LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

ELECTIVE ENGLISH - II

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Printed by
LAXMI PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
113, Golden House, Daryaganj,
New Delhi-110002
for
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara

SYLLABUS

Elective English - II

Objectives:

- To develop analytical skills of students.
- To enhance writing skills of students.
- To improve understanding of literature among students.

S. No.	Topics
1.	The Last Leaf by O. Henry
2.	The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant
3.	Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail
4.	My Vision for India by APJ Abdul Kalam
5.	The Thought Fox by Ted Hughes
6.	Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost
7.	A Flight of Pigeons by Ruskin Bond
8.	The Shroud by Munshi Prem Chand
9.	The Right to Arms by Edward Abbey
10.	Of Revenge by Francis Bacon
11.	Indian Weavers by Sarojini Naidu
12.	Ode to the West Wind by P B Shelley

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Unit 1: The Last Leaf by O. Henry

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about O. Henry;
- Weigh and consider the story *The Last Leaf*;
- Discuss the themes and plot of *The Last Leaf*;
- Make analysis of the story *The Last Leaf*.

Introduction

The Last Leaf is a short story by O. Henry which is set in Greenwich Village. It depicts the characters and themes typical of O. Henry's works. To be perfect short story neatness, brevity and a significant incident or an aspect of character or an experience of some psychological moment is essential. Within its short framework, it must have a beginning, middle and an end. There must be completeness in its structure. All the elements, *i.e.* plot, character, dialogue, descriptions and background must be organically connected with each other. Generally a good story has a surprising end which bears a sense of endlessness.

All these characteristics of a good short story are fulfilled in O. Henry's *The Last Leaf*. It has an ironical twist at the end that is surprising and at the same time striking to the readers. Old Behrman's bold self sacrifice for the young Johnsy comes unexpectedly to the readers, but nonetheless convincing and admirable. The story is farther a parable of a Christian story of resurrection and sacrifice.

The story begins in a leisurely manner with the sketchy background. The old Greenwich village in which painters come to set up their art studio has curious maze streets criss-crossing one another. A traveller loses the directions of the streets. This description of the streets has relevance to the story in which a strong and strange psychological morbidity is focused. The main theme is then introduced. It has two characters – Sue and Johnsy. They meet each other suddenly at a hotel and find themselves sharing taste in chicory salad, bishop sleeves and in

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painting. They become intimate friends and set up a common studio in a cheap rented house. The humorous beginning arrests the attention of the readers and relieves the tension that awaits them.

After a serio-comic introduction comes the central situation. One day Johnsy is attacked with pneumonia. She becomes gradually weak in body and mind. She is possessed with death wish. There is an ivy vine on the yard near Johnsy's window. She looks at the window and counts the leaves backward that were falling and associates her longevity with the fall of leaves. She has an uncanny feeling that her life will end with the fall of the last leaf of the ivy creeper. The doctor tells Johnsy that her life depends on her wish to live. If a patient loses her will power to live, no disease can be resisted. Johnsy does not like eating and drinking. She only looks vacantly at the window counting the number of leaves falling. Her friend Sue tries to divert her mind from the window. She sits by Johnsy so that the latter will be inspired to live for painting. She offers her broth, wine, milk and tries to take her mind from death wish but she cannot succeed. The strange fancy that takes hold of her mind cannot be removed.

Sue tells this strange fancy of Johnsy to the old painter Behrman who lives downstairs. As a painter he is a failure. But he has the ambition to paint a masterpiece. Behrman loves these two young painters and protects them as guardians. He dismisses this fancy as foolish. He comes upstairs with Sue to pose for as her model for the old hermit miner. A persistent cold rain is falling mingled with snow.

Next morning Johnsy asks Sue to draw up the green skin of the window. To their surprise they find the last leaf standing out against the brick wall in spite of the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind throughout the night. The last leaf survives the rain and wind. Johnsy's wish to live revives. Throughout the day and the next night the leaf clings to its stem against the wall. Johnsy considers herself a bad girl to think of death. The last leaf continues to live and so she will live. She calls for foods and assures herself that one day she will paint her masterpiece – the Bay of Naples. She is declared out of danger by the doctor after two days.

Then there is the characteristic twist. The mystery is clear. On the dreadful night Old Behrman paints the green leaf on the stem. That is why it neither moves nor flutters. The painted leaf has given the illusion of living leaf and Johnsy has got back her urge to live. Johnsy is out of danger but Behrman dies of pneumonia. Painting is made in sufferings and saves the life of morbid Johnsy. Art triumphs over death. Life is immortalised by the touch of art. This ironical twist to the plot makes the story so interesting. It comes so unexpectedly yet convincing with a delightful tragic-comic note.

1.1 Introduction to the Author

William Sydney Porter, known by his pen name O. Henry, was an American writer. O. Henry's short stories are known for their wit, wordplay, warm characterisation and clever twist endings.

William Sydney Porter was born on September 11, 1862, in Greensboro, North Carolina. His middle name at birth was Sidney; he changed the spelling to Sydney in 1898. His parents were Dr. Algernon Sidney Porter (1825–1888), a physician, and Mary Jane Virginia Swaim Porter (1833–1865). They were married on April 20, 1858. When Porter was three, his mother died of tuberculosis, and he and his father moved into the house of his maternal grandmother. As a child, Porter was always reading, everything from classics to dim novels; his favourite works were Lane's translation of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and *Burton s Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Porter graduated from his aunt Evelina Maria Porter's elementary school in 1876. He then enrolled at the Lindsey Street High School. His aunt continued to tutor him until he was

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fifteen. In 1879, he started working in his uncle's drug store and in 1881, at the age of nineteen, he was licensed as a pharmacist. At the drug store, he also showed off his natural artistic talents by sketching the townsfolk.

Porter led an active social life in Austin, including membership in singing and drama groups. He was a good singer and musician. He played both guitar and mandolin. He became a member of the "Hill City Quartet," a group of young men who sang at gatherings and serenaded young women of the town. Porter met Athol Estes, then seventeen years old and from a wealthy family and began courting with her. Her mother objected to the match because Athol was ill, suffering from tuberculosis. On July 1, 1887, Porter eloped with Athol to the house of Reverend R. K. Smoot, where they were married.

Porter family in early 1890s—Athol, daughter Margaret and William.

The couple continued to participate in musical and theatre groups, and Athol encouraged her husband to pursue his writing. Athol gave birth to a son in 1888, who died hours after birth, and then a daughter, Margaret Worth Porter, in September 1889. Porter's friend Richard Hall became Texas Land Commissioner and offered Porter a job. Porter started as a draftsman at the Texas General Land Office (GLO) in 1887 at a salary of $100 a month, drawing maps from surveys and field notes. The salary was enough to support his family, but he continued his contributions to magazines and newspapers.

The same year, Porter began working at the First National Bank of Austin as a teller and book-keeper at the same salary was paid made at the GLO. The bank was operated informally and Porter was apparently careless in keeping his books and may have embezzled funds. In 1894, he was accused of embezzlement by the bank and lost his job but was not indicted.

He then worked full time on his humorous weekly called The Rolling Stone, which he started while working in the bank. The Rolling Stone featured satire on life, people and politics and included Porter's short stories and sketches. Although eventually reaching a top circulation of 1500, The Rolling Stone failed in April 1895 since the paper never provided an adequate income. However, his writings and drawings had caught the attention of the editor at the Houston Post.

Porter's father-in-law posted bail to keep Porter out of jail, but the day before Porter was due to stand trial on July 7, 1896, he fled, first to New Orleans and later to Honduras. While holed up in a Trujillo hotel for several months, he wrote Cabbages and Kings, in which he coined the term "banana republic" to describe the country, subsequently used to describe almost any small, unstable tropical nation in Latin America. Porter had sent Athol and Margaret back to Austin to live with Athol's parents. Unfortunately, Athol became too ill to meet Porter in Honduras as Porter had planned. When he learned that his wife was dying, Porter returned to Austin in February 1897 and surrendered to the court, pending an appeal. Once again, Porter's father-in-law posted bail so Porter could stay with Athol and Margaret.

Athol Estes Porter died of tuberculosis (then known as consumption) on July 25, 1897. Porter, having little to say in his own defence, was found guilty of embezzlement in February 1898, and was sentenced to five years in prison, and imprisoned on March 25, 1898, as federal prisoner 30664 at the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio. While in prison, Porter, as a licensed pharmacist, worked in the prison hospital as the night druggist. Porter was given his own room in the hospital wing, and there is no record that he actually spent time in the cell block of the prison. He had fourteen stories published under various pseudonyms while he was in prison, but was becoming best known as "O. Henry", a pseudonym that first appeared over the story "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" in the December 1899 issue of McClure's Magazine. A friend of his in New Orleans would forward his stories to publishers, so they had no idea the writer was imprisoned. Porter was released on July 24, 1901, for good behaviour

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after spending three years in jail. Porter reunited with his daughter Margaret, now age 11, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Athol's parents had moved after Porter's conviction. Margaret was never told that her father had been in prison—just that he had been away on business.

Porter's most prolific writing period started in 1902, when he moved to New York City to be near his publishers. While there, he wrote 381 short stories. He wrote a story a week for over a year for the New York World Sunday Magazine. His wit, characterization, and plot twists were adored by his readers, but often panned by critics. Porter married again in 1907, to childhood sweetheart Sarah (Sallie) Lindsey Coleman, whom he met again after revisiting his native state of North Carolina.

Porter was a heavy drinker, and his health deteriorated markedly in 1908, which affected his writing. In 1909, Sarah left him, and he died on June 5, 1910, of cirrhosis of liver, complications of diabetes, and an enlarged heart. After funeral services in New York City, he was buried in the Riverside Cemetery in Asheville, North Carolina. His daughter, Margaret Worth Porter, who died in 1927, was buried next to her father.

Portrait of Porter from frontispiece in his collection of short stories Waifs and Strays. O. Henry's stories frequently have surprise endings. In his days, he was called the American answer to Guy de Maupassant. Both authors wrote plot twist endings, but O. Henry's stories were much more playful. His stories are also known for witty narration.

Most of O. Henry's stories are set in his own time, the early 20th century. Many take place in New York City and deal for the most part with ordinary people: clerks, policemen, waitresses, etc.

O. Henry's work is wide-ranging, and his characters can be found roaming the cattle-lands of Texas, exploring the art of the con-man, or investigating the tensions of class and wealth in turn-of-the-century New York. O. Henry had an inimitable hand for isolating some element of society and describing it with an incredible economy and grace of language. Some of his best and least-known work is contained in Cabbages and Kings, a series of stories each of which explores some individual aspect of life in a paralytically sleepy Central American town, while advancing some aspect of the larger plot and relating back one to another.

Porter gave various explanations for the origin of his pen name. In 1909 he gave an interview to The New York Times, in which he gave an account of it: It was during these New Orleans days that I adopted my pen name of O. Henry. I said to a friend: "I'm going to send out some stuff. I don't know if it amounts too much, so I want to get a literary alias. Help me pick out a good one." He suggested that we got a newspaper and picked a name from the first list of notables that we found in it.

In the society columns we found the account of a fashionable ball. "Here we have our notables," said he. They looked down the list and my eye lighted on the name Henry, "That'll do for a last name," said I. "Now for a first name. I want something short. None of your three-syllable names for me." "Why don't you use a plain initial letter, then?" asked my friend. "Good," said I, "O is about the easiest letter written, and O it is." A newspaper once wrote and asked me what the O stands for. I replied, "O stands for Olivier, the French for Oliver." And several of my stories accordingly appeared in that paper under the name Olivier Henry.

In the introduction to The World of O. Henry: Roads of Destiny and Other Stories (Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), William Trevor writes that when Porter was in the Ohio State Penitentiary "there was a prison guard named Orrin Henry, whom William Sydney Porter . . . immortalised as O. Henry".

The writer and scholar Guy Davenport offers another explanation: "[T]he pseudonym that he began to write under in prison is constructed from the first two letters of Ohio and the second and last two of penitentiary."

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The O. Henry Award is a prestigious annual prize named after Porter and given to outstanding short stories. Several schools around the country bear Porter's pseudonym.

In 1952, a film featuring five stories, called O. Henry's Full House, was made. The episode garnering the most critical acclaim[citation needed] was "The Cop and the Anthem" starring Charles Laughton and Marilyn Monroe. The other stories are "The Clarion Call", "The Last Leaf", "The Ransom of Red Chief" (starring Fred Allen and Oscar Levant), and "The Gift of the Magi".

The O. Henry House and O. Henry Hall, both in Austin, Texas, are named after him. O. Henry Hall, now owned by the University of Texas was previously served as the federal courthouse in which O. Henry was convicted of embezzlement. Porter has elementary schools named for him in Greensboro, North Carolina (William Sydney Porter Elementary and Garland, Texas (O. Henry Elementary), as well as a middle school in Austin, Texas (O. Henry Middle School).

1.2 The Last Leaf

In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One Street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

At the top of a squatty, three-story brick Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth Street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy fingers. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, gray eyebrow.

"She has one chance in - let us say, ten," he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. "And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-u on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopoeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"She - she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day." said Sue.

"Paint? - bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking twice—a man for instance?"

"A man?" said Sue, with a jew's-harp twang in her voice. "Is a man worth - but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

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"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle of the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting — counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and little later "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven", almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out of the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

"Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense," complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were—let's see exactly what he said—he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, bending over her, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by tomorrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down."

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"Couldn't you draw in the other room?" asked Johnsy, coldly.

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "Beside, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as fallen statue, "because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move 'til I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along with the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away, when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

"Vass!" he cried. "Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I will not bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly pusiness to come in der brain of her? Ach, dot poor leetle Miss Yohnsy."

"She is very ill and weak," said Sue, "and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a horrid old - old flibbertigibbet."

"You are just like a woman!" yelled Behrman. "Who said I will not bose? Go on. I come mit you. For half an hour I haf peen trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gott! dis is not any blace in which one so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go away. Gott! yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

"Pull it up; I want to see," she ordered, in a whisper.

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Wearily Sue obeyed.

But, lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last one on the vine. Still dark green near its stem, with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from the branch some twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow, "think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and—no; bring me a hand-mirror first, and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

And hour later she said:

"Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

"Even chances," said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "With good nursing you'll win." And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is—some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is acute. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital to-day to be made more comfortable."

The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's out of danger. You won. Nutrition and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place, and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colors mixed on it, and—look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

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1.3 Plot and Themes

Plot

Johnsy has fallen ill and is dying of pneumonia. She watches the leaves fall from a vine outside the window of her room, and decides that when the last leaf drops, she too will die. While Sue tries to tell her to stop thinking like that, Johnsy is determined to die when the last leaf falls.

An old, frustrated artist named Behrman lives below Johnsy and Sue. He has been claiming that he will paint a masterpiece, even though he has never even attempted to start. Sue goes to him, and tells him that her sister is dying of pneumonia, and that Johnsy claims that when the last leaf falls off a vine outside her window, she will die. Behrman scoffs at this as foolishness, but—as he is protective of the two young artists—he decides to see Johnsy and the vine.

In the night, a very bad storm comes and wind is howling and rain is splattering against the window. Sue closes the curtains and tells Johnsy to go to sleep, even though there were still four leaves left on the vine. Johnsy protests but Sue insists on doing so because she doesn't want Johnsy to see the last leaf fall. In the morning, Johnsy wants to see the vine, to be sure that all the leaves are gone, but to their surprise, there is still one leaf left.

While Johnsy is surprised that it is still there, she insists it will fall that day. But it doesn't, nor does it fall through the night nor the next day. Johnsy believes that the leaf stayed there to show how wicked she was, and that she sinned in wanting to die. She regains her will to live, and makes a full recovery throughout the day.

In the afternoon, a doctor talks to Sue. The doctor says that Mr. Behrman has come down with pneumonia and, as there is nothing to be done for him, he is being taken to the hospital to be made comfortable in his final hours. A janitor had found him helpless with pain, and his shoes and clothing were wet and icy cold. The janitor couldn't figure out where he had been on that stormy night, though she had found a lantern that was still lit, a ladder that had been moved, some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it. "Look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell.""

Themes

Death and Dying

The Last Leaf is a short story that entails the treasury of life and the existence of faith and hope. It tells about the importance of living and how we deal with the hindrances we battle through our life story. It is a moving story across the traps that come across us in the most significant parts of our lives, the value of life is the centrepiece of story, where all the things go back and revolve… The story gives us a hint that God is the only one who knows whether we ride on with life and chances or trail on and be drawn against the judgement. The melodramatic and picturesque setting of the story connects to the negative status of main character facing life and death subject matter.

Pessimism

Johnsy the main character seems to be a very pessimistic person. She has lost the entire positive attitude in life due to her disease and she is waiting for her death.

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"Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind"

That is the first step of Johnsy that she has made up her mind that she will die when the last leaf falls. That signifies the mental and psychological condition of hers and describes the theme of pessimism.

"She was looking out of window and counting—counting backwards".

The psychological disturbances shown by O. Henry in these lines as she is tired of waiting that when the last leaf falls, she will be near to death. "When the last one falls I must go, too."

Here in these lines Henry has showed extreme pessimism. It is the last one, said Johnsy "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall today, and I shall die at the same time."

These words literated by Johnsy again show her desperate and chaotic state of mind. She has supposed the things which have no logic and waiting for her death, or waiting for the last leaf to fall.

Self-Sacrifice

Mr. Behrman risks his life for Johnsy. He has sacrificed his own life, to give life to Johnsy the painting he made at the wall, shows his self sacrificing, kind and noble nature.

He himself catches the pneumonia and dies, but he didn't let Johnsy to die.

With the character of Mr. Behrman, O. Henry is showing the sacrificing nature of a man and it gives us a message that self sacrifice is a great deed and one has to be kind and gentle towards others. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in hospital."

Hope

Theme of hope is very nicely presented in this story. Doctor is a very optimistic person. He tries to make Johnsy realise, that is she has made her mind that she will die when the last leaf falls could be harmful for her. He told her that he can only provide her medicine and that is effective as 50 per cent, the next situation is in her hand.

"I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines." If you will get her to ask one question about the new writer styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you one-in-five chance for her, instead of".

So O. Henry conveys message one never let go for hope and optimist approach in life. It is our state of mind which can bring worse or better for us in our lives "Sadie, someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples". These lines show Johnsy's desires and aspirations. It gives the picture of hope and this hope in life gives us the spirit of living in this world.

Love and Friendship

In *The Last Leaf* O. Henry describes friendship and bondage between two friends. They care and love each other. Sue supports Johnsy morally when the latter falls ill. She proves to be great support for Johnsy and she tries her level best to bring back Johnsy towards life and in the world of optimism.

"Dear, Dear!" said she, leaning her own face down to the pillow " think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

These lines show the effective relationship between two friends. Mr. Behrman also shows great deal of love for these girls. Although he is a bit careless person but he really cared for Johnsy and his love is shown by his painting for the sake of Johnsy's life.

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1.4 Analysis of the Story The Last Leaf

The text under analysis is a story written by O'Henry. O'Henry is a pseudonym of William Sydney Porter. He was an American writer, noted for his numerous short stories. He worked in various jobs: as a rancher, bank teller, journalist, etc. He founded a comic weekly magazine "The Rolling Stone" before being employed by "The Houston Post" to write a humorous daily column.

The short story "The Last Leaf" portraits two young women named Sue and Johnsy living together in New York. Pneumonia has hit the area they are living in and Johnsy, not being used to the climate—as she is from California, is suffering from the disease. Sue takes on the role as the caretaker of Johnsy. Because Johnsy is terminally ill, she is therefore in need of medical help.

