery and allegorical elements, the poem underscores the often misguided nature of human aspirations and the inevitable disillusionment that follows.

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

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

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

In order to convince us of his point of view, the speaker refers to various historical figures, citing their fates as examples of why the pursuit of wealth and power is ultimately futile. There's no point in running after money or status. They're not going to bring us happiness or peace. On the contrary: they'll only bring us lots of trouble.The ultimate conclusion of the poem is that the only chance at a happy life we have is through God. It's

only through our faith in God that we can hope to find peace and contentment. So we'd better pull out our prayer books and start praying.

4.2.6 FURTHER READING

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4.2.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a. Metaphor. The speaker compares pride to a "treacherous phantom."
b. The speaker describes fate as a "clouded maze," suggesting life's uncertainty and complexity.
c. Consonance. It creates a rhythmic effect and emphasizes the speaker's critique of vengeance and foolish actions.
d. Money is metaphorically portrayed as "a pest" that corrupts and spreads its influence insidiously.
e. It represents the pursuit of wealth and power, which many people eagerly seek.
f. The speaker personifies hate as a relentless pursuer that follows those who seek wealth and power, causing trouble and strife.
g. Democritus views pleasure and sorrow as ephemeral illusions, described metaphorically as "robes of pleasure" and "veils of woe" that conceal deeper truths about human existence.
h. The pursuit of Preferment is metaphorically depicted as a crowded gate, symbolizing the competitive and transient nature of ambitions for wealth and power.
i. The speaker critiques these portraits as superficial and insincere, metaphorically comparing them to a "bright Palladium" that fails to reflect true heroic worth or benevolence.

j. The speaker uses Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, a powerful figure in King Henry VIII's court, to illustrate how concentrated power can lead to manipulation and downfall.

4.2.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. What is the rhyme scheme of Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?
2. What is the main idea of Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?
3. What are the prominent neoclassical features in "The Vanity of Human Wishes"?
4. Evaluate "A Vanity of Human Wishes" as a satire by Samuel Johnson.
5. Analyse the thematic exploration of power and ambition in Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes." How does Johnson critique various forms of power (political, financial, intellectual, and sexual) through historical examples and literary devices? Discuss how these critiques contribute to the overarching message of the poem about the futility of human desires and the search for true contentment.
6. Examine the use of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, and consonance in "The Vanity of Human Wishes." How does Johnson employ these devices to convey his critical view of human nature and society? Provide specific examples from the poem, focusing on how these devices enhance the speaker's argument about the vanity of human aspirations and the inevitability of misfortune and disillusionment.

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