The unnamed doctor, who is called in to Johnsy's aid, is portrayed as a presumptuous and nonchalant man. He seems presumptuous by stating that he could increase Johnsy's survival-prognosis if Sue got her "to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves"; implying that by being a woman you automatically have an interest in fashion. The fact that he also declares that Johnsy should think about finding herself a man, simply underlines my point further: For all he knew Johnsy could be a lesbian. It is not apparent that she is though, however there are innuendos throughout the story which could suggest that Sue and Johnsy are more than just roommates.

The doctor gives Johnsy a ten-to-one chance to survive the illness in her current state. According to him she needs to have the will to live, to survive. On the grounds that Johnsy has started the countdown to her own death by the use of the falling last leafs of an ivy vine, one could declare that will basically non-existent.

Sue convinces Johnsy to stop counting the falling leafs so that Sue can paint to make money instead of watching over her beloved for a while. Sue – in the need of comfort and a model for her artwork - seeks Mr. Behrman's help and guidance. He is a sixty-year old man who lives on the ground floor, directly beneath the girls. Mr. Behrman is also a painter, though he still has not managed to paint his masterpiece. The old man expresses great concern about Johnsy's condition and initially, he helps Sue by posing for her portrait. He thereafter spends the rest of that night painting his masterpiece on the brick-wall.

In 1898 O. Henry was convicted of embezzlement and served a three-year term in the federal penitentiary. After that he contributed short stories to the popular magazines of his days for the rest of his life. In all, Henry wrote 270 stories, and they consist of a rich mixture of semi-realism, sentiment and surprise endings. He is frequently thought of as a "funny" writer.

O. Henry was interested in social problems and revealed his negative attitude to the bourgeois society. O. Henry's heroes are various: cowboys, writers, artists, milliners, clerks, politicians, etc. His stories are characterized by colourful detail, keen wit and great narrative skill and they still hold the attention of the present audience.

Hence, the general slant of the text is a 3rd person narration. It contains different elements: an account of events, portraiture. The description is intercepted with a dialogue. The general key to the text is sentimental and pessimistic. The scene is laid in Greenwich Village in a joint studio. It touches upon an important event in the life of the main characters: Sue and Johnsy. The title is highly symbolic and it agrees with the contents of the text.

In my opinion the text can be split into three logically connected parts. At the beginning of the story the author introduces the two main characters. They get acquainted in a café, find out that they are quite congenial and begin renting a joint studio. Then we learn that Johnsy

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is ill with pneumonia. She is very weak; she lays in her bed, scarcely moving, and looks out of the window counting the falling leaves on the old ivy vine.

Self Assessment

1. Johnsy the main character seems to be very
   (*a*) sadistic (*b*) pessimistic
   (*c*) optimistic (*d*) none of these.
2. Sue found ……smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den .
   (*a*) Behrman (*b*) Johnsy
   (*c*) the Doctor (*d*) none of these
3. Mr. Behrman died of……..
   (*a*) typhoid (*b*) cholera
   (*c*) pneumonia (*d*) none of these.
4. O. Henry's middle name at birth was Sidney; he changed the spelling to …… 1898.
   (*a*) Sydney (*b*) Sidnee
   (*c*) Sydniy (*d*) none of these

1.5 Summary

- The story revolves around two artist girls—Sue and Johnsy—who have their own 'studio' in quaint old Greenwich Village. What they have was a relationship fostered on mutual trust and their common tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves! All went hunky dory till Johnsy fell ill with pneumonia one cold November month. The disease seemed to drain out the last streaks of will and womanly taste from her being. She lay all day on her bed awaiting her death, looking out of the window listlessly. The doctor put her chances at one-in-ten, which he swelled up to one-in-five if Sue managed to get Johnsy to ask 'one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves'! Here the author tries to cook up humour from a woman's natural eye for fashion. Distressed by the doctor's verdict Sue cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp—another typical womanly reaction! She, at no cost, wanted to lose a friend who had so much in common with her and who had, for the past one year, been her staunch companion in everything—from her artistic conquests to her personal trivia. With a heavy heart she gathered her drawing board and paintbrush (and a great amount of will) and made her way into Johnsy's room. Johnsy lay there still as death itself. Sue began working on an illustration for a magazine story. 'Young artists must pave their way to art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that Young authors write to pave their way to literature!' Here the author has skilfully drawn a comparison between the two classes of strugglers and brought to light how the two, despite being so different in their genres, together make a wonderful piece! How many of us have actually read up a story because the illustrations were appealing?! Coming back to the story, our heroine Sue sat there in the room sketching with determination, trying to drown her sorrow into her art. Suddenly the sound of low moans broke her trance. She went quickly to Johnsy's bedside. She was lying there eyes open wide and fixed outside the window. She was counting - counting backwards! Sue's solicitous glances found that Johnsy had her eyes on an old, old vine, the leaves of which had been ripped off its body, exposing the rotting skeleton. It had been losing

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leaves at an alarming rate, from over a hundred leaves on it three days ago to five just then. In her desperation Johnsy cried out that her life would betray her the day the last leaf fell! Her friend rebuked her with magnificent scorn, calling her a scatterbrain! She declared that she wouldn't leave the room until she saw the last leaf fall off, which she was sure would happen before dark, and prove Johnsy's paranoid fears unfounded. On the ground floor of Sue's studio lived old Behrman. He was over sixty and sported a long Michael Angelo Moses beard dangling over an impish body. A failure in art—his drawing board had waited forty years to receive the first line of the great masterpiece he planned to create! It was still waiting. He made both ends meet by serving as a model to young artists. And Sue was his regular customer. Later that day Sue went over to Behrman to get him to pose for an art piece. Close as she was to him, she poured out her heart about Johnsy to him. The old man was visibly stupefied at what he heard and blabbered about illogical people of the world. Nevertheless, Sue went back home once her work was done. Days passed and the old vine started making small steps to become bald! As each day came and went, its leaves bid adieu one after the other. And Johnsy…her belief was becoming a reality! She was slowly slipping away into death. So the leaves fell one after the other until one very last! Johnsy busied herself bidding her final farewell to the world. Days slipped away like sand; soon and fast, but the last leaf refused to fall off, determined not to betray its naked host! Rain, shine or twilight, nothing could possibly make it part ways with the vine. The young woman waited and she waited still and then her patience wore off. She concluded that God didn't want her in his kingdom and realized that asking for death was a sin. For the first time through her illness she asked for her broth without waiting for Sue to jostle it down her throat. Soon she was her true self again - up and about! One afternoon as the two girls sat knitting, Sue broke the news of old Behrman's death from pneumonia. He was found cold and wet and in pain…and beside him was a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it. No one had wondered why the last leaf never fluttered, never moved...Behrman had finally delivered his masterpiece! He had painted it the night the last leaf fell!

1.6 Keywords

Magnificent : Impressively beautiful, elaborate, or extravagant; striking.

Blabbered : Sob noisily and uncontrollably.

Portraiture : The art or practice of making portraits.

1.7 Review Questions

1. Why did artists want to settle in Greenwich Village?
2. How did Sue and Johnsy become roommates?
3. Give a description of Mr. Pneumonia.
4. What did the doctor recommend for Johnsy to recover?
5. How does the doctor demonstrate his low regard for painting?
6. What did Johnsy count and why did she do it?
7. How does Sue try to persuade Johnsy to stop thinking that she was going to die?
8. Who is Mr. Behrman and why does Sue see him?

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9. Why does Johnsy command Sue to open the green shades? Why are they both taken by surprise?

10. What caused Mr. Behrman's death?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*a*) 3. (*c*) 4. (*a*)

1.8 Further Readings

Books The Necklace from *Book Rags and Gale s For Students Series*. ©2005-2006 Thomson Gale, a part of the Thomson Corporation.

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Online links www.w3.org/WAI/eval/considerations.html

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Unit 2: The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the story 'The Necklace';
- Discuss the plot and themes of the story;
- Make analysis of the major characters;
- Answer the discussion questions which follow after the text.

Introduction

Guy de Maupassant was a French author of short stories and novels. Although much of his work was humorous, he is most famous for his horror story The Monkey's Paw. The story The Necklace opens with the description of how miserable Mathilde is. Maupassant describes her as "suffering constantly, feeling herself destined for all delicacies and luxuries." She sits dreaming of silent rooms nicely decorated and her own private room, scented with perfume to have intimate "tete-a-tetes" with her closest friends. Then she is awakened, only to realize that she is in her own grim apartment.

Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant was born on August 5, 1850, to an affluent family at the Chateau de Miromesnil, in France. As a child, Guy adored his mother and loathed his absent father. His mother was very literary and passed on her love of books to her son, Guy, and his brother, Herve. Much of Guy's childhood was spent in the countryside playing sports or simply spending time outdoors.

The Franco-Prussian War erupted shortly after Maupassant finished college. Maupassant enlisted as a volunteer and then, in 1871, left the army to work as a clerk in the navy for the next ten

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years. During this time he became close with Gustave Flaubert, a friend of his mother's and the author of Madame Bovary (1857). Flaubert introduced him to several other prominent writers and spurred Maupassant to focus on his writing. As a result, Maupassant began producing a fair amount of short fiction on his own and eventually found work as a contributing editor for several prominent French newspapers in 1878. Despite this early focus on writing, however, Maupassant didn't publish any of his work until he turned thirty.

"The Necklace," or "La Parure" in French, first appeared in the Parisian Newspaper Le Gaulois in 1884. The story was an immediate success, and Maupassant later included it in his short-story collection Tales of Day and Night (1885). Flaubert's influence on Maupassant is evident in "The Necklace," and the story is in many ways similar to Madame Bovary. Both works, for example, revolve around attractive yet dissatisfied young women who seek to escape their destinies. More important, both works are also among the finest examples of realist fiction, a style of writing first appeared in the mid nineteenth century that sought to expose the grittier realities of ordinary people's lives. Above all else, Maupassant sought to explore the deeper meanings of everyday events, and his writing style has influenced other literary greats such as Anton Chekhov and O. Henry.

Maupassant's literary career peaked in the 1880s, around the time when he published "The Necklace." In the years just before and after he published Tales of Day and Night, Maupassant wrote more than 300 short stories and several successful novels, including Un Vie (1883), Bel Ami (1885), and Pierre et Jean (1888). He travelled extensively during this time and often produced his best writing on the road, writing newspaper articles, essays, and travelogues in addition to fiction. A powerful literary figure in his day, Maupassant formed and maintained friendships with other literary giants such as Ivan Turgenev and Émile Zola.

Despite his wealth and popularity, Maupassant never married, partly out of fear of being abandoned by a loved one as he was abandoned by his father. As he grew older, Maupassant became more withdrawn and obsessed with death. His infection with syphilis contributed to his growing dementia, and he was institutionalized after he tried to kill himself in 1891. He died two years later, on July 6, 1893.

2.1 Detailed Study–The Necklace

The Necklace is often studied as a short work in world literature. The story is by Guy de Maupassant, and he infused the story with heartache, with the wounds of self-sacrifice—the stuff we can't ever forget or be allowed to let go. And, then, what happens when the hellish torment is over? Here's a story you may not soon forget.

The girl was one of those pretty and charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a slip of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved, married by any rich and distinguished man; so she let herself be married to a little clerk of the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace and charm take the place of family and birth. Natural ingenuity, instinct for what is elegant, a supple mind are their sole hierarchy, and often make of women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

Mathilde suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born to enjoy all delicacies and luxuries. She was distressed at the poverty of her dwelling, at the bareness of the walls, at the shabby chairs, the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton

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peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her despairing regrets and bewildering dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the oppressive heat of the stove. She thought of long reception halls hung with ancient silk, of the dainty cabinets containing priceless curiosities and of the little coquettish perfumed reception rooms made for chatting at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth in use three days, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with a delighted air, "Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvellous plates and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinxlike smile while you are eating the pink meat of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that. She felt made for that. She would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see any more because she felt so sad when she came home.

But one evening her husband reached home with a triumphant air and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "there is something for you."

She tore the paper quickly and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Madame Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table crossly, muttering:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble to get it. Everyone wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated glance and said impatiently:

"And what do you wish me to put on my back?"

He had not thought of that. He stammered:

"Why, the gown you go to the theatre in. It looks very well to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief and replied in a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I am."

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He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions—something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied hesitating:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there of a Sunday.

But he said:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty gown."

The day of the ball drew near and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her frock was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewellery, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."

"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband. "They're very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"True! I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told her of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a mirror, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian gold cross set with precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated and could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look further; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it round her throat, outside her high-necked waist, and was lost in ecstasy at her reflection in the mirror.

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Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anxious doubt:

"Will you lend me this, only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a great success. She was prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling and wild with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, sought to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

She danced with rapture, with passion, intoxicated by pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness comprised of all this homage, admiration, these awakened desires and of that sense of triumph which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She left the ball about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying the ball.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest wraps of common life, the poverty of which contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wished to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying: "Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will call a cab."

But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient night cabs which, as though they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.

It took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they mounted the stairs to their flat. All was ended for her. As to him, he reflected that he must be at the ministry at ten o'clock that morning.

She removed her wraps before the glass so as to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her neck!

"What is the matter with you?" demanded her husband, already half undressed.

She turned distractedly toward him.

"I have—I have—I've lost Madame Forestier's necklace," she cried.

He stood up, bewildered.

"What!—how? Impossible!"

They looked among the folds of her skirt, of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere, but did not find it.

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the minister's house."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"

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"No. And you—didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at each other. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without any fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least spark of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face. He had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace that ornament."

The next day they took the box that had contained it and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, trying to recall it, both sick with chagrin and grief.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds that seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they should find the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked signing a note without even knowing whether he could meet it; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace Madame Forestier said to her with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

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Thereafter Madame Loisel knew the horrible existence of the needy. She bore her part, however, with sudden heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, meeting with impertinence, defending her miserable money, sou by sou.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked evenings, making up a tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

This life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households—strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How strange and changeful is life! How small a thing is needed to make or ruin us!

But one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself after the labours of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

"Good-day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all and stammered:

"But—madame!—I do not know—— You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life, since I last saw you, and great poverty—and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

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"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very similar."

And she smiled with a joy that was at once proud and ingenuous.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"

2.2 Plot Overview

Mathilde Loisel is "pretty and charming" but feels she has been born into a family of unfavourable economic status. She was married off to a lowly clerk in the Ministry of Education, who can afford to provide her only with a modest though not uncomfortable lifestyle. Mathilde feels the burden of her poverty intensely. She regrets her lot in life and spends endless hours imagining a more extravagant existence. While her husband expresses his pleasure at the small, modest supper she has prepared for him, she dreams of an elaborate feast served on fancy china and eaten in the company of wealthy friends. She possesses no fancy jewels or clothing, yet these are the only things she lives for. Without them, she feels she is not desirable. She has one wealthy friend, Madame Forestier, but refuses to visit her because of the heartbreak it brings her.

One night, her husband returns home proudly bearing an invitation to a formal party hosted by the Ministry of Education. He hopes that Mathilde will be thrilled with the chance to attend an event of this sort, but she is instantly angry and begins to cry. Through her tears, she tells him that she has nothing to wear and he ought to give the invitation to one of his friends whose wife can afford better clothing. Her husband is upset by her reaction and asks how much a suitable dress would cost. She thinks about it carefully and tells him that 400 francs would be enough. Her husband quietly balks at the sum but agrees that she may have the money.

Did u know? Mathilde Loisel, the main character of "The Necklace," is a 19th century French version of a desperate housewife. Because she's a woman in a man's world, she has almost no control over her life.

As the day of the party approaches, Mathilde starts to behave oddly. She confesses that the reason for her behaviour is her lack of jewels. Monsieur Loisel suggests that she wear flowers, but she refuses. He implores her to visit Madame Forestier and borrow something from her. Madame Forestier agrees to lend Mathilde her jewels, and Mathilde selects a diamond necklace. She is overcome with gratitude at Madame Forestier's generosity.

At the party, Mathilde is the most beautiful woman in attendance, and everyone notices her. She is intoxicated by the attention and has an overwhelming sense of self-satisfaction. At 4 a.m., she finally looks for Monsieur Loisel, who has been dozing for hours in a deserted room.

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He cloaks her bare shoulders in a wrap and cautions her to wait inside, away from the cold night air, while he fetches a cab. But she is ashamed at the shabbiness of her wrap and follows Monsieur Loisel outside. They walk for a while before hailing a cab.

When they finally return home, Mathilde is saddened that the night has ended. As she removes her wrap, she discovers that her necklace is no longer around her neck. In a panic, Monsieur Loisel goes outside and retraces their steps. Terrified, she sits and waits for him. He returns home much later in an even greater panic—he has not found the necklace. He instructs her to write to Madame Forestier and say that she has broken the clasp of the necklace and is getting it mended.

They continue to look for the necklace. After a week, Monsieur Loisel says they have to see about replacing it. They visit many jewellers, searching for a similar necklace, and finally find one. It costs 40,000 francs, although the jeweller says he will give it to them for 36,000. The Loisels spend a week scraping up money from all kinds of sources, mortgaging the rest of their existence. After three days, Monsieur Loisel purchases the necklace. When Mathilde returns the necklace, in its case, to Madame Forestier, Madame Forestier is annoyed at how long it has taken to get it back but does not open the case to inspect it. Mathilde is relieved.

The Loisels began to live a life of crippling poverty. They dismiss their servant and move into an even smaller apartment. Monsieur Loisel works three jobs, and Mathilde spends all her time doing the heavy housework. This misery lasts ten years, but at the end they have repaid their financial debts. Mathilde's extraordinary beauty is now gone: she looks just like the other women of poor households. They are both tired and irrevocably damaged from these years of hardship.

One Sunday, while she is out for a walk, Mathilde spots Madame Forestier. Feeling emotional, she approaches her and offers greetings. Madame Forestier does not recognize her, and when Mathilde identifies herself, Madame Forestier cannot help but exclaim that she looks different. Mathilde says that the change was on her account and explains to her the long saga of losing the necklace, replacing it, and working for ten years to repay the debts. At the end of her story, Madame Forestier clasps her hands and tells Mathilde the original necklace was just costume jewellery and not worth anything.

2.3 Major Characters

In any literay work, it is absolutely essential to have characters, whether major or minor. It is also necessary to develop these characters throughout the story. Character development gives the reader insight to the more important meanings or lessons of the story. These lessons are usually brought out by the events that take place within the story. Looking at Guy De Maupassant's piece "The Necklace", we see a very clear development of the main character Mathidle. In the story, we see a change in her attitude about life.

This change comes about when she has to learn one of life's little lessons the hard way. She and her husband are forced to live a life of hard work and struggle because of her own selfish desires. Mathilde changes from a woman who spends her time dreaming of all the riches and glory she doesn't have, to realise that she overlooked all the riches she did have.

Mathilde Loisel—The protagonist of the story. Mathilde has been blessed with physical beauty but not with the affluent lifestyle she yearns for, and she feels deeply discontented with her lot in life. When she prepares to attend a fancy party, she borrows a diamond necklace from her friend Madame Forestier, then loses the necklace and must work for ten years to pay off a replacement. Her one night of radiance cost her and Monsieur Loisel any chance for future happiness.

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Monsieur Loisel—Mathilde's husband. Monsieur Loisel is content with the small pleasures of his life but does his best to appease Mathilde's demands and assuage her complaints. He loves Mathilde immensely but does not truly understand her, and he seems to underestimate the depth of her unhappiness. When Mathilde loses the necklace, Monsieur Loisel sacrifices his own future to help her repay the debt. He pays dearly for something he had never wanted in the first place.

Madame Forestier—Mathilde's wealthy friend. Madame Forestier treats Mathilde kindly, but Mathilde is bitterly jealous of Madame Forestier's wealth, and the kindness pains her. Madame Forestier lends Mathilde the necklace for the party and does not inspect it when Mathilde returns it. She is horrified to realize that Mathilde has wasted her life trying to pay for a replacement necklace, when the original necklace had actually been worth nothing.

2.4 Analysis of Major Characters

Mathilde Loisel

Beautiful Mathilde Loisel was born into a family of clerks, and her utter conviction that her station in life is a mistake of destiny leads her to live her life in a constant rebellion against her circumstances. Although she has a comfortable home and loving husband, she is so unsatisfied that she is virtually oblivious of everything but the wealth she does not have. Her desire for wealth is a constant pain and turmoil. She cannot visit her wealthy friend Madame Forestier without being overcome with jealousy, and the idea of going to a party without expensive clothes drives her to tears. Mathilde is a raging, jealous woman who will do anything in her power to reverse the "mistake of destiny" that has plunged her into what she perceives as a wholly inappropriate and inadequate life.

Mathilde is happy at only one point in "The Necklace": on the night of the party, when her new dress and borrowed jewels give her the appearance of belonging to the wealthy world she aspires to. Fully at ease among the wealthy people at the party, Mathilde feels that this is exactly where she was meant to be—if it hadn't been for the mistake of destiny. She forgets her old life completely (her husband dozes in an empty room for most of the night) and immerses herself in the illusion of a new one. Her moment of happiness, of course, is fleeting, and she must spend the next ten years paying for the pleasure of this night. However, her joy was so acute—and her satisfaction, for once, so complete—that even the ten arduous years and her compromised beauty do not dull the party's memory. Just as Mathilde was oblivious to the small pleasures that her life once afforded her, she is oblivious to the fact that her greed and deception are what finally sealed her fate.

Monsieur Loisel

Monsieur Loisel's acceptance and contentment differ considerably from Mathilde's emotional outbursts and constant dissatisfaction, and although he never fully understands his wife, he does his best to please her. When he comes home bearing the invitation to the party, he expects Mathilde to be excited and is shocked when she is devastated. He cannot understand why Mathilde will not wear flowers to the party in lieu of expensive jewellery—in his view, that they cannot afford expensive jewellery is simply a fact of their life, not something to be railed against. When Monsieur Loisel tries to appease Mathilde, he does so blindly, wanting only to make her happy. When she declares that she cannot attend the party because she has nothing to wear, he gives her money to purchase a dress. While she complains she has no proper jewelry, he urges her to visit Madame Forestier to borrow some. When she dances all night at the party, he dozes in a coat room and allows her to enjoy herself.

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Monsieur Loisel's eagerness and willingness to please Mathilde becomes his downfall when she loses the necklace. He is the one to venture back into the cold night to search for the necklace in the streets, even though he is already undressed and has to be at work in a few short hours. He is the one who devises a plan for purchasing a replacement necklace and orchestrates the loans and mortgages that help them pay for it. Although this decision costs him ten years of hard work, he does not complain or imagine an alternate fate. It is as though his desires do not even exist—or, at the very least, his desires are meaningless if they stand in the way of Mathilde's. The money he gives her for a dress had been earmarked for a gun, but he sacrifices this desire without a word—just as he mutely sacrifices any hope of happiness after he buys the necklace. Rather than force Mathilde to be accountable for her actions, he protects her, ultimately giving up his life so that she can relish her one moment of well-dressed happiness.

2.5 Themes, Motifs and Symbols

Themes

The Deceptiveness of Appearances

The reality of Mathilde's situation is that she is neither wealthy nor part of the social class of which she feels she is a deserving member, but Mathilde does everything in her power to make her life appear different from how it is. She lives in an illusory world where her actual life does not match the ideal life she has in her head—she believes that her beauty and charm make her worthy of greater things. The party is a triumph because for the first time, her appearance matches the reality of her life. She is prettier than the other women, sought after by the men, and generally admired and flattered by all. Her life, in the few short hours of the party, is as she feels it should be. However, beneath this rightness and seeming match of appearances and reality is the truth that her appearance took a great deal of scheming and work. The bliss of her evening was not achieved without angst, and the reality of her appearance is much different than it seems. Her wealth and class are simply illusions, and other people are easily deceived.

The deceptiveness of appearances is highlighted by Madame Forestier's necklace, which appears to be made of diamonds but is actually nothing more than costume jewellery. The fact that it comes from Madame Forestier's jewellery box gives it the illusion of richness and value; had Monsieur Loisel suggested that Mathilde wear fake jewels, she surely would have scoffed at the idea, just as she scoffed at his suggestion to wear flowers. Furthermore, the fact that Madame Forestier—in Mathilde's view, the epitome of class and wealth—has a necklace made of fake jewels suggests that even the wealthiest members of society pretend to have more wealth than they actually have. Both women are ultimately deceived by appearances: Madame Forestier does not tell Mathilde that the diamonds are fake, and Mathilde does not tell Madame Forestier that she has replaced the necklace. The fact that the necklace changes—unnoticed—from worthless to precious suggests that true value is ultimately dependent on perception and that appearances can easily deceive.

The Danger of Martyrdom

Mathilde's perception of herself as a martyr leads her to take unwise, self-serving actions. The Loisels live, appropriately, on the Rue des Martyrs, and Mathilde feels she must suffer through a life that is well beneath what she deserves. Unable to appreciate any aspect of her life, including her devoted husband, she is pained by her feeling that her beauty and charm are being wasted. When Mathilde loses the necklace and sacrifices the next ten years of her life to pay back the debts she incurred from buying a replacement, her feeling of being a martyr

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intensifies. She undertakes the hard work with grim determination, behaving more like a martyr than ever before. Her beauty is once again being wasted; this work eventually erases it completely. Her lot in life has gotten worse, and Mathilde continues to believe she has gotten less than she deserves, never acknowledging the fact that she is responsible for her own fate. Her belief in her martyrdom is, in a way, the only thing she has left. When Madame Forestier reveals that the necklace was worthless, Mathilde's sacrifices also become worthless, and her status as a martyr—however dubious—is taken away entirely. At the end of the story, Mathilde is left with nothing.

Notes You can read "The Necklace" as a story about greed, but you can also read it as a story about pride. Mathilde Loisel is a proud woman. She feels far above the humble circumstances (and the husband)...

Whereas Mathilde sees herself as a martyr but is actually very far from it, Monsieur Loisel himself is truly a martyr, constantly sacrificing his desires and, ultimately, his well-being for Mathilde's sake. He gives up his desire for a gun so that Mathilde can buy a dress, and he uncomplainingly mortgages his future to replace the necklace Mathilde loses. Forced to sacrifice his happiness and years of his life to accommodate Mathilde's selfish desires, he is the one who truly becomes a martyr.

The Perceived Power of Objects

Mathilde believes that objects have the power to change her life, but when she finally gets two of the objects she desires most, the dress and necklace, her happiness is fleeting at best. At the beginning of "The Necklace," we get a laundry list of all the objects she does not have but that she feels she deserves. The beautiful objects in other women's homes and absence of such objects in her own home make her feel like an outsider, fated to envy other women. The things she does have—a comfortable home, hot soup, a loving husband—she disdains. Mathilde effectively relinquishes control of her happiness to objects that she does not even possess, and her obsession with the trappings of the wealthy leads to her perpetual discontent. When she finally acquires the dress and necklace, those objects seem to have a transformative power. She is finally the woman she believes she was meant to be—happy, admired, and envied. She has gotten what she wanted, and her life has changed accordingly. However, when she loses the necklace, the dream dissolves instantly, and her life becomes even worse than before. In reality, the power does not lie with the objects but within herself.

In contrast to Mathilde, Madame Forestier infuses objects with little power. Her wealth enables her to purchase what she likes, but more important, it also affords her the vantage point to realize that these objects are not the most important things in the world. She seems casual about, and even careless with her possessions: when Mathilde brazenly requests to borrow her striking diamond necklace, she agrees. And later, when Mathilde informs her that the necklace in her possession is actually extremely valuable, she seems more rattled by the idea that Mathilde has sacrificed her life unnecessarily. The fact that Madame Forestier owned fake jewels in the first place suggests that she understands that objects are only as powerful as people perceive them to be. For her, fake jewels can be just as beautiful and striking as real diamonds if one sees them as such.

Motifs

Coveting

Throughout "The Necklace," Mathilde covets everything that other people have and she does not. Whereas Monsieur Loisel happily looks forward to have hot soup for dinner, Mathilde

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thinks only of the grandness of other homes and lavish table settings that she does not own. When Monsieur Loisel obtains an invitation for a party, she covets a new dress so that she can look as beautiful as the other wives, and also jewellery so that she does not look poor in comparison to them. She is so covetous of Madame Forestier's wealth that she cannot bear to visit her, but she overcomes her angst when she needs to borrow jewellery for the party; there, her coveting is briefly stated because she gets to take one of the ornaments home with her. After the party, she covets the fur coats the other women are wearing, which highlight the shabbiness of her own wraps. This endless coveting ultimately leads to Mathilde's downfall and, along the way, yields only fleeting happiness. It is so persistent, however, that it takes on a life of its own—Mathilde's coveting is as much a part of her life as breathing.

Symbols

The Necklace

The necklace, beautiful but worthless, represents the power of perception and the split between appearances and reality. Mathilde borrows the necklace because she wants to give the appearance of being wealthy; Madame Forestier does not tell her up front that the necklace is fake, perhaps because she, too, wants to give the illusion of being wealthier than she actually is. Because Mathilde is so envious of Madame Forestier and believes her to be wealthy, she never doubts the necklace's authenticity—she expects diamonds, so diamonds are what she perceives. She enters willingly and unknowingly into this deception, and her complete belief in her borrowed wealth allows her to convey an appearance of wealth to others. Because she believes herself rich for one night, she becomes rich in others' eyes. The fact that the necklace is at the centre of the deception that leads to Mathilde's downfall suggests that only trouble can come from denying the reality of one's situation.

Realism

Maupassant, like his mentor, Flaubert, believed that fiction should convey reality with as much accuracy as possible. He strived for objectivity rather than psychological exploration or romantic descriptions, preferring to structure his stories and novels around clearly defined plot lines and specific, observable details. However, he argued that calling fiction "realistic" was not correct—every work of fiction, he believed, was an illusion, a world created by a writer to convey a particular effect to readers. He was faithful above all to the facts and believed that close, focused observation could reveal new depths and perspectives to even the most common, unremarkable aspects of life. "The Necklace" clearly demonstrates Maupassant's fixation with facts and observations. Rather than explore Mathilde's yearning for wealth or unhappiness with her life, Maupassant simply tells us about her unhappiness and all the things she desires. At the end of the story, he provides no moral commentary or explanation about Mathilde's reaction to Madame Forestier's shocking revelation; he simply reports events as they happen. There is no pretense, idealizing, or artifice to Maupassant's prose or treatment of his characters.

Realism began in France in the mid nineteenth century and rejected the tenets from the romantic movement that came before it, a literary movement that emphasized the idealization of characters rather than realistic portrayal of them. Realist literature often focused on middle-class life—such as the tragic lives of Mathilde and her husband—and was most concerned with portraying actions and their consequences with little or no subjectivity. Social factors and cultural environment are often powerful forces in realist literature, as are elements of rationalism and scientific reasoning. Flaubert was one of the earliest practitioners of realism, as typified by his novels Madame Bovary (1857) and Sentimental Education (1869). Realism was also an influential artistic school that included French painters such as Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, and Éduard Manet.

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The Surprise Ending and Irony

"The Necklace" is most famous for its "whip-crack" or "O. Henry" ending. O. Henry, who wrote during the late 1800s, was famous for his twist endings that turned stories on their heads. In "The Necklace," the surprise ending unhinges the previously implied premise of the story. Until this point, the reader has been able to interpret Mathilde's ten years of poverty as penance for her stolen night of pleasure at the party and for carelessly losing the borrowed necklace. The ending shatters that illusion, revealing that the ten years of misery were unnecessary and could have been avoided if only Mathilde had been honest with Madame Forestier. Losing the necklace had seemed to be Mathilde's fatal mistake, but it was actually Mathilde's failure to be truthful with Madame Forestier that sealed her fate. This shocking realization sheds new light on the previous events and suggests that Mathilde's future—even though her debts are now repaid—will be none too rosy.

The horrible irony of the fact that the Loisels spent years paying off a replacement for what was actually a worthless necklace is just one instance of irony evident in "The Necklace." Also ironic is the fact that Mathilde's beauty, which had been her only valued asset, disappears as a result of her labour for the necklace. She had borrowed the necklace to be seen as more beautiful and winds up losing her looks completely. Perhaps the most bitter irony of "The Necklace" is that the arduous life that Mathilde must assume after losing the necklace makes her old life—the one she resented so fully—seem luxurious. She borrows Madame Forestier's necklace to give the appearance of having more money than she really does, only to then lose what she does have. She pays doubly, with her money and looks, for something that had no value to begin with.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Mathilde was

   (*a*) Pretty (*b*) Plain

   (*c*) Dull (*d*) Dumb

   (*e*) Unsocial

2. Mathilde's mind dwelled on "quiet ....."

   (*a*) Moments (*b*) Vestibules

   (*c*) Libraries (*d*) Films

   (*e*) Books

3. Mathilde's friend was from her ..... days.

   (*a*) Nursery (*b*) Childcare

   (*c*) Grammar school (*d*) High school

   (*e*) Convent

4. Who said, "You ought to have brought it back sooner, for I might have needed it."?

   (*a*) First Jeweler (*b*) M. Ramponneau

   (*c*) Mme. Forestier (*d*) M. Loisel

   (*e*) Mme. Loisel

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5. Who said, "At most they were worth five hundred francs!"?

(*a*) The First Jeweler (*b*) The Second Jeweler

(*c*) Mme. Forestier (*d*) Mme. Loisel

(*e*) M. Loisel

2.6 Important Explanations from the Text

(i) *Frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privation and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchant s counter thirty-six thousand francs.*

Explanation: These lines appear close to the end of the story, marks the beginning of the Loisels plunge into poverty. Doomed to work for years to pay off his many loans, Monsieur Loisel nonetheless buys the replacement necklace so that Mathilde does not have to admit to her wealthy friend that she lost the original. Without complaining and with only this sick feeling in his gut, Monsieur Loisel faces the bleak future and moves forward. Unlike Mathilde, who cannot see the consequences of her actions and is oblivious to the sacrifices that her husband has made on her behalf, Monsieur Loisel can see clearly what is in store. This passage reveals the extent of his love for Mathilde—he knows he is giving up everything for her, and it has all been for a goal he never understood. Where Mathilde is selfish, Monsieur Loisel is selfless, and this purchase is his ultimate sacrifice.

(ii) *What would have happened if she had never lost those jewels? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed to ruin or to save!*

Explanation : The above lines occurred near the end of the story, when Mathilde day-dreams during her housecleaning. When Mathilde imagines the night of the party, she idealizes it, even though this event led to her downfall. She seems to regret nothing about the night except losing the necklace, and she fails to realize that it was her desire to appear to be someone other than herself that ultimately ruined her. Despite her hardships, Mathilde has failed to learn from her mistakes. Instead of asking herself what would have happened if she hadn't lost the jewels, she should be asking herself what would have happened if she hadn't borrowed them in the first place. Mathilde believes that life is fickle, but it is she herself who has acted capriciously and brought about her own dire fate. Shortly after her reverie, she meets Madame Forestier again and learns that the necklace had been worthless. Had she simply told Madame Forestier she lost the necklace, she would have learned right away that it was costume jewellery and would not have sacrificed everything to buy a replacement. Truly, little would have been needed to save Mathilde.

(iii) *She danced madly, ecstatically, drunk with pleasure, with no thought for anything, in the triumph of her beauty, in the pride of her success, in a cloud of happiness made up of this universal homage and admiration, of the desires she had aroused, of the completeness of a victory so dear to her feminine heart.*

Explanation : These lines appear near the middle of the story, during the party, when Mathilde is happier than she had ever been or ever would be again. Mathilde has schemed and strived to get to this moment: she wheedled money from Monsieur Loisel so that she could buy a new dress and borrowed jewels from Madame Forestier so that she would not look poor among the other women. And her angling has been successful—she is greatly admired at the party, and all the men want to dance with her. This is the moment for which she has been born. In this passage, her happiness is absolute. There is no thought of the past, nor any thought of the party's end, when she will return to her ordinary life. In the days that follow, she and Monsieur

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Loisel will be plunged into deeper poverty than they have ever known; but for now, she has immersed herself completely in the illusion of wealth. In her expensive dress for which her husband had to sacrifice, and in the necklace that does not even belong to her, she is filling the role she believes she deserves. In this moment, nothing else matters.

2.7 Summary

- "The Necklace" is a short story that gives an important moral. You should always be grateful for what you have, as things can always be worse. The narrator introduces us to a girl. We don't know her name yet, but apparently she's charming, attractive, and, believes that she should have been born into a rich family. Instead she wound up in a family of "employees" and ended up marrying a "little clerk" in Department of Education. Our ordinary girl is convinced that she's meant for the extraordinary life of a fabulously rich girl. She hates her own humble surroundings and spends her time dreaming about fancy tapestries and tall footmen. While her husband slurps his stew she imagines grand banquets.
- A life of luxury is all the girl wants – it's what she's made for. But sadly, she doesn't lead the luxurious life of which she dreams. Consequently, she spends all her days weeping and feeling sorry for herself. One evening, the girl's husband comes in with a large envelope. She tears it open to find that she and her husband – M. and Mme. ("Monsieur and Madame) Loisel – have been invited to a fancy party at the Minister of Education's palace. Her husband can't wait to see her reaction. Mme. Loisel is not happy about this. She's got nothing to wear. This is enough to send her into tears.
- M. Loisel feels awful, and asks his wife, Mathilde, how much a simple, pretty dress for the ball would cost. Mathilde stops to think it over—how much can she ask for before her husband flips out—and at last tells him four hundred francs would probably do it. M Loisel agrees to give Mathilde four hundred francs. There goes that new gun he'd been saving for.
- The date of the party approaches, and Mathilde is in a bad mood again. This time it's jewels: she doesn't have any to wear over her dress. M. Loisel suggests she wear flowers, but Mathilde will have none of that. M. Loisel suggests that Mathilde borrow some jewels from her rich friend Mme. Forestier. Now there's an idea.
- The next day, Mathilde visits Mme. Forestier and tells her about her situation. Mme. Forestier brings out a big box of jewels and tells Mathilde to pick whatever she wants. Mathilde isn't satisfied with anything she sees, but then Mme. Forestier brings her another box containing a spectacular diamond necklace. Mathilde is beside herself. It's the only thing she wants! Mme. Forestier agrees to let her borrow it.
- The evening of the party arrives, and Mathilde is a smash hit. All the men—including the Minister—notice her. She's in the heaven. Her husband, meanwhile, has also been having a great time: he's been off dozing in a corner since midnight. When it's four o'clock and at last time to go, M. Loisel brings the coats. But Mathilde is self-conscious: her coat is so shabby compared to the rest of her appearance. So she dashes off into the street to avoid being seen.
- M. Loisel follows Mathilde into the streets, and they spend a long time wandering around, shivering, and looking for a carriage. At last they find one and head back home, glumly. Mathilde doesn't want to go back to her ordinary life, and M. Loisel doesn't want to get up for work at 10 am. As soon as they enter the house, Mathilde

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rushes to a mirror to see herself all decked-out one last time. But the diamond necklace is missing. She screams.

- M. Loisel wants to know what the matter is, and Mathilde tells him. They search frantically through her dress and coat for the necklace, but it's nowhere to be found. The Loisels review all the places they've been to figure out where the necklace could have been lost, and M. Loisel decides it must have been left in the cab. But unfortunately, neither of them has the cab number.
- M. Loisel goes back out in search of the necklace, and returns at 7 am with nothing. He spends all of the next day searching, visiting the police HQ, the cab company, and still has nothing. Mathilde, meanwhile, spends the day stuck in a chair, too traumatized to do anything. When he returns, M. Loisel tells Mathilde to write to Mme. Forestier to say that they broke the clasp of the necklace and are having it fixed. They need to buy more time.
- A week passes, and still no sign of the necklace. M. Loisel, who already looks five years older, decides they have no choice but to replace it. He and Mathilde go to see the jeweller whose name was on the necklace box to see about a replacement. The jeweller says that he did not sell the necklace, just the case. M. and Mme. Loisel start going from jeweler to jeweller, hoping to find a necklace just like the one they remember.
- At last they find one in a jewellery store at the Palais Royale. There is just one problem: It's forty thousand francs (thirty-six thousand after bargaining), which is a ton of money. M. Loisel asks the jeweller to hold the necklace for them a few days. It turns out that M. Loisel has only 18,000 francs to his name, in the form of his inheritance from his father. All the rest of the money to buy the necklace he has to get by taking out loans.
- So he takes out enough loans to pay for the necklace—and to ensure that his life will be ruined forever—and then goes back to the jeweller's to buy it. Mathilde takes the replacement necklace to Mme. Forestier, who's miffed that she didn't return her necklace sooner. Mathilde's worried she'll notice the substitution. Mme. Forestier does not open the box, and does not see the substitution.
- Now Mathilde and M. Loisel are poor. They have to dismiss the maid and move into an attic. Mathilde starts to do the housework, and run the errands, haggling at stores over every cent. M. Loisel works two night jobs. This goes on for ten years, until all the interest on the Loisels' loans is paid. Mathilde is now a rough, hard woman, and her looks are ruined. She occasionally thinks of how her life might have been different if she hadn't lost the necklace…
- One Sunday, Mathilde goes for a stroll on the Champs Elysées (main street of Paris that you see in all the movies), and notices a beautiful young-looking woman walking with her child. It's Mme. Forestier, who hasn't aged one day. Mathilde decides it's time to tell her everything that happened. When Mathilde greets Mme. Forestier by her first name, Mme. Forestier does not recognize her former friend, because she looks so different. She gives a cry of surprise when Mathilde reveals who she is. Mathilde tells Mme. Forestier that her life's been hard, and all on account of her. Mme. Forestier doesn't understand. Mathilde explains that she'd lost the diamond necklace, but replaced it, and has spent the last ten years paying for the replacement. (Mme. Forestier apparently hadn't noticed the difference). Mme. Forestier grabs Mathilde by the hands, shaken. Her diamond necklace, she tells Mathilde, was a fake. It was worth at most five hundred francs.

Notes

2.8 Keywords

Workmanship : Skill - craft - art - craftsmanship

Horrible irony : Witty language used to convey insults or scorn.

Sacrifice : The act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage, especially the ritual slaughter of an animal or a person.

2.9 Review Questions

1. Why did Guy de Maupassant entitle the story "The Necklace"?
2. Are there conflicts (physical, moral, intellectual, or emotional) in the story? How are they introduced? Are they ever resolved?
3. The Necklace is an important symbol. What other symbols do you see? How and why are these symbols important?
4. Do you find the characters likable (or detestable)? Does your opinion of the characters change substantially through the story?
5. Was the story ending unexpected? How? Why?
6. What is the central/primary purpose of the story? Is the purpose important or meaningful?
7. What are some of the themes that Guy de Maupassant wrote about with this story? Do the themes affect the plot? Characters? How? Why?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*a*) 2. (*b*) 3. (*e*) 4. (*c*)
5. (*c*)

2.10 Further Readings

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Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

Notes

Unit 3: Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Martin Luther King's letter from Birmingham Jail;
- Make analysis of King's letter.

Introduction

As early as in May 1962 Birmingham minister and SCLC member Fred Shuttles worth had suggested that the SCLC ally with his own organization, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, to protest conditions in Birmingham. Birmingham was the wealthiest city in Alabama, and a bastion of segregation. The mayor was a segregationist and the police commissioner, Eugene "Bull" Conner was known for his hostile and sometimes violent treatment of blacks. The Governor of the state was George Wallace, who had won office with promises of "segregation forever."

In Birmingham between 1957 and 1962 seventeen black churches and homes had been bombed, including the home of Shuttles worth, who campaigned actively for civil rights. Although the population of Birmingham was 40% African American, there seemed little hope for a political solution to the racial divide: of 80,000 registered voters, only 10,000 were black.

King did not adopt Shuttles worth's suggestion until early 1963, but once he did, he treated it as a major campaign. In March King, along with Ralph Abernathy and a few other SCLC organizers, set up headquarters in a room at a motel in one of Birmingham's black neighbourhoods. They began recruiting volunteers for protest rallies and giving workshops in nonviolent techniques. Initially King head scheduled the protests to begin in time to disrupt Easter season shopping,

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giving them economic bite. He postponed his plans, however, to prevent them from affecting the local mayoral election, in which Bull Conner was a candidate.

The campaign began on 3 April with lunch-counter sit-ins. On 6 April, protestors marched on City Hall, and forty-two people were arrested. Demonstrations occurred each day thereafter. While the jails filled with peaceful blacks, King negotiated with white businessmen, whose stores were losing business due to the protests. Although some of these businessmen were willing to consider desegregating their facilities and hiring African Americans, City officials held fast to segregationist policies. On 10 April, these officials obtained an injunction prohibiting the demonstrations. Unlike the injunction in Albany, Georgia, however, this one came from a state court, not a federal one. King felt comfortable violating such an injunction, on the grounds of adhering to the federal laws with which it was at odds.

Getting the other leaders of the campaign to violate the injunction, however, took some convincing by King, especially as many of the clergy felt bound to be in the pulpit–and not in jail–on the following Sunday, which was Easter. But King succeeded in persuading them to his cause, and personally led a march on Good Friday, 12 April. All protestors were quickly arrested. Birmingham police separated King and Abernathy, placing each in solitary confinement, and denying each man his rightful phone-calls to the outside world.

Disturbed by the unprecedented silence from her husband, Coretta Scott King called the White House. Her call was returned by Robert Kennedy and then by the President himself. The Kennedy Administration sent FBI agents to Birmingham, and King promptly received more hospitable treatment. Moreover, this intervention by Kennedy gave the movement greater momentum.

King spent eight days in his cell. During that time he composed his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." The letter was ostensibly conceived in response to a letter that had recently run in a local newspaper, which had claimed that the protests were "unwise and untimely"; however, King also quite deliberately wrote his letter for a national audience. The letter reveals King's strength as a rhetorician and his breadth of learning. It alludes to numerous secular thinkers, as well as to the Bible. It is passionate and controlled, and was subsequently appropriated by many writing textbooks as a model of persuasive writing. At the time, it gave a singular, eloquent voice to a massive, jumbled movement.

Once King was released from jail, the protests assumed a larger scale and a more confrontational character. At the suggestion of SCLC member Jim Bevel, the organizers began to recruit younger protestors. They visited high schools, to train youth in non-violent tactics. The method was dangerous—kids could get hurt—but also potentially very symbolically powerful: children were the beneficiaries of the movement; they represented the movement's hope for the future.

On 2 May King addressed a young crowd at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Afterward they marched downtown, singing "We Shall Overcome," and nearly a thousand youths were arrested. The next day, more young people had arrived to replenish the ranks, and another march occurred. By this point, the situation had become overwhelming for Bull Conner, whose jails were full. On 3 May he had his forces blast the young protestors with fire-hoses, and released attack dogs against them. It was these acts of violence–broadcast on national television–that pricked the national conscience, and marked a turning point not only in Birmingham but also in the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. Telegrams flooded the White House conveying outrage, and it became clear that the Kennedy Administration would have to confront civil rights issues more directly.

In a day or two the protests had become so massive and volatile that the City was willing to negotiate. It listened to the demands of the SCLC, and set a schedule for the desegregation of lunch counters and other facilities. It also promised to confront the issue of inequality in

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hiring practices, to grant amnesty to the arrested demonstrators, and to create a bi-racial committee for the reconciliation of differences.

As had happened in Montgomery, violence followed the concessions. Whites bombed black homes and churches, and blacks retaliated with mob violence. King's activities in Birmingham, therefore, included a final stage, during which he patrolled the city, speaking wherever people had gathered; he implored African Americans to answer violence only with peace.

While changes in local policies constituted the Birmingham campaign's immediate outcome, the effort's long-term effects were felt nation-wide. In the weeks that followed, tensions flared, and protests commenced in scores of Southern cities. King's fame as a civil rights leader was redoubled. And on 11 June, President Kennedy voiced his commitment to federal civil rights legislation. He had been holding off, preoccupied by the Cold War, but Birmingham had pressed the issue. Kennedy's commitment culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was signed into law by Lyndon Johnson after Kennedy's assassination. The act mandated federally what had in Birmingham been won locally: a white commitment to desegregation and equal employment opportunities. It also gave the federal government power to enforce desegregation laws in schools by withholding funds from non-compliant districts.

3.1 Triumphs and Tragedies

On 28 August 1963 roughly 250,000 people, three quarters of them black, marched in Washington D.C., from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial, where they listened to speeches by America's civil rights leaders, including King. Officially called the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," the event was a major success, as the preceding Birmingham campaign had been, and, like that campaign, contributed to the atmosphere in which federal civil rights legislation could pass.

The planning of the rally had been a group effort, involving A. Phillip Randolph, King, James Farmer of CORE, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, John Lewis of SNCC, and Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women. Bayard Rustin became national coordinator. The plan initially upset the Kennedy Administration, which feared riots would result, and thus endanger the civil rights legislation that had recently come before Congress. Consequently, the Administration became involved in the planning, editing the content of the SNCC speaker's speech, inviting white organizations to participate, and thereby successfully preventing the outbreak of violence. This involvement led some militant blacks to consider the march an inauthentic event; Nation of Islam spokesman Malcolm X dismissed it altogether.

Attendance of the march exceeded the expectations of its planners: they had counted on 100,000 and got a quarter of a million. At the rally, King was the last speaker to address the marchers, and he delivered the most famous speech of his career. Impassioned, rhythmic, and clear, King described his hopes for the future:

Did u know? Eugene "Bull" Conner was the Police Commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 when protests led by Fred Shuttlesworth, King, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference brought the city to a halt. Conner's use of fire-hoses and attack-dogs to suppress peaceful protestors was televised nationally; his violence thus served, as King put it, "to subpoena the conscience of the nation."

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I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children one day will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountains of despair the stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing we will be free one day.

The speech aired on national television, reaching millions of Americans, including the President, who watched from the White House. It aided the Civil Rights Movement by providing a clear articulation of the hopes and wishes behind actions that often seemed chaotic. Even on television, King was a speaker with tremendous presence.

But the joy of the Birmingham and Washington victories was tempered by murders throughout the South. In Mississippi on 12 May, Medgar Evers, a friend of King and an active NAACP member, was shot dead at the door to his home. On 15 September at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, from which King had led marches during the spring campaign, four little black girls died when a bomb exploded. And on 22 November, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. These tragedies grounded all the movement's victories in a feeling of solemnity and necessity.

Nevertheless, more victories came. In January 1964, King appeared again on the cover of Time, this time as the magazine's "Man of the Year." During the summer, King spoke in East and West Germany, and met the Pope. He also campaigned for Johnson's re-election, against Johnson's very conservative Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater. In July, Johnson invited King to the White House when he signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which King had helped to precipitate with the Birmingham campaign. The meeting reassured King about Johnson's priorities.

King's SCLC activities that year took him to St. Augustine, Florida, early in the summer. There, protestors attempting to integrate the town were suffering the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. Four people had died in bombings, and the Klan was organizing mobs to attack civil rights workers when they came to segregated sites. King, Abernathy, and others were arrested for attempting to eat at a whites-only restaurant, but King left jail early to receive an honorary degree from Yale University. His absence hurt the campaign in St. Augustine. An injunction was soon passed banning marches, and the federal government refused to intervene. The city thus became the site of another of SCLC's unsuccessful actions.

Also fraught with violence and mixed results was that summer's voter- registration campaign in Mississippi, known as "Freedom Summer." "Freedom Summer" involved cooperation between SCLC, SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP, which together pushed to register as many blacks as possible. The murder of three civil rights workers, under suspicious circumstances involving local police, tainted the campaign. And when King initiated a march to protest the atmosphere of hostility and violence, the police halted the event with tear gas and rifle butts.

King's fame reached its apex in October of that year, when he was informed that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize for 1964. On 10 December the Nobel Committee honoured him at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway. King announced that he accepted the honour on behalf of the Civil Rights Movement, to which he would give all $54,000 of the prize money. And by early 1965 the Nobel Prize Laureate was back in a jail cell in the southern United States.

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3.2 Selma

Early in 1965 Lyndon Johnson believed Southern states needed time to absorb the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with its comprehensive ban on segregation, before any further action could be taken. King, however, believed a second bill was necessary to secure voting rights for African Americans. Toward this end he decided to launch a major SCLC voter-registration drive. SCLC member Jim Bevel suggested the drive take place in Selma, Alabama, where an unsuccessful SNCC voter-registration drive had been going on for months.

Selma was the county seat of Dallas County in the heart of Alabama's black belt. It provided everything that made a media event: a segregationist mayor, a Klan—affiliated police chief, and a very low percentage of blacks registered to vote. Of 30,000 people, slightly more than half were black, only 350 blacks were registered. And blacks who had tried recently to register had been deflected by slow service, odd courthouse hours, excessively difficult literacy tests, and, of course, the threat of violence.

King first visited Selma with other SCLC members in January 1965, shortly after he returned from Oslo, Norway. Early protests were small in number, and resulted in arrests, both in Selma and in nearby towns. On 1 February King and Ralph Abernathy led a march of about 250 people to the Selma Courthouse to protest slow voter-registration. Both King and Abernathy were arrested and spent five days in jail. During that time Malcolm X visited Selma. Although he did not meet King, he wished his best to King through King's wife before departing to engagements elsewhere. Shortly thereafter, Malcolm X was assassinated, and this visit, more supportive of King than earlier encounters, reflected the two leaders' partial reconciliation at the end of Malcolm X's life.

The Selma campaign became bloody on the evening of 18 February when a protest march headed for the jail of the town of Marion was attacked by a mob of whites. The streetlights shut off and violence commenced in the dark. A young black man, Jimmy Lee Jackson, was shot, and died eight days later.

On 5 March King flew to Washington to encourage Johnson to introduce a Voting Rights Bill. Johnson declined, and King immediately announced plans for a massive march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama's capital, which was 54 miles away. Governor George Wallace issued an order prohibiting the march, but the SCLC proceeded, though King did not lead the march himself.

On 7 March, over 500 people began walking up the four-lane highway toward Montgomery. When they reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, which crossed the Alabama River, they encountered 60 State troopers, some cavalry, and the sheriff of the town. Civilian whites also stood by. The authorities ordered the crowd to disperse, but it refused. Moments later, the troopers began attacking the protestors with teargas, clubs, whips, and electric cattle prods, while the white spectators yelled encouragement. By the time the scuffle had ended, sixteen people had to be hospitalized, and at least fifty others were injured. As in Birmingham, reporters captured images that were subsequently broadcast nationally. These images inspired protests in Detroit, Chicago, Toronto, New Jersey, and other cities, and caught the attention of the White House.

King announced plans for a second march, which he would lead himself. This time Wallace obtained a federal injunction against it, but, despite this, and despite the admonition of the Attorney General, King stuck to his word. About 1500 people participated in the second march, more than half of them white. Clergypersons from around the country had rallied in support, and clergypersons constituted almost a third of the crowd. When the march reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, it again confronted State police. This time King ordered the protestors to disperse, a decision that would draw criticism from many fellow civil rights activists.

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That night, back in Selma, a white Unitarian minister from Boston, James Reeb, who had marched that day, was murdered by Klansmen when he emerged from a black-run restaurant. This tragedy produced just the right amount–and just the right kind–of publicity to push the Selma campaign to a level of critical influence. In Washington, thousands of religious leaders picketed the White House. On 15 May, in a televised address to a joint session of Congress, Johnson compared events in Selma to events in Lexington and Concord during the Revolutionary War, and at Appomattox during the Civil War. He then proceeded to unveil his Voting Rights Bill to legislators and the nation.

Meanwhile, in Alabama, the federal injunction was lifted, and Johnson sent four thousand troops to accompany a third—this time successful–march to Montgomery. On 24 March, the protest reached Montgomery, and culminated in a rally on the capitol steps, from which King addressed a crowd of 25,000. The crowd included Rosa Parks, as well as celebrities Harry Belafonte, Leonard Bernstein, Billy Eckstine, Nina Simone, and Sammy Davis, Jr. But the joy of the day did not go untempered: that night a white woman, who was driving protestors back to Selma, was shot dead.

As Birmingham had led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Selma led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which Johnson signed into law in August. The legislation prohibited the kind of tactics that had been used in Selma to hinder black voter registration (deliberately slow service, odd courthouse hours, excessively difficult literacy tests, etc.) and gave the federal government more power to police local instances of abuse. Insofar as federal legislation was concerned, Selma marked the final stage of the Civil Rights Movement. It was the last major gain obtained by non-violent direct action. After the Selma victory, King changed his focus.

3.3 Final Years

Five days after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became law, the black neighbourhood of Watts in south central Los Angeles, California, erupted in riots. Police brutality and poor living conditions provoked the uprising, which ultimately took 34 lives, destroyed 209 buildings, and led to over 4000 arrests. King visited the city on 17 August, condemning the violence, but emphasizing the validity of its causes. After Selma, and encouraged by Watts, King turned his attention to Northern and Western cities, which suffered a kind of racial tension that his victories in the South had not relieved.

Late in 1965, he and the SCLC chose Chicago as the site for a Northern urban campaign. In February 1966, King rented an apartment in Chicago slums for his family and himself, and began organizing protests against poverty and discrimination in housing and employment. Increasingly his focus was economic: for the Johnson Administration would go no further with federal legislation, and only by securing decent jobs and homes could African Americans escape the kind of conditions that had proven so explosive in Watts.

King planned a massive rally in Chicago for 10 July, 1966, a day he named "Freedom Sunday." Developments in the South, however, took him away from Chicago shortly before the event: in June, a man named James Meredith, who had been the first black student at the University of Mississippi, was shot by whites and seriously wounded while working on a voter-registration drive. The major civil rights organizations–CORE, SNCC, and the SCLC– descended on Mississippi and coordinated a march, called the Meredith March, from the site of the shooting to Jackson, Mississippi.

In Mississippi, however, King sensed divisions within the movement that he had sensed before–indeed, they now seemed to be deepening: members of SNCC considered King's strategies to be decreasingly effective as racial violence increased. This attitude was embodied by Stokely

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Carmichael, the newly elected head of SNCC, who, during the Meredith March, suggested "Black Power" as a rallying cry for the movement. King and the SCLC refused to endorse the slogan, fearing it would alienate white sympathy. For the time being, King and Carmichael smoothed over their differences, but, in the fall, Carmichael, along with Bobby Seale, founded the Black Panther Party, an overtly militant organization. Schisms widened over a disagreement regarding who would speak at the march's concluding rally.

King returned to Chicago in time for Freedom Sunday, at which he addressed a crowd of 45,000 and nailed a list of grievances to the door of City Hall. King urged the city, specifically Chicago's Mayor Daley, to spend more money on public schools, to integrate them, to build low-rent housing, and to support African-American-run banks. Shortly after Freedom Sunday, black youths rioted on Chicago's West Side, leading to the deployment of the National Guard, and suggesting just how limited was King's influence over events in that city; in general, his Chicago campaign was characterized by meagre returns on great investments. Chicago's Operation Breadbasket, led by Jesse Jackson and supported by King, met with only limited success in creating new job opportunities for Chicago blacks. This metropolis of the North resisted tactics that had succeeded in the cities of the South.

In addition to urban economic questions, King turned his attention to the Vietnam War. He had spoken out against the war as early as in 1965, but, as it escalated, as it took an increasingly disproportionate number of young black lives, and as it appeared more and more a war of capitalists against peasants, King became bitterly vocal. On 4 April 1967 at New York's Riverside Church, King delivered his first sermon devoted entirely to the issue of Vietnam. On 15 April he participated in the Spring Mobilization for Peace in New York, an anti-war protest unrelated to the Civil Rights Movement.

King believed the war exported the same spirit of racism and economic exploitation under which African Americans suffered at home. His attack on the Johnson Administration's policies was unequivocal, and angered Johnson, who felt that he had been loyal to King. King's anti-war stance also met with criticism from fellow civil rights leaders, who questioned the wisdom of diverting much-needed attention away from the immediate concerns of African Americans.

The Vietnam War, as well as the conditions in the cities, led King to adopt a belief in a kind of Christian socialism, and to concern himself with campaigns aimed at a redistribution of American wealth. Late in 1967, King announced his plan to organise a Poor People's March on Washington for 22 April 1968. He envisioned a massive rally of the poor of all races, intended to shut down the capital and not desist until adequate reforms were made. Although a version of the event would in fact take place, King would not live to see it.

3.4 Assassination and Legacy

King's interest in a strike of black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1968 reflected his growing concern with economic issues. The workers wanted pay equal to that of whites. Taking time out from planning sessions for the Poor People's March, King flew to Memphis on 28 March to participate in a rally of 6000 people. The presence of Black Panthers in the crowd, however, and the violence they initiated, led King to remove himself and his supporters from the march that day.

King went back to Atlanta briefly for SCLC work, but returned to Memphis in time for a second march, which he hoped would be peaceful. King had stayed at the Holiday Inn during his first visit, but, on account of criticism that those accommodations were lavish, and becuase of security considerations, he checked into the Lorraine Motel in a black neighbourhood closer to the protests.

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On the evening of 4 April, after a pre-dinner organizational meeting, King stepped onto the balcony of his second floor motel room. He talked with friends on the ground below. After a few moments, a loud sound, like that of a firecracker, was heard, and King slammed against the wall behind him. From the rooming-house across the way, a sniper had shot King in the neck and head, and King died within the hour at St. Joseph's Hospital in Memphis.

Notes Shuttles worth was a minister in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, of which he was secretary, began to oversee the protests there that soon gained national attention.

The alleged assassin, James Earl Ray, was apprehended a month later in Heathrow Airport in London. He confessed to the killing, but retracted his confession after he had been imprisoned. There is much speculation that the FBI was involved in King's death.

Upon news of the assassination, riots erupted nation-wide. President Johnson declared 7 April a national day of mourning–but mourning in many places took the form of violence and arson. The number of riots totalled 168; the number of arrests, 3000; the number of injuries, over 20,000; and the number of soldiers called in to restore order, 55,000.

Funeral services were held at Ebenezer Church in Atlanta, which held 750 of the 150,000 people who appeared to pay their last respects. Robert, Ethel, and Jacqueline Kennedy visited Atlanta, as did Richard Nixon. Burgeoning television star Bill Cosby came and spent time with King's children. King was buried near his grandparents in the all-black South View Cemetery.

But King's death did not prevent the realization of his planned protests. Thousands of supporters came from miles around, flooding Memphis and making the sanitation workers' strike a success. That summer, the Poor People's March took place without King, though on a smaller scale than he had imagined. The SCLC and Coretta Scott King continued much of what King had begun.

But King's major legacy was the pieces of federal legislation passed in 1964 and 1965. In his final years, King had failed somewhat to engage the broad-based support he had earlier enjoyed: while the Christian socialist vision of his later period proved too radical to affect white mainstream Americans, his non-violent tactics had remained too peaceful to satisfy the rising tide of black militancy. However, the fact remained that King, more than any other leader, had been responsible for both abstract and concrete achievements of the Civil Rights Movement. King had dreamed and had acted.

Amercian minorities enjoyed an initial flurry of political empowerment in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 began to affect local elections. However, after this progress started to slow, and has remained comparatively sluggish. The "white flight" from cities to suburbs has left behind decaying neighbourhoods with weak tax bases and de facto segregated schools. Affirmative action programmes have come under attack, especially by right-wing politicians. Celebrations of King often downplay his radical economic vision while highlighting his moments of upbeat–and unthreatening–liberal rhetoric. The irony of his treatment as a national hero was perhaps most evident in the establishment of the holiday honouring him–effected as it was by the staunchly anti-communist Reagan Administration.

3.5 Textual Analysis

The spirit of revolutionary change, which has long been disturbing sleeping societies, shakes the core of what Martin Luther King Jr. calls "obnoxious negative peace." King's legacy of

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exceptional devotion to social justice and true peace is manifested in "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Much like the Apostle Paul, an authority that King reference, King writes with conviction and fervor. In his eloquent yet powerful letter King uses several rhetorical devices to make his point that "justice too long delayed, is justice denied." By addressing the clergymen's arguments and appealing to their emotion, logic, and ethos, he demonstrates to them that the time for action is now.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "Letter of Birmingham Jail" as a response to white Alabama clergymen who criticized his action as "unwise and untimely." They published a fierce criticism about King's organization and participation in the protest march against segregation in Birmingham. King's letter does not attempt to persuade the clergymen to side with civil rights activists, but rather to explain to them the need for direct action, open their eyes to the suffering of the Negro community, and that humanity as a whole is interrelated. King also explains the need for tension, though only through non-violent means, a tension that will force society to confront the present social injustice head on. He rejects on being called an outsider not only because he was invited to Birmingham but because humanity has an "inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

Throughout the essay King not only addresses the clergymen's concern such as him being an outsider coming in, the protests being "unwise and timely," but he also anticipates further questions. The clergymen had urge for negotiations, instead of direct action, but King wanted to show that direct action is necessary to reach negotiation. Not only did he make argument for this point but he did by first anticipating questions that they may have such as, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path? "King addresses concerns from the opposition throughout his whole essay such as: "You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws," "You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme." By addressing their concerns in a fair and rational way, he is showing his readers that he gave great thought to their point of view and is taking them seriously.

Jailed under the premise of "disturbing the peace," King responds to fellow religious leaders by laying out the authority by which his group came to Birmingham. He was not only invited here, but he has organizational affiliation with those hosting the demonstration. Not only is there a secular purpose but King also states a divine purpose/authority. In one of his many biblical references he writes: "Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village...so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid." Not only is King responding to an invitation he is following in the footsteps of the prophets, figures that these clergymen respect and are well acquainted with. Aside from biblical authorities King also uses historical figures that have shaped human history and thought. King justifies the need for tension in the Birmingham by linking it to Socrates teaching on the need for tension in the mind so individual can confront half-truths and rise to freedom.

King's many appeals to authorities such as the Supreme Court, Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, and Tillich prove him to not only be a well read man, but one that bases one's opinions on the teachings of superior minds. There is a higher law than what the local authorities of Birmingham dictates; there exists a moral law, a code of ethics that one must judge one's actions by. If the only thing that differentiates right and wrong is legality then what Adolf Hitler did in Germany was legal and what the Hungarian freedom fighters did was illegal in Hungary.

Perhaps one of the most moving passages in this essay is when he described what it is like to be an African American at the time. After 340 years the Negro community is still waiting for their Constitutional rights, still have to "explain to your six-year-old daughter why she

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can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Fun town is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky." There is a need to take action to restore human dignity for no one deserves to be called "nigger" or "boy" as if it were their names. Experiences like this should incur sympathy from everyone let alone men of God, how could anyone stand in silence while human dignity is being debased right in their back yard. Just as the Jews have waited for a promise land and be freed from their oppressors so are all the minorities of America waiting for the promise land of "racial justice." It would strike me to the core to be compared to biblical oppressors such as the Egyptians or Babylonians.

As passionate as King was about social justice and desegregation, he did not let his emotions get the best of him for his letter if not anything else it was logical. He made sure the clergymen understood that their criticism is of great importance to him for he does not waste his time to respond to every criticism. He also wanted them to understand that the protest is not the action of a heated moment but that is well thought out, "We decided to schedule our direct-action program for the Easter season, realizing that, except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change." The idea is to bring pressure to change and to endure brutality even unto non-retaliation.

Obviously, laws are essential to the continuing and orderly function of society. However law can be just and unjust and those that are unjust are contrary to the welfare of a nation's citizens. King gave concrete examples of what a just law is and what an unjust law is and how to tell the difference between them. Through logic he is able to demonstrate how we can balance between the ideas of being obedience to the law and how the law can be wrong. In this way he shows that he is not being contradictory in following the Supreme Court's ruling in 1954 but not the laws in Birmingham.

"Be the change you want to see in the world," these words from Mahatma Gandhi truly describe Martin Luther King. He was the epitome of social justice, of desegregation, and honouring human dignity through non-violent means. He wanted a world with peace so he suffered without retaliating, and he wanted a world that confronted its frailties, so he chose peaceful protests to bring awareness. "Letter from Birmingham Jail," appeals to the logical, intellectual, and human in all of us.

Self Assessment

1. When plans were announced for a march from Selma to Montgomery, who prohibited the event?

   (*a*) Lyndon Johnson (*b*) Eugene "Bull" Conner

   (*c*) Stokely Carmichael (*d*) George Wallace

2. How many federal troops were sent to accompany protestors, the third time they marched from Selma to Montgomery?

   (*a*) 40 (*b*) 400

   (*c*) 4000 (*d*) None

3. During the Selma Campaign, whom did the Ku Klux Klan kill?

   (*a*) A Unitarian minister (*b*) A nun

   (*c*) A Baptist preacher (*d*) A priest

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4. Five days after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became law, where did massive riots erupt?
   (*a*) Watts, California (*b*) Trenton, New Jersey
   (*c*) Detroit, Michigan (*d*) Chicago, Illinois
5. To what city did King move at the beginning of 1966?
   (*a*) Watts, California (*b*) Trenton, New Jersey
   (*c*) Detroit, Michigan (*d*) Chicago, Illinois

3.6 Summary

- In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr. creates a ringing response to a statement by some Alabama clergymen opposing his actions in Birmingham, Alabama. The initial explanation of why King is in Birmingham later becomes the background to an essay justifying King's civil disobedience and explaining the wrongfulness of racial segregation. Throughout the essay, King uses several literary tools which create a powerful tone to complement his strong opinions. He uses comparisons to help the reader understand not only the historical reasons why segregation is wrong, but the costly emotional effects that it has on everyone who experiences it. King also uses realistic examples to show the reader how segregation damages one's character. His terminology creates a clear definition between whites and blacks as segregator and segregated. As shown in this piece, King's skill for expressing his ideas in writing has caused him to be considered one of America's greatest communicators.
- King's use of comparison in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" makes the African-American's plight of segregation seem almost holy. First, King compares his "gospel of freedom" to the gospel of eighth-century prophets and the Apostle Paul. Later, he compares being arrested for his peaceful but illegal actions to the crucifixion of Jesus for his "unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion." King also connects himself to God by implying that above constitutional rights and legal laws are God-given rights, and these rights are the ones that he and his followers are supporting. He states that just laws are laws that "square with the moral law or the law of God."
- King continues this religious connection in his last paragraph, where he refers to blacks who conduct sit-ins as "children of God" who stand up for "the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage." Another comparison is made between King and Socrates, who was condemned for his ideas and forced to drink poison. These comparisons make Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers seem to be fighting an almost divine cause, one that has the support of God and of history.
- King also uses his writing to evoke emotion. Aside from his comparisons to God and Socrates, which may help religious readers better connect to his message, King writes about the emotional suffering that blacks went through due to segregation and prejudice. He responds to whites telling blacks to "wait" for desegregation by mentioning several atrocities committed by whites on blacks, including lynching, drowning, and police brutality.
- He continues on these emotional lines by expressing how children begin to become deeply affected by segregation when they realize that they are considered inferior to whites. King uses specific examples, such as a daughter who finds out that she can't visit an amusement park because it is closed to coloured children, and a son who asks, "Daddy, why do white people treat coloured people so mean?" He shows how the build-up of these feelings in black children eventually turn into hatred for whites when

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he says, "There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair." All of these statements help the reader see just how blacks were disturbed beyond morality and legality. King's use of emotional writing helps readers develop sympathy for the segregated.

- In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King uses specific words to illustrate the division between whites and blacks that was taking place at that time. When writing about the difference between just and unjust laws, King uses contrasting words such as "uplift" and "degrade," "segregator" and "segregated," "superiority" and "inferiority," and "majority" and "minority" to create a clear definition between two kinds of people. He also writes about how, according to Martin Buber, segregation replaces an "I-thou" relationship with an "I-it" relationship. Despite using these clean-cut words, King never outright mentions the two races that represent the segregator and the segregated, but through the use of contrasting terminology in his argument against unjust laws King develops a relationship between whites and blacks that suggests complete oppression and domination. This feeling carries into his argument against the "white moderate," where the reader learns that King believes a white person doing nothing to help desegregation is a white person supporting segregation.
- King's use of comparison, emotional tools, and contrasting terminology—all help the reader to understand the real meaning behind civil disobedience and the fault in segregation. By comparing himself and his followers to biblical and historical figures, King creates a feeling of importance when he discusses the wrongfulness of obeying unjust laws. Through the eyes of two children, King connects the reader emotionally to his cause. Finally, the use of contrasting terminology creates a clear definition between two groups, one the segregator and the other the segregated. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s use of literary tools in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" allows King to reach his readers and help them understand how racial prejudice must be combated.

3.7 Keywords

Black Panthers : The Black Panthers were members of the Black Panther Party, a militant black political organization founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California in 1966. Stokely Carmichael was also closely involved in the group's development. The Party called for black self-defense and demanded equality for blacks in political, economic, and social arenas nation-wide. In their militancy, the Black Panthers differed with King and his non-violent direct action tactics.

Black Power : At a march in 1966 the chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, Stokely Carmichael, used this slogan before a national audience, putting it into currency as a widely used term. "Black Power" came to denote a brand of civil rights activism more militant than that of King, and King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference refused to use or endorse the slogan for fear of alienating white sympathy.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 : The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in employment and in public facilities, and gave the federal government greater power to enforce the desegregation of

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schools. Yet this Act could only pass in the right atmosphere, and the creation of such an atmosphere is generally attributed to one pivotal series of events and their repercussions: the civil rights protests in Birmingham in 1963, and the response of many white Americans to the white-on-black violence they provoked.

Congress of Racial Equality : The first organisation in the Civil Rights Movement systematically to employ non-violent direct action, the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, was founded in Chicago in 1942. In the 1960s, it participated in activism in the South, providing support and supervisions to sit-ins and voter-registration campaigns, often cooperating with King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

3.8 Review Questions

1. How did King's extensive education affect his career as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement?
2. Contrast King's view of America during the last three years of his life with his view during the Birmingham and Selma campaigns.
3. Was King a leader in the right place at the right time, or can his success be attributed to his innate characteristics?
4. Why did some of King's campaigns succeed, and others not?
5. How did King's relationship to the Johnson Administration differ from his relationship to the Kennedy Administration?
6. Toward what audience did King direct his "I Have a Dream" speech? How is this clear from the speech's language?
7. Characterize King's relationship to other leaders and organizations of the Civil Rights Movement.
8. Why was the church an important part of King's work as an activist? What did he gain by working with and through it?
9. What aspects of King's life are emphasized in mainstream America's remembrance of him?
10. If King had not been assassinated, what campaigns might he have organized in the 1970s and 1980s? Would the Civil Rights Movement perhaps fared differently during these years, or, after the victories of the sixties, was deceleration inevitable?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*a*) 2. (*d*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*a*)
5. (*d*)

Notes

3.9 Further Readings

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Unit 4: My Vision for India by APJ Abdul Kalam

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about APJ Abdul Kalam;
- Discuss Kalam's Vision for India.

Introduction

The full name of Dr. Abdul Kalam, one of the former Presidents of India, is Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam. He hails from the southern-most tip of India. He belonged to a very poor family of Rameshwaram in his childhood.

The name of Mr. Kalam's father is Jainulabdeen Marakayar. He was the Panchayat Board President. He was the owner of a few boats which were used to ferry pilgrims between Rameshwaram and Dhanushkody.

Dr. Kalam was the youngest child in the family. He was the only one to do graduation. His brothers and sisters could not even complete their schooling. The poverty of the family can be judged from the fact that once his father had no resources even to pay his fee. Then his sister came to his rescue. She sold her ornaments to enable him doing higher education. Kalam was a typical case of a poor but a determined person in his childhood. As a boy, he had even to sell newspapers. Abdul Kalam had his initial education in Rameshwaram. Later he studied at Schwartz High School, in Ramanathapuram. Subsequently, he moved to St. Joseph's College, Trichi. Though he was not a bright student in terms of the marks that he secured in exams, but he developed an interest in Physics. After completing the B.Sc degree course from St. Joseph's, he joined the Madras Institute of Technology, the best institution for technical education in South India at that time. He specialised in Aeronautical Engineering and became a full-fledged aeronautical engineer after being trained at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bangalore.

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After his college education, Abdul Kalam was keen on joining the Indian Air Force. But his dreams of joining the Indian Air Force were dashed when he just missed to make it to the selected list of candidates. Though he was sad at being unable to join the Indian Air Force, he went ahead and joined the Directorate of Technical Development and Production, DTD & P (Air), as a Senior Scientific Assistant.

Abdul Kalam's job at the DTD & P (Air) became the launching pad for his glorious career in the defence field. After working for some time at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in USA, Abdul Kalam returned to India and helped the country to develop awe some weaponry.

It will be no exaggeration to state that Abdul Kalam is instrumental in firmly establishing India's core competence in missile technology. His efforts, along with that of his dedicated team, took India into the selected club of nations that call themselves super powers.

In his 14-year work-span as the Director of Defence Research and Development Laboratory, he lined up Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Akash and Nag. He completed the long delayed 'Arjun' tank project and also pushed ahead with an indigenous Aircraft 'Kaveri'.

He is one of those few technologists who strive to find multiple uses for what they create. He developed lightweight calipers for the polio-effected, out of the carbon material developed for Agni missile. This material made the caliper one tenth of its original weight of four kilos.

He doesn't favour the import of technology and encourages self-reliant in technology. He says, "Haven't we proved that we can do things with minimum foreign aid? All we need is determination and belief in ourselves."

Dr. Kalam is an extremely simple man. He is above seventy and a bachelor. He is a strict vegetarian and teetotaller. He is a 'work alcoholic' who knows no holidays in the seven day week. He works 18 hours a day. He is fond of music and spends his leisure hours practising the lute (Veena). He is a great lover of books and is a voracious reader of both the 'Bhagvad Gita' and the 'Kuran'. Dr. Kalam quotes, "for great men, religion is a way of making friends, small people make religion a fighting tool".

Dr. Kalam has received many presitgious awards for his distinguished contributions to the defence of the country. He was honoured with Padma Bhushan in 1981 and with the Padma Vibhushan in 1990. He received the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 1997. Dr. Kalam was awarded India's highest Civilian honour, the Bharata Ratna on 25th November, 1997.

He was appointed as the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India and given the rank of Cabinet Minister on 25th November, 1999. He won the Lifetime Contribution Award in Engineering presented by Shri K C Pant, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission on December 8, 2000.

Dr. Kalam was elected as the President of India on 25th July, 2002. It is a great honour for the Indians to see such a great patriot to be the first citizen of our country.

He is a man of vision and wants to see India a fully developed nation by 2020. It is to this end that his book "India 2020 : A Vision for the New Millennium" is focussed.

In his new book "Ignited Minds", he affirms, "Our youth must dream, dream, dream! Convert these dreams into thoughts; and then transform these thoughts into actions. We must think big, having low aim is a sin".

He always asks the teachers and the parents to be role models to the children. He attributes his success to his parents, teachers and the team with which he has been working for the last

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many years. It is a true testimonial to his character, simplicity, wisdom and personal integrity. May he live long to guide the destiny of our country.

4.1 My Vision for India

"Sight is about what lies right in front of us. Vision is what lies ahead" goes the old adage. India is an old civilization and an extremely complex society. Her glorious past, natural beauty, resources, vast size and above all her unique geographical location has always given her the pride of place in the world. With the ups and downs of history it has retained its vibrancy. Yet, due to callousness and lethargy on our part and due to the negative slant of the media here, we as a nation have not been able to attain the status of a developed nation thus far.

In this famous speech delivered in Hyderabad, Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam outlines his three visions for his motherland India and pleads for Indians to be involved in the nation-building process and to make India a developed nation.

First Vision: Freedom

In 3000 years of our history, people from all over the world have come and invaded us, captured our lands and conquered our minds. From Alexander onwards, the Greeks, the Portuguese, the British, the French, the Dutch, all of them came and looted us, took over what was ours. Yet, we have not done this to any other nation. We have not conquered anyone. We have not grabbed their land, their culture, their history and tried to enforce our way of life on them. Why? Because, we respect the freedom of others, and that is the reason for his first vision of Freedom. India got its first vision of this in the Indian Rebellion in the year 1857, when we started the war of Independence. It is this freedom that we must protect and nurture and build on.

That is why my first vision is that of **FREEDOM.** I believe that India got its first vision of this in 1857, when we started the war of independence. It is this freedom that we must protect and nurture and built on. If we are not free, no one will respect us.

Second Vision: Development

My second vision for India is **Development.** For fifty years we have been a developing nation. It is time we see ourselves as a developed nation. We are among top 5 nations of the world in terms of GDP. We have 10 per cent growth rate in most areas. Our poverty levels are falling, our achievements are being globally recognized today. Yet we lack the self-confidence to see ourselves as a developed nation, self reliant and self assured. Isn't this right?

Third Vision: India must stand up to the World

I have a third vision. That India must **STAND UP TO THE WORLD**. Because I believe that unless India stands up to the world, no one will respect us. Only strength respects strength. We must be strong not only as a military power but also as an economic power. Both must go hand-in-hand.

My good fortune was to have work with three great minds. Dr Vikram Sarabhai of the Dept. of space, Professor Satish Dhawan, who succeeded him, and Dr. Brahm Prakash, father of nuclear material. I was lucky to have worked with all three of them closely and consider this the great opportunity of my life.

I see four milestones in my career:

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- **ONE:** Twenty years I spent in ISRO. I was given the opportunity to be the project director for India 's first satellite launch vehicle, SLV3. The one that launched Rohini. These years played a very important role in my life of Scientist.
- **TWO:** After my ISRO years, I joined DRDO and got a chance to be the part of India 's guided missile program. It was my second bliss when Agni met its mission requirements in 1994.
- **THREE:** The Dept. of Atomic Energy and DRDO had this tremendous partnership in the recent nuclear tests, on May 11 and 13. This was the third bliss. The joy of participating with my team in these nuclear tests and proving to the world that India can make it.That we are no longer a developing nation but one of them. It made me feel very proud as an Indian. The fact that we have now developed for Agni a re-entry structure, for which we have developed this new material. A very light material called carbon-carbon.
- **FOUR:** One day an orthopaedic surgeon from Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences visited my laboratory. He lifted the material and found it so light that he took me to his hospital and showed me his patients. There were these little girls and boys with heavy metallic calipers weighing over three kgs., each dragging their feet around. He said to me: Please remove the pain of my patients. In three weeks, we made these Floor reaction Orthosis 300 gram calipers and took them to the orthopaedic center. The children didn't believe their eyes. From dragging around a three kg. load on their legs, they could now move around! Their parents had tears in their eyes. That was my forth bliss!

Why is the media here so negative? Why are we in India so embarrassed to recognize our own strengths, our achievements? We are such a great nation. We have so many amazing success stories but we refuse to acknowledge them. Why? We are the second largest producer of wheat in the world. We are the second largest producer in rice. We are the first in milk production. We are number one in remote sensing satellites. Look at Dr. Sudarshan, he has transferred the tribal village into a self-sustaining, self-driving unit. There are millions of such achievements but our media is only obsessed with the bad news and failures and disasters.

I was in Tel Aviv once and I was reading the Israeli newspaper. It was the day after a lot of attacks and bombardments and deaths had taken place. The Hamas had struck. But the front page of the newspaper had the picture of a Jewish gentleman who in five years had transformed his desert land into an orchid and a granary. It was this inspiring picture that everyone woke up to. The gory details of killings, bombardments, deaths, were inside in the newspaper, buried among other news. In India we only read about death, sickness, terrorism, crime. Why are we so negative?

4.2 Four Milestones in Dr. Kalam's Career

Dr. Kalam says that being the project director for India's first satellite launch vehicle, SLV3, was the first milestone in his career. Second was when Agni met its mission requirements in 1994. Third came the partnership between DRDO and the Dept of Atomic Energy. Removing the pain of little boys and girls in hospital, by replacing heavy metallic callipers weighing over three kg each with 300-gram callipers, was the fourth bliss or milestone of his career.

The Media's Obsession with Bad News, Failures and Disasters

Dr. Kalam wonders how the media in India could be so negative. Giving the example of Dr. Sudarshan, who has transferred the tribal village into a self-sustaining, self-driving unit, Dr. Kalam says that there are millions of such achievements in India but our media is only obsessed with only the bad news and failures and disasters.

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In Tel Aviv, where gory killings, deaths and bombardments take place every now and then, the front page of the newspaper had the picture of a Jewish gentleman who in five years had transformed his desert land into an orchid and a granary. It was this inspiring picture that everyone woke up to.

The Nation's Obsession with Foreign Things

Dr. Kalam is surprised at the people's obsession with foreign things. We want foreign TVs, foreign shirts, foreign technology. There is an obsession for everything that is imported. According to Dr. Kalam, self respect comes only with self-reliance.

4.3 Conformity in Foreign Countries but Detached in Motherland

In India, we the people blame the government for being inefficient, the laws for being too old, the municipality for not picking up the garbage etc. But what do we do about it? In Singapore, you don't throw cigarette butts on the roads. You wouldn't dare to speed beyond 55 mph in Washington and tell the traffic cop about your heavy political connections. You wouldn't spit *paan* on the streets of Tokyo. When the same Indian can respect and conform to a foreign system in other countries, he cannot do that in his own. You will throw papers and cigarettes on the road the moment you touch Indian ground. If you can be an involved and appreciative citizen in an alien country, why cannot you be the same here in India?

4.4 The Easy Way Out: Blame it on the System

We sit back wanting the government to do everything for us, while our contribution is totally negative. We expect the government to clean up but we are not going to stop chucking garbage all over the place, nor are we going to stop to pick up a stray piece of paper and throw it in the bin. We expect the railways to provide clean bathrooms but we are not going to learn the proper use of bathrooms. When it comes to social issues like women, dowry, girl child etc., we make loud drawing room protestations and do the reverse at home.

And for all these negatives on our part, we blame it on the system. The whole system has to change, we seem to justify. For us, the system consists of everyone else except me and YOU. When it comes to making a positive contribution to the system we lock ourselves along with our families into a safe cocoon and wait for a Mr. Clean to come along and work miracles for us, or we leave the country and run away.

Like lazy cowards hounded by our fears we run to America to bask in their glory and praise their system. When New York becomes insecure we run to England. When England experiences unemployment, we take the next flight out to the Gulf. When the Gulf is war struck, we demand to be rescued and brought home by the Indian government. Everybody is out to abuse and rape the country. Nobody thinks of feeding the system, because our conscience is mortgaged to money.

Self Assessment

Choose the correct options

1. Kalam received Ramanujan Award in

   (*a*) 2002 (*b*) 2000

   (*c*) 2003 (*d*) None of these

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2. The Government of India awarded an award in 1998.

   (*a*) Bharat Ratna (*b*) Padma Vibhushan

   (*c*) Veer Savarkar Award (*d*) None of these

3. The Dept. of Atomic Energy and DRDO had recent nuclear tests, on

   (*a*) 11 and 13 May (*b*) 24 and 31 May

   (*c*) 12 and 15 May (*d*) None of these

4. Abdul Kalam received Padam Bhushan Award in:

   (*a*) 1981 (*b*) 1984

   (*c*) 1990 (*d*) 1999

4.5 Summary

- India with its varied incarnations is an old civilization and an extremely complex society. Its glorious past, natural beauty, resources, vast size and above all its unique geographical location have always given its the pride of place in the world. With the ups and downs of history India has retained its vibrancy. My vision of India 2020AD is a visionary's agenda full of hopes and resolve to work towards it.
- The understanding of the historical traditions is very important in order to form a concrete futuristic vision of nation like India. India has a long history and as it is understood presently, it has covered a span of five thousand years since the period of its first known civilization. During all these times a long steam of immigrants, representing different ethnic strains and linguistic families, have merged into its population to contribute to its diversity, richness and vitality. India is probably the only civilization in the world which shows a clear continuity of its several traditions from the times of its earliest known civilization. Even today several levels of social evolution coexist in India and its composite identity has won it the quoted cliché, 'unity in diversity.'
- A country of India's dimension is bound to have its share of problems and failings. However, the vibrant nation sets about overcoming its shortcomings, protecting its culture and enriching the material as well as cultural life of its people. So, obviously I visualize an all around growth and development of India.
- The Indian society of my vision will be different from the present one. Hopefully in the 2020 AD, India will rid itself of the discriminating nature of its caste system. There will be quality in all fields for everyone. There will also not remain some unfortunate customs like dowry system, child labour as well as discrimination against women or weaker sections of the society. I hope the society itself will develop a mechanism to promote the well being of everyone without having the need of an enforcement by law all the time.
- In economic field, I hope India will make great progress. Agriculture will make a rapid advance, generating enough surplus and providing food for everyone. Certainly the industrial development will have a balanced look providing work for everyone and at the same time bringing prosperity and sustained development for our natural resources. And there will be no more rise of population. The most important part of the human resource development is meaningful education for all. I hope by that time India will develop an advanced and relevant education system taking care of the needs of all the aspects of the society. I am sure India by that time will be able to take care of the health needs of all its citizens.

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- Often our political leaders lack 'political will' and work in a petty and partisan manner. Still I am hopeful, by that time democracy will be strengthened in India and it will give rise to true statesmen who will further take ahead my vision of India in AD 2020 and each aspect of the Directive Principles of our Constitution will be fulfilled. Elections till be peaceful and every citizen will exercise his/her franchise fearlessly. By that time no politician or political party will be allowed to exploit caste, religion, language or ethnicity to advance their petty political ambitions.
- For thousands of years India had to beat the burnt of foreign invasions. The fortitude of the Indians has withstood successfully all the onslaughts. Yet it is widely believed that there is no serious strategic thinking or planning in India. In this matter, India is generally inward looking country and this tradition has been shaped by our geography, history, culture and civilization. The otherwise humane and noble pacific image of India is often taken for sheepishness. We do not look ahead or plan ahead our strategic realities. We only react to threats. A few of our unfriendly countries have taken advantage of it by launching a protracted low intensity war on several fronts. I hope that by 2020 India will develop long term defensive strategies.
- In some of the areas like software technology, genetic engineering and space, although India has made rapid advances, we still have to be dependent on the developed nations for several technologies. I have a vision that in coming times, India will emerge as one of the world leaders in science and technology. Our development in this field will also take care of our real needs and will reach to the common people. Our developed industrial and scientific base will also be able to check brain-drain. It will also help in protecting our environment and sustaining our resource base.
- India's policy has always been one of brotherhood and co-existence. yet our borders are surrounded by hostile war-hawks. Unless a nation is able to defend its borders and integrity, all other developments are of no use. We do have several proven instances of internal disturbances. be it Kashmir or the North-East we have dangers all around. I am confident that by 2020 India will be able to build an arsenal and strategy to remove all fears of external attack.
- International relations are not only important for making friends but also significant for trade, security and communication. India will look forward to develop greater economic ties with Russia, South-East Asia, S. Africa, Latin American countries and also in co-operation with China and geo-economic matters. Our country will also hopefully achieve friendly ties with Pakistan.
- Glory of a nation is not complete unless it does well in sports too. I am hopeful that our country will make a great advance in sports winning a number of Olympic medals and international laurels. Sports will be made popular at every stage in India.
- My vision of India in 2020 AD may sound life a dreamer's agenda but given the glories posterity of India and its resilience, it can still come true. And in this task we need the right kind of leaders and solemn commitment on the part of my countrymen.

4.6 Keywords

Onslaught : A fierce or destructive attack.

Futuristic : Characterised by, or expressing a vision of the future.

Notes

4.7 Review Questions

1. Why are we, as a nation so obsessed with foreign things?
2. We want foreign TVs, we want foreign shirts. We want foreign technology. Why this obsession with everything imported? Do we not realize that self-respect comes with self-reliance?
3. Discuss the three visions of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*c*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*a*)

4.8 Further Readings

Books My Vision for India- APJ Abdul Kalam [e-text]

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

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Unit 5: The Thought Fox by Ted Hughes

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5.5 Critical Appreciation

5.6 Summary

5.7 Keywords

5.8 Review Questions

5.9 Further Readings

Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Ted Hughes;
- Discuss the themes and meanings of the Poem *The Thought Fox*;
- Make a critical analysis of the poem.

Introduction

The Thought Fox is written in first person, omniscient narration. You can see this by the way the author is actually involved with the piece, taking a part within the tale told: 'I imagine.....' line 1

This poem has a dramatic monologue effect, and the poet's use of hook lines and intrigue encourages the reader to discover what is in the forest that he tells of. 'Something else is alive Besides the clocks loneliness. And this blank page where my fingers move.'

Here the poet has used enjambment for a pausing effect, and this is a controlled energy, with a vibrant immediacy. His personification of the clock being lonely is hiding a double meaning, the clock being his brain, cognitive thinking.

The Thought Fox is another of his 6 stanza poems each containing the four-line format. In the 2nd stanza the poet uses his poet licence.

'Through the window I see no star.'

This gives the impression that there is only one star, however I think that the one star the he is looking for is the one bright spark of an idea. There is then an air of mystery brought into play with the poet's use of a caesura at the end of 'star' and the next lines.

'Something more near

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Through deeper within the darkness

Is entering the loneliness;

The tone is changed again to a more faster pace as an animal is introduced, a fox.

Hughes has used a term called euphony in line 9 along with alliteration.

'Cold, delicately as the dark snow.....'

A melodious sound comes from the words, something I would associate with snowflakes falling. In the second half of the third stanza, the focus changes quite rapidly, however the affects are subtle.

'Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints in the snow....'

I can see the eyes of the fox now, but I can also see the eyes of the character. The use of repetition is not just for effect, it is telling us something more. The character is trying to remember something and that is the reason for the repetition, and he is working out in his head how it would look on the paper. This is what's known as lateral thought. A way of solving problems by apparently illogical methods, a thought within a thought process. This is where the omniscient narration becomes more clear.

At this point the character knows what is going to happen thanks to the following:

'Between trees, and warily a lame

Shadow lags by stump and in a hollow

Of a body that is bold to come.'

Hughes uses this term, 'warily a lame' as though the animal and the character are unconvinced and the hollow of the body is the space within his brain. Then again in line 16, enjambment is used and causes the tone of the piece to change.

Something is happening, something that poses both fear and excitement.

'Across clearings, an eye,

A widening deepening greenness.....'

Hughes uses select words which rhyme and contain two or three syllables to extend the rhyme and to create a

threatening tone, which creeps upon the words, ready and uncertain for attack.

'Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head'

The shot is released. The tension has climaxed and the thought has entered his head with the violence of an animal. Alliteration features heavily, with the use of the animal's description; the sound is quick and instant like the movement of the fox. In the last two lines of this piece, the ending is controlled and closed, and Hughes draws me back to the beginning two stanzas, making me re-cap on the subject matter past, of the star, the window and the ticking of the clock. Once again, I have gone back full circle to the blank page.

'The window is starless still; the clock ticks....'

The use of caesura for pause is again, deliberate, and I

am reminded of the actions of the animal after the attack,

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and then we have the final kill, the last line is pinnacle.

The prey is dead and so is his thought.

'The page is printed.'

I believe the poem signifies a change of life.

Whilst the poem has a theme of a second event running through it, the poem contains images you cannot actually see; yet we know they exist and happened at the same time. The use of synchronics is a vital addition to the piece. The rules used are formality and imagery, the control of speed, littered with metaphor and simile all to create a deeper picture than the one being initially presented.

Compared to poems like 'Wind' which has a differing focus with Gothic overtone, *The Thought Fox* has a vibrant crispness that contains psychological realism, this is more composing thoughts and words or being visited by a muse, whereas Wind is a poem of an element already trying to change thoughts that have been acted out.

The poet starts the poem with the words that it is a lonely room in a dark night. Everything is quiet so that the tick-tick sound of the clock impresses upon the persona (the "I" in the poem) the darkness, the silence and loneliness. The persona has a blank page before him and his fingers move on it. Outside it is all dark; even the stars are not there in the sky. Yet deep in the darkness, the persona sees something moving and entering the loneliness.

The presence that moves in deep darkness is like a fox touching the twigs and leaves with its nose. What the persona sees are two eyes that move in the darkness and leave their footprints on the snow. Then a lame, cautious body in the form of an eye comes brilliantly and concentratedly toward the room. With the stink of a fox it enters the hole of the persona's head. The window is still without stars and is dark and lonely. The clock continues to tick and by now the page, the blank page has received the footprints of the thought-fox in the form of a poem.

5.1 Introduction to Author

Ted Hughes is consistently described as one of the twentieth century's greatest English poets. Born August 17th, 1930 in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire, his family moved to Mexborough when he was seven to run a newspaper and tobacco shop. He attended Mexborough grammar school, and wrote poems from the age of fifteen, some of which made their way into the school magazine. Before beginning English studies at Cambridge University (having won a scholarship in 1948), he spent much of his National service time reading and rereading all of Shakespeare. According to report, he could recite it all by heart. At Cambridge, he 'spent most..time reading folklore and Yeat's poems,' and switched from English to Archaeology and Anthropology in his third year.

His first published poem appeared in 1954, the year he graduated from Cambridge. He used two pseudonyms for the early publications, Daniel Hearing and Peter Crew. From 1955 to 1956, he worked as a rose gardener, night-watchman, zoo attendant, schoolteacher, and reader for J. Arthur Rank, and planned to teach in Spain then emigrate to Australia. February 26 saw the launch of the literary magazine, the St Botolph's Review, for which Hughes was one of six co-producers. It was also the day he met Sylvia Plath; they were married in four months.

Hughe's first book of poems, Hawk in the Rain, was published in 1957 to immediate acclaim, winning the Harper publication contest. Over the next 41 years, he would write upwards of 90 books, and win numerous prizes and fellowships including the following (in that order):

Harper publication contest, Guiness Poetry Award, Guggenheim fellowship, Somerset Maughan award, city of Florence International Poetry Prize, Premio Internazionale Taormina Prize,

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Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, OBE, vote for the best writing in English in the New Poetry Poll, Whitbread Book of the Year, W.H. Smith Literature award, Forward Prize for Poetry, Queen's Order of Merit, T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, South Bank Award for Literature, Whitbread Prize for Poetry, and the Whitbread Book of the Year again. In 1984, he was appointed England's poet laureate.

Hughes is what some have called a nature poet. A keen countryman and hunter from a young age, he viewed writing poems as a continuation of his earlier passion. 'This is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own.' (Poetry in the Making , 1967)

5.2 Hughes and Plath

A strong indirect source of interest in the person of Hughes (aside from his poetry) is his seven-year marriage to the well-known American Poet, Sylvia Plath. Birthday Letters is a sequence of lyrics written by Hughes in the first year of their marriage, cast as a continued conversation with Plath.

When Plath committed suicide in 1963 (they had separated in 1962), many held Hughes responsible for her death as a consequence of his adulterous relationship with Assia Wevill; recent biographies such as Elaine Feinstein's Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet have attempted to 'set the record straight and clear the air of rancor and recrimination' (Brooke Allen, The New York Times).

Though deeply marked by the loss, Hughes was publicly silent on the subject for more than 30 years out of his sense of responsibility to protect the couple's two young children, whose perceptions of their mother would have otherwise been impossibly spoiled by external interference. The publication of Birthday Letters has been seen as a 'retaking' of the histories that had been stolen from the family through the cracks in the armour.

Did u know? 'You write interestingly only about the things that genuinely interest you. This is an infallible rule.. in writing, you have to be able to distinguish between those things about which you are merely curious–things you heard about last week or read about yesterday- and things which are a deep part of your life… So you say, 'What part of my life would I die to be separated from?

5.3 The Thought Fox

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:

Something else is alive

Beside the clock's loneliness

And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:

Something more near

Though deeper within darkness

Is entering the loneliness:

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Cold, delicately as the dark snow,

A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow

Between trees, and warily a lame

Shadow lags by stump and in hollow

Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,

A widening deepening greenness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,

Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

The window is starless still; the clock ticks,

The page is printed.

THE THOUGHT FOX has often been acknowledged as one of the most completely realised and artistically satisfying of the poems in Ted Hughes's first collection, The Hawk in the Rain. At the same time it is one of the most frequently anthologised of all Hughes's poems. In this essay I have set out to use what might be regarded as a very ordinary analysis of this familiar poem in order to focus attention on an aspect of Hughes's poetry which is sometimes neglected. My particular interest is in the underlying puritanism of Hughes's poetic vision and in the conflict between violence and tenderness which seems to be directly engendered by this puritanism.

'The Thought Fox' is a poem about writing a poem. Its external action takes place in a room late at night where the poet is sitting alone at his desk. Outside the night is starless, silent, and totally black. But the poet senses a presence which disturbs him:

Through the window I see no star:

Something more near

Though deeper within darkness

Is entering the loneliness.

The disturbance is not in the external darkness of the night, for the night is itself a metaphor for the deeper and more intimate darkness of the poet's imagination in whose depths an idea is mysteriously stirring. At first the idea has no clear outlines; it is not seen but felt – frail and intensely vulnerable. The poet's task is to coax it out of formlessness and into fuller consciousness by the sensitivity of his language. The remote stirrings of the poem are compared to the stirrings of an animal – a fox, whose body is invisible, but which feels its way forward nervously through the dark undergrowth:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,

A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

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The half-hidden image which is contained within these lines is of soft snow brushing against the trees as it falls in dark flakes to the ground. The idea of the delicate dark snow evokes the physical reality of the fox's nose which is itself cold, dark and damp, twitching moistly and gently against twig and leaf. In this way the first feature of the fox is mysteriously defined and its wet black nose is nervously alive in the darkness, feeling its way towards us. But by inverting the natural order of the simile, and withholding the subject of the sentence, the poet succeeds in blurring its distinctness so that the fox emerges only slowly out of the formlessness of the snow. Gradually the fox's eyes appear out of the same formlessness, leading the shadowy movement of its body as it comes closer:

Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow

Between trees, and warily a lame

Shadow lags by stump and in hollow. ..

In the first two lines of this passage the rhythm of the verse is broken by the punctuation and the line-endings, while at the same time what seemed the predictable course of the rhyme-scheme is deliberately departed from. Both rhythmically and phonetically the verse thus mimes the nervous, unpredictable movement of the fox as it delicately steps forward, then stops suddenly to check the terrain before it runs on only to stop again. The tracks which the fox leaves in the snow are themselves duplicated by the sounds and rhythm of the line 'Sets neat prints into the snow'.

The first three short words of this line are internal half-rhymes, as neat, as identical and as sharply outlined as the fox's paw-marks, and these words press down gently but distinctly into the soft open vowel of 'snow'. The fox's body remains indistinct, a silhouette against the snow. But the phrase 'lame shadow' itself evokes a more precise image of the fox, as it freezes alertly in its tracks, holding one front-paw in mid-air, and then moves off again like a limping animal. At the end of the stanza the words 'bold to come' are left suspended – as though the fox is pausing at the outer edge of some trees. The gap between the stanzas is itself the clearing which the fox, after hesitating warily, suddenly shoots across: 'Of a body that is bold to come/Across clearings. ..'

Notes 'It is occasionally possible, just for brief moments, to find the words that will unlock the doors of all those many mansions in the head and express something—perhaps not much, just something—of the crush of information that presses in on us from the way a crow flies over and the way a man walks and the look of a street and from what we did one day a dozen years ago. Words that will express something of the deep complexity that makes us precisely the way we are.'

At this point in the poem the hesitant rhythm of that single sentence which is prolonged over five stanzas breaks into a final and deliberate run. The fox has scented safety. After its dash across the clearing of the stanza-break, it has come suddenly closer, bearing down upon the poet and upon the reader:

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an eye,

A widening deepening greenness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,

Coming about its own business. ..

It is so close now that its two eyes have merged into a single green glare which grows wider and wider as the fox comes nearer, its eyes heading directly towards ours: 'Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox. It enters the dark hole of the head'. If we follow the 'visual logic' of the poem we are compelled to imagine the fox actually jumping through the eyes of the poet – with whom the reader is inevitably drawn into identification. The fox enters the lair of the head as it would enter its own lair, bringing with it the hot, sensual, animal reek of its body and all the excitement and power of the achieved vision.

The fox is no longer a formless stirring somewhere in the dark depths of the bodily imagination; it has been coaxed out of the darkness and into full consciousness. It is no longer nervous and vulnerable, but at home in the lair of the head, safe from extinction, perfectly created, its being caught for ever on the page. And all this has been done purely by the imagination. For in reality there is no fox at all, and outside, in the external darkness, nothing has changed: 'The window is starless still; the clock ticks. The page is printed.' The fox is the poem, and the poem is the fox. 'And I suppose,' Ted Hughes has written, 'that long after I am gone, as long as a copy of the poem exists, everytime anyone reads it the fox will get up somewhere out of the darkness and come walking towards them.'

After discussing 'The Thought Fox' in his book *The Art of Ted Hughes*, Keith Sagar writes: 'Suddenly, out of the unknown, there it is, with all the characteristics of a living thing– "a sudden sharp hot stink of fox". A simple trick like pulling a kicking rabbit from a hat, but only a true poet can do it'. In this particular instance it seems to me that the simile Sagar uses betrays him into an inappropriate critical response. His comparison may be apt in one respect, for it is certainly true that there is a powerful element of magic in the poem. But this magic has little to do with party-conjurors who pull rabbits out of top-hats. It is more like the sublime and awesome magic which is contained in the myth of creation, where God creates living beings out of nothingness by the mere fiat of his imagination.

The very sublimity and God-like nature of Hughes's vision can engender uneasiness. For Hughes's fox has none of the freedom of an animal. It cannot get up from the page and walk off to nuzzle its young cubs or do foxy things behind the poet's back. It cannot even die in its own mortal, animal way. For it is the poet's creature, wholly owned and possessed by him, fashioned almost egotistically in order to proclaim not its own reality but that of its imaginatively omnipotent creator. (I originally wrote these words before coming across Hughes's own discussion of the poem in Poetry in the Making: 'So, you see, in some ways my fox is better than an ordinary fox. It will live for ever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds. I have it with me wherever I go. And I made it. And all through imagining it clearly enough and finding the living words').

This feeling of uneasiness is heightened by the last stanza of the poem. For although this stanza clearly communicates the excitement of poetic creation, it seems at the same time to express an almost predatory thrill; it is as though the fox has successfully been lured into a hunter's trap. The bleak matter-of-factness of the final line – 'The page is printed' – only reinforces the curious deadness of the thought-fox. If, at the end of the poem, there is one sense in which the fox is vividly and immediately alive, it is only because it has been pinned so artfully upon the page. The very accuracy of the evocation of the fox seems at times almost fussily obsessive. The studied and beautifully 'final' nature of the poem indicates that we are not in the presence of any untrained spontaneity, any primitive or naive vision. It might be

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suggested that the sensibility behind Hughes's poem is more that of an intellectual – an intellectual who, in rebellion against his own ascetic rationalism, feels himself driven to hunt down and capture an element of his own sensual and intuitive identity which he does not securely possess.

In this respect Hughes's vision is perhaps most nearly akin to that of D.H. Lawrence, who was also an intellectual in rebellion against his own rationalism, a puritan who never ceased to quarrel with his own puritanism. But Lawrence's animal poems, as some critics have observed, are very different from those of Hughes. Lawrence has a much greater respect for the integrity and independence of the animals he writes about. In 'Snake' he expresses remorse for the rationalistic, 'educated' violence which he inflicts on the animal. And at the end of the poem he is able, as it were, retrospectively to allow his dark sexual, sensual, animal alter ego to crawl off into the bowels of the earth, there to reign alone and supreme in a kingdom where Lawrence recognises he can have no part. Hughes, in 'The Thought Fox' at least, cannot do this. It would seem that, possessing his own sensual identity even less securely than Lawrence, he needs the 'sudden sharp hot stink of fox' to pump up the attenuated sense he has of the reality of his own body and his own feelings. And so he pins the fox upon the page with the cruel purity of artistic form and locates its lair inside his own head. And the fox lives triumphantly as an idea – as a part of the poet's own identity – but dies as a fox.

If there is a difference between 'The Thought Fox' and the animal poems of Lawrence there is also, of course, a difference between Hughes's poetic vision and that kind of extreme scientific rationalism which both Lawrence and Hughes attack throughout their work. For in the mind of the orthodox rationalist the fox is dead even as an idea. So it is doubly dead and the orthodox rationalist, who is always a secret puritan, is more than happy about this. For he doesn't want the hot sensual reek of fox clinging to his pure rational spirit, reminding him that he once possessed such an obscene thing as a body.

This difference may appear absolute. But it seems to me that it would be wrong to regard it as such, and that there is a much closer relationship between the sensibility which is expressed in Hughes's poem and the sensibility of 'puritanical rationalism' than would generally be acknowledged. The orthodox rationalist, it might be said, inflicts the violence of reason on animal sensuality in an obsessive attempt to eliminate it entirely. Hughes in 'The Thought Fox' unconsciously inflicts the violence of an art upon animal sensuality in a passionate but conflict-ridden attempt to incorporate it into his own rationalist identity.

The conflict of sensibility which Hughes unconsciously dramatises in 'The Thought Fox' runs through all his poetry. On the one hand there is in his work an extraordinary sensuous and sensual generosity which coexists with a sense of abundance and a capacity for expressing tenderness which are unusual in contemporary poetry. These qualities are particularly in evidence in some of the most mysteriously powerful of all his poems – poems such as 'Crow's undersong', 'Littleblood', 'Full moon and little Frieda' and 'Bride and groom lie hidden for three days'. On the other hand his poetry – and above all his poetry in Crow – is notorious for the raging intensity of its violence, a violence which, by some critics at least, has been seen as destructive of all artistic and human values. Hughes himself seems consistent to see his own poetic sensitivity as 'feminine' and his poetry frequently gives the impression that he can allow himself to indulge this sensitivity only within a protective shell of hard, steely 'masculine' violence.

In 'The Thought Fox' itself this conflict of sensibility appears in such an attenuated or suppressed form that it is by no means the most striking feature of the poem. But, as I have tried to show, the conflict may still be discerned. It is present above all in the tension between the extraordinary sensuous delicacy of the image which Hughes uses to describe the fox's nose and the predatory impulse which seems to underlie the poem – an impulse to which Hughes has himself drawn

attention by repeatedly comparing the act of poetic creation to the process of capturing or killing small animals. Indeed it might be suggested that the last stanza of the poem records what is, in effect, a ritual of tough 'manly' posturing. For in it the poet might be seen as playing a kind of imaginative game in which he attempts to outstare the fox – looking straight into its eyes as it comes closer and closer and refusing to move, refusing to flinch, refusing to show any sign of 'feminine' weakness. The fox itself does not flinch or deviate from its course. It is almost as though, in doing this, it has successfully come through an initiation-ritual to which the poet has unconsciously submitted it; the fox which is initially nervous, circumspect, and as soft and delicate as the dark snow, has proved that it is not 'feminine' after all but tough, manly and steely willed 'brilliantly, concentratedly, coming about its own business'. It is on these conditions alone, perhaps, that its sensuality can be accepted by the poet without anxiety.

Whether or not the last tentative part of my analysis is accepted, it will perhaps be allowed that the underlying pattern of the poem is one of sensitivity—within—toughness; it is one in which a sensuality or sensuousness which might sometimes be characterised as 'feminine' can be incorporated into the identity only to the extent that it has been purified by, or subordinated to, a tough, rational, artistic will.

The same conflict of sensibility which is unconsciously dramatised in 'The Thought Fox' also appears, in an implicit form, in one of the finest and most powerful poems in Lupercal, 'Snowdrop':

Now is the globe shrunk tight

Round the mouse's dulled wintering heart.

Weasel and crow, as if moulded in brass,

Move through an outer darkness Not in their right minds,

With the other deaths. She, too, pursues her ends,

Brutal as the stars of this month,

Her pale head heavy as metal.

The poem begins by evoking, from the still and tiny perspective of the hibernating mouse, a vast intimacy with the tightening body of the earth. But the numbness of 'wintering heart' undermines the emotional security which might be conveyed by the initial image. The next lines introduce a harsh predatory derangement into nature through which two conventionally threatening animals, the weasel and the crow, move 'as if moulded in brass'. It is only at this point, after a sense of petrified and frozen vitality has been established, that the snowdrop is, as it were, 'noticed' by the poem. What might be described as a conventional and sentimental personification of the snowdrop is actually intensified by the fact that 'she' can be identified only from the title. This lends to the pronoun a mysterious power through which the poem gestures towards an affirmation of 'feminine' frailty and its ability to survive even the cruel rigour of winter. But before this gesture can even be completed it is overlaid by an evocation of violent striving:

She, too, pursues her ends,

Brutal as the stars of this month,

Her pale head heavy as metal.

The last line is finely balanced between the fragility of 'pale' and the steeliness of 'metal' – a word whose sound softens and moderates its sense .The line serves to evoke a precise visual image of the snowdrop, the relative heaviness of whose flower cannot be entirely supported

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by its frail stem. But at the same time the phrase 'her pale head' minimally continues the personification which is first established by the pronoun 'she'. In this way the feminine snowdrop – a little incarnation, almost, of the White Goddess – is located within that world of frozen and sleeping vitality which is created by the poem, a vitality which can only be preserved, it would seem, if it is encased within a hard, metallic, evolutionary will.

The beauty of this poem resides precisely in the way that a complex emotional ambivalence is reflected through language. But if we can withdraw ourselves from the influence of the spell which the poem undoubtedly casts, the vision of the snowdrop cannot but seem an alien one. What seems strange about the poem is the lack of any recognition that the snowdrop survives not because of any hidden reserves of massive evolutionary strength or will, but precisely because of its frailty – its evolutionary vitality is owed directly to the very delicacy, softness and flexibility of its structure. In Hughes's poem the purposeless and consciousless snowdrop comes very near to being a little Schopenhauer philosophising in the rose-garden, a little Stalin striving to disguise an unmanly and maidenly blush behind a hard coat of assumed steel. We might well be reminded of Hughes's own account of the intentions which lay behind his poem 'Hawk roosting'. 'Actually what I had in mind', Hughes has said, 'was that in this hawk Nature is thinking … I intended some creator like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine.' But, as Hughes himself is obliged to confess, 'He doesn't sound like Isis, mother of the gods, which he is. He sounds like Hitler's familiar spirit.' In an attempt to account for the gap between intention and performance Hughes invokes cultural history: 'When Christianity kicked the devil out of Job what they actually kicked out was Nature. ..and nature became the devil.' This piece of rationalisation, however, seems all too like an attempt to externalise a conflict of sensibility which is profoundly internal. The conflict in question is the same as that which may be divined both in 'The Thought Fox' and in 'Snowdrop', in which a frail sensuousness which might be characterised as, 'feminine' can be accepted only after it has been subordinated to a tough and rational will.

The conflict between violence and tenderness which is present in an oblique form throughout Hughes' early poetry is one that is in no sense healed or resolved in his later work. Indeed it might be suggested that much of the poetic and emotional charge of this later work comes directly from an intensification of this conflict and an increasingly explicit polarisation of its terms. The repressed tenderness of 'Snowdrop' or the tough steely sensibility which is expressed in 'Thrushes', with its idealisation of the 'bullet and automatic / Purpose' of instinctual life, is seemingly very different to the all but unprotected sensuous delicacy of 'Littleblood', the poem with which Hughes ends Crow:

O littleblood, little boneless little skinless

Ploughing with a linnet's carcase

Reaping the wind and threshing the stones.

. . . .

Sit on my finger, sing in my ear, O littleblood.

But this poem must ultimately be located within the larger context which is provided by the Crow poems. This context is one of a massive unleashing of sadistic violence -a violence which is never endorsed by Hughes but which, nevertheless, seems to provide a kind of necessary psychological armour within which alone tenderness can be liberated without anxiety.

In pointing to the role which is played by a particular conflict of sensibility in Hughes's poetry I am not in any way seeking to undermine the case which can – and should – be made for what would conventionally be called Hughes's poetic 'greatness'. Indeed, my intention is almost the reverse of this. For it seems to me that one of the factors which moderates or

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diminishes the imaginative power of some of Hughes's early poetry is precisely the way in which an acute conflict which is central to his own poetic sensibility tends to be disguised or, suppressed. In Crow, which I take to be Hughes's most extraordinary poetic achievement to date, Hughes, almost for the first time, assumes imaginative responsibility for the puritanical violence which is present in his poetry from the very beginning. In doing so he seems to take full possession of his own poetic powers. It is as though a conflict which had, until that point, led a shadowy and underworld existence, is suddenly cracked open in order to disgorge not only its own violence but also all that imaginative wealth and vitality which had been half locked up within it.

The most obvious precedent for such a violent eruption of imaginative powers is that which is provided by Shakespeare, and perhaps above all by King Lear. Lear is a play of extraordinary violence whose persistent image, as Caroline Spurgeon has observed, is that 'of a human body in anguished movement, tugged, wrenched, beaten, pierced, stung, scourged, dislocated, flayed, gashed, scalded, tortured, and finally broken on the rack'. But at the same time it is a play about a man who struggles to repossess his own tenderness and emotional vitality and to weep those tears which, at the beginning of the play, he contemptuously dismisses as soft, weak and womanly. The same conflict reappears throughout Shakespeare's poetry. We have only to recall Lady Macbeth's renunciation of her own 'soft' maternal impulses in order to appreciate the fluency of Shakespeare's own imaginative access to this conflict and the disturbing cruelty of its terms:

> I have given suck, and know
>
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
>
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
>
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
>
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
>
> Have done to this. (I. vii)

The intense conflict between violence and tenderness which is expressed in these lines is, of course, in no sense one which will be found only in the poetic vision of Hughes and Shakespeare. It is present in poetry from the Old Testament onwards and indeed it might reasonably be regarded as a universal conflict, within which are contained and expressed some of the most fundamental characteristics of the human identity.

Any full investigation of the conflict and of its cultural significance would inevitably need to take account both of what Mark Spilka has called 'Lawrence's quarrel with tenderness' and of Ian Suttie's discussion of the extent and rigour of the 'taboo on tenderness' in our own culture.[6] But such an investigation would also need to take into consideration a much larger cultural context, and perhaps above all to examine the way in which the Christian ideal of love has itself traditionally been expressed within the medium of violent apocalyptic fantasies.

The discussion of Hughes's poetry has sometimes been too much in thrall to a powerful cultural image of Hughes's poetic personality – one which he himself has tended to project. In this image Hughes is above all an isolated and embattled figure who has set himself against the entire course both of modern poetry and of modern history. He is rather like the hero in one of his most powerful poems 'Stealing trout on a May morning', resolutely and stubbornly wading upstream, his feet rooted in the primeval strength of the river's bed as the whole course of modern history and modern puritanical rationalism floods violently past him in the opposite direction, bearing with it what Hughes himself has called 'mental disintegration … under the super-ego of Moses … and the self-anaesthetising schizophrenia of St Paul', and

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leaving him in secure possession of that ancient and archaic imaginative energy which he invokes in his poetry.

The alternative to this Romantic view of Hughes's poetic personality is to see Hughes's poetry as essentially the poetry of an intellectual, an intellectual who is subject to the rigours of 'puritanical rationalism' just as much as any other intellectual but who, instead of submitting to those rigours, fights against them with that stubborn and intransigent resolution which belongs only to the puritan soul.

In reality perhaps neither of these views is wholly appropriate, and the truth comes somewhere between the two. But what does seem clear is that when Hughes talks of modern civilisation as consisting in 'mental disintegration. ..under the super-ego of Moses … and the self-anaesthetising schizophrenia of St Paul' he is once again engaging in that characteristic strategy of externalising a conflict of sensibility which is profoundly internal. For it must be suggested that Paul's own 'schizophrenia' consisted in an acute conflict between the impulse towards tenderness, abundance and generosity and the impulse towards puritanical violence – the violence of chastity. It is precisely this conflict which seems to be buried in Hughes's early poetry and which, as I have suggested, eventually erupts in the poetry of Crow. If, in Crow, Hughes is able to explore and express the internalised violence of the rationalist sensibility with more imaginative power than any other modern poet, it is perhaps because he does so from within a poetic sensibility which is itself profoundly intellectual, and deeply marked by that very puritanical rationalism which he so frequently and justifiably – attacks.

5.4 Analysis

Ted Hughes was one of the most honoured and respected poets of the 20th century. This poem speaks directly as it encapsulates the moments of creation, the stillness and emptiness when nothing will come, and it gives great hope to anyone suffering writer's block.

The poem exposes and explores the creative process, giving insight to the poet's experience with honesty and depth. He is the speaker, the omniscient narrator. He uses an intimate conversational tone that brings out the sensory imagery and the changing rhythms, the time and place, with perfection. The visual, auditory and olfactory move throughout the poem, like that fox. We can smell the foxy creature, as Hughes uses alliteration and enjambment thus:

> "Till, with a sudden, sharp hot stink of fox
>
> It enters the dark hole of the head" (l. 21-22)

That "dark hole" is such a great metaphor for the empty mind of a writer seeking inspiration. But the lead up to this is full of rhythmic tension and images that take us right into the scene, with the lone man in the night, we are with him every step of the way.

Hughes lets us know he is alone in the darkness, for his eye rhymes and half rhymes signify this, as in "darkness" and loneliness", and the rhythm combines to enhance the rhyme to create the picture; the cold, the dark, the scents, the tension.

Did u know? 'The Thought Fox' is a poem about composing poetry, or rather, about being visited by the muse. Appropriately enough, in Hughes' case, the muse is an animal, a fox. Hughes has said that this was the first animal poem he wrote."

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5.5 Critical Appreciation

The Fox as a Symbol of Thought

The Thought Fox describes, in an indirect or oblique manner, the process by which a poem gets written. What a poet needs to write a poem is inspiration. A poet waits for the onrush of an idea through his brain. And, of course, he also needs solitude (loneliness) and silence around him. Solitude and silence are, however, only contributory circumstances. They constitute a favourable environment, while the poem itself comes out of the poet's head which has been invaded, as it were, by an idea or thought. The idea or thought takes shape in his head like a fox entering a dark forest and then coming out of it suddenly. That is why the phrase "The Thought Fox" has been used as a title for this poem. The fox embodies the thought which a poet expresses in his poem.

The fox here serves as a symbol.

Vivid Imagery in the Poem

The Thought Fox was one of the outstanding poems in the volume called "The Hawk in the Rain". What is remarkable about this poem, apart from its symbolic statement of the process of poetic composition, is its imagery. We have here a series of images in the poem, from the first line to the last; and every image is a vivid one. The opening line contains the following image: "I imagine this midnight moment's forest." Here the poet imagines that he is sitting in a forest at midnight. Then follow the images of the lonely clock, the blank page, and the feeling that something else is also alive around the poet. There are no stars in the sky; and then the poet perceives something intruding upon his loneliness or solitude. Next, a fox's nose touches a twig and then a leaf. The two eyes of the fox seem to be moving forward. The fox is leaving clear footprints on the snow in the forest. The imagery continues with the eye of the fox "brilliantly, concentratedly," coming about its own business till it enters the dark hole of the head with "a sudden sharp hot stink of a fox." The window is starless still; the clock ticks even now; but the page is no longer blank. The page carries a poem written by its author in his own handwriting, even though the word "printed" has been used. The word "printed" is not absolutely inappropriate because ultimately the poem written by its author would get printed.

A Poem without any Popular Appeal

The Thought Fox has greatly been admired by critics; but it does not have much of an appeal for the average reader. The poem contains an abstract idea which the poet has tried to concretize. We, as average readers, cannot understand why a thought should be personified as a fox. To the popular mind, a fox represents cunning. We have all heard the story of the fox who cheated a crow of a piece of cheese which the crow held in its beak. The fox employed flattery to make the crow open its beak so that the piece of cheese might fall from the beak for the fox to grab it. But in this poem the fox has been elevated to the status of a poetic idea. Nor can we affirm that this poem is remarkable because of its felicity of word and phrase. The only remarkable quality of this poem is its imagery.

Comments by Some of the Critics

A critic expresses the view that in Hughes's world the only way to come to terms with the animals is not to tame them but to become possessed by them, and that this is what precisely

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happens in the poem, The Thought-Fox. This critic regards The Thought-Fox as the finest of the five animal poems in the volume entitled "The Hawk in the Rain". Talking about his childhood passion for capturing animals, Hughes has described the composition of this poem in the following manner:

An animal I never succeeded in keeping alive is the fox. I was always frustrated: twice by a farmer, who killed cubs I had caught before I could get to them, and once by a poultry-keeper who freed my cub while his dog waited. Years after those events I was sitting up late one snowy night in dreary lodgings in London. I had written nothing for a year or so but that night I got the idea I might write something, and I wrote in a few minutes The Thought Fox; the first animal poem I ever wrote.

The same critic goes on to say that, although The Thought Fox is a fox of imagination, it has been presented in the poem with a beautifully solid foxy reality. Continuing his comment, this critic says that, when the fox does come in the poem, it is "coming about its own business"—functioning as a fox—and is welcomed into the vacuum in the human head, the vacuum created when instinct had to vacate a place for excessive thinking:

Till with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

Making a fox-hole out of the human brain shows how Hughes here, as elsewhere in his poems, dismisses sardonically the physical seat of learning. In this case, instinct replaces intellect. In his verbal re-creation of the fox, Hughes disdains strict rhyme and iambic pentameter. Hughes's rhythm is mimetic, seeking to stimulate the action of the poem. The monosyllables in the above-quoted, memorable lines really suggest the movement of the fox as it approaches the safety of the metaphorical fox-hole. We have here the swift, sudden little trot, then the cautious careful tread, then the confident measured pace. Indeed, Hughes has here given evidence of his remarkable gift for embodying words with animal rhythm. Two of the critics, namely Gifford and Roberts, agreeing with this opinion, say that the mimetic language here works in two ways: It evokes the movements of the fox, and those movements in turn provide an image for the movement of the poem itself. Another critic gives high praise to this poem which, he says, embodies an abstraction suggested by the very title of the poem. The title gives us a clear clue to the poem's theme which is a "thought" coming to life on the "printed page" like a wild beast invading the poet's mind. The process, says this critic, is described in exquisite gradations, from the first moment when

I imagine this midnight moment's forest;

Something else is alive

Beside the clock's loneliness

And this blank page where my fingers move.

After an interval, the living metaphor moves into the poem:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,

A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;

Two eyes serve a movement

The movement is completed in the last stanza:

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

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The window is starless still, the clock ticks,

The page is printed.

I

Something like the effect in this poem of the physical realization of a meaning, quick with its own rank presence, occurs in all the best works of Hughes. Another critic, Seamus Heaney, also has something illuminating to say about this poem. Hughes's aspiration, in these early poems, says this critic, is to command all the elements which make up the poetic effect in order to bring them within the jurisdiction of his authoritarian voice. The first line of this poem, for instance, is hushed, but it is a hush achieved by the quelling action of the m's and d's and t's: "I imagine this midnight moment's forest". The last stanza of the poem, according to this critic, is characterized by the shooting of the monosyllabic consonantal bolts. Yet another critic, Alan Bold, offers the following valuable comment: "Hughes invests his poems with a dream-like quality, a kind of reverie. It is not surprising that such a reverie on a cold winter's night produced The Thought Fox."

II

"The Thought Fox" is a poem about writing a poem and not at all about an animal. The fox in the poem is the poetic energy or inspiration that comes out of darkness (the unconscious) and leaves its footprints on snow, the blank white page. But the annual image in the title as well as the movement of the symbolic animal in the poem is not only appropriate in its own context but also consistent with Ted Hughes concept of poetic composition which he compared with the capturing of animals:

The special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerized and quite involuntary concentration with which you make out the stirrings of a new poem in your mind, then the outline, the mass and colour and clear final form of it, the unique living reality of it in the midst of the general lifelessness, all that is too familiar to mistake. This is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own.

The secret, says Hughes, is to "imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it. … Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn your self into it. When you do this, the words look after themselves, like magic." This is borne out by the present poem in which a kind of drama goes on between the "I" that imagines and the "I" that perceives. At the beginning of the poem it is the self, the persona that imagines the fox and its slow animal movement which the rhythm of the poem supports; then, toward the end, in a climactic manner, the fox enters the "dark hole of the head" of perceiving persona with the sting in the tail that "the page is printed." The last lines, comments Thomas West, "where we turn to the ticking clock but discover now a printed page reveal an external world of time and long dead imaginings (in print), which feels very distant from the imaginative act, this dark and secret reality of the mind's possession by something akin, in its apartness and its energy, to the jaguar."

Apart from the interesting drama that goes in it, "The Thought Fox" reveals Ted Hughes' subtle artistry. The very movement of the poem is like the movement of a fox in the darkness: The language mimes in sound and rhythm what it describes:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,

A fox's nose touches a twig, leaf;

Two eyes serve a movement, that now

And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow

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Between trees, and warily a lone

Shadow lags by stump and in hollow.

As Keith comments, "The poem has already sets neat prints upon the page in the line before we are told that the fox sets them into the snow. The noun 'shadow' has to drag itself across the gap between the lines which separates it from its adjective. And the alliteration of 'lame' and 'lag' upon a long palatal consonant mimes the meaning to a degree which becomes obvious if we try to find a substitute for either word."

Forms and Devices

Ted Hughes extends his central metaphor of fox-as-thought with great skill. Although the fox is symbolic of poetic creation, the reader is able to maintain a strong sense of it as a "real" fox. Even when Hughes is conveying abstract ideas, he uses precise detail and concrete sensory images from the natural world.

Hughes often uses strong contrasts to convey his notion of nature as interacting opposites: life and death, light and dark, predator and prey. The main contrast in this poem is between the intense vitality of the imagination (the world of the fox) and the impersonal vacancy of the poet's self and environment. The unidentified "something else" in the forest seems more real, more alive than anything in the room, including the poet. More human feeling is accorded to the clock in its "loneliness" than to the poet. He is defined in negatives, in absent terms. There is a disembodied quality to the image of the blank notepaper "where my fingers move," as if the fingers had a life of their own and were acting independently.

The abstract phenomenon of the creative process is made into a living creature of independent will. "Something more near" than the starless night, yet "deeper within darkness," solidifies out of the blackness. This apparent contradiction, of something being real yet elusive, is descriptive of an idea at its genesis. One is aware of the idea's existence, yet it has not yet gained sufficient definition for one to grasp it. The atmosphere of suspense relaxes into the first concrete sensory images of the fox—the cold touch of its nose, then "two eyes"—as the fox edges cautiously into vision. In the beats of "now,/ And again now, and now," and the three consecutive strong stresses of "sets neat prints," one hears the rhythm of the fox's tentative steps.

Hughes often uses alliteration (repetition of consonants) and assonance (repetition of vowel sounds within words) to add an incantatory quality to his verse and to bring images to life. In the alliteration of "touches twig, leaf," one feels the delicacy of the fox's nose investigating its environment. The strong sounds of "Of a body that is bold to come/ Across clearings," together with the positioning of "Across clearings" at the start of a new stanza, give a sense of sudden energy as the fox emerges into the open.

The most memorable image forms the poem's climax: "With a sudden sharp hot stink of fox/ It enters the dark hole of the head." The fox has realized its symbolic status as metaphor for thought. The thought fills the expectant vacancy that has been the poet's consciousness until now. The image is intensely violent, evoking speed, flavour, temperature, and smell.

Two images introduced at the poem's beginning and repeated at the end reflect its circular journey: from the everyday world, into the imaginative world, then back into the everyday world enriched by the gift of the imagination, the poetic composition. The image of the still-ticking clock, echoing the third line of the poem, recalls one to the world of time and space into which creation manifests. "The window is starless still," also a repeated image, brings one back full circle to the unchanging eternity that preceded the coming of the thought-fox and continues undiminished after the event. "The page is printed"—referring to the page one has

read—resolves the central metaphor. The Thought Fox has found its fulfillment in the completed poem.

Themes and Meanings

In his essay "Capturing Animals" (Poetry Is, 1967), Ted Hughes recalls his boyhood hunting expeditions with his brother. Hughes's job was to retrieve the many different creatures that his brother shot. When he was fifteen, however, his attitude to animals changed. He gave up hunting around the same time that he began to write poems.

It was several years before he realized that "my writing poems might be partly a continuation of my earlier pursuit. Now I have no doubt. The special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerized and quite involuntary concentration with which you make out the stirrings of a new poem in your mind, then the outline, the mass and color and clear final form of it, the unique living reality of it in the midst of the general lifelessness, all that is too familiar to mistake." It is hunting, he wrote, and the poem is a new type of creature. "The Thought-Fox" was the first of Hughes's many animal poems. He says, "It is about a fox, obviously enough, but a fox that is both a fox and not a fox.It is both a fox and a spirit." The poem is a clear expression of his notion that writing poetry is a kind of hunting, an attempt to capture the unique essence of an experience or an object.

According to Hughes, a poem, like the fox, comes of its own volition. Also like the fox, it comes shyly, "warily," and step by step. The implication is that it could easily be frightened away at any stage. In fact, in his essay "Learning to Think" (also in Poetry Is), Hughes describes how his experience of angling taught him to write poetry. His technique to catch fish was to keep perfectly still and allow his mind to settle on the float, which would attract the fish. Similarly, the would-be poet must first learn to still his mind on an object in order to catch the myriad thoughts that gradually attach themselves to it.

"The Thought Fox" embodies Hughes's vision of poetic creation—that a poem, before it takes on a manifest form on the page, has a life of its own, independent of the individualized self of the poet. The poet's role is impersonal. He only has to stay quiet and alert, to be receptive to the poem. Then he can capture it as it emerges from the depths of uncreated reality and delicately makes its way into conscious awareness.

Hughes shares his vision of the creative process with the English Romantics, who commonly viewed poets as channels through whom inspiration flowed from a transcendent source. Hughes's unique contribution to this tradition is his ability to clothe profound metaphysical truths in simple, precise language and concrete images from nature.

Self Assessment

1. "The Thought Fox" was first published in *The Hawk in the Rain* in

   (*a*) 1957 (*b*) 1958

   (*c*) 1960 (*d*) 1950

2. This poem is divided into—stanzas.

   (*a*) 19 (*b*) 10

   (*c*) 6 (*d*) 5

3. The second stanza intensifies

   (*a*) suspense (*b*) love

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(*c*) hate (*d*) none of these

4. *The Thought Fox* is:

(*a*) an animal poem (*b*) a love poem

(*c*) a nature poem (*d*) none of these.

5.6 Summary

- "The Thought Fox" is a poem of twenty-four lines divided into six stanzas. The title tells the reader that the poet is drawing an analogy between a thought—specifically, in this case, a poetic composition—and a fox.
- The poet speaks in the first person and in his own persona. He begins by evoking the silence and mystery of a forest at midnight. An atmosphere of suspense is created as one becomes aware of "something else" that is alive in the imaginary forest outside. The world of the forest is set against the world of the room where the poet is working, characterised only by the presence of a clock and the poet's as yet blank paper.
- The second stanza intensifies the suspense. The poet shifts his perspective, taking the reader's awareness outside the room as he looks through the window into the black, starless night. The "something" is approaching, beginning to solidify out of the darkness. The third stanza gives the first tangible sense of the creature in the form of the fox's cold nose investigating the surrounding twigs and leaves.
- The poet introduces the fox into the reader's sensory field in parts: a nose, then two eyes, as the fox stealthily moves between the trees of the silent, snowbound forest, then the whole body as it flashes across clearings. The fox in its literal sense as a fox is fully realized by the fifth stanza; it is "Brilliantly, concentratedly, Coming about its own business."
- The final stanza is a sudden and shocking transition back to the fox as a metaphor for thought. "With a sudden sharp hot stink of fox. It enters the dark hole of the head." The reader is reminded that, although the poet has presented a vivid picture of a fox, he was all the time comparing it with the creative process. Like the fox in the darkness of the forest, a thought begins in the subconscious mind as a vague sense or movement. As it rises to the conscious level of the mind, it becomes increasingly concrete and definite, until it finally "enters the dark hole of the head" as a conscious, coherent thought.
- The reader is brought back to the poet's room with a reference to the window, "starless still." One senses the unbounded, uncreated reality that underlies individualized creation, unchanged and undiminished by the ever-changing manifestations that emerge from it. The ticking of the clock brings one back from the timeless world of the imagination to the world of time and space. "The page is printed" states that the thought has taken its final form—as the very poem that is before the reader. The poet has witnessed the act of his own poetic creation. Thus the poem is reflexive; it is a poem about its own composition.

5.7 Keywords

Coherent : (of a person) Able to speak clearly and logically: "after one beer, he is not coherent.

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Loneliness : The state of being alone in solitary isolation.

Metaphor : A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

A thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, esp. something abstract.

5.8 Review Questions

1. Write a full note on the animal imagery used by Hughes in 'The Thought Fox'.
2. Explain the poem 'The Thought Fox' as an animal poem. What does Hughes try to convey the message by this poem?
3. Discuss the themes and meanings of the poem 'The Thought Fox'.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*a*) 2. (*c*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*a*)

5.9 Further Readings

Books Ted Hughes, Poetry in the Making (Faber, 1967), p. 20.

Keith Sagar, The Art of Ted Hughes (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 19

See Poetry in the Making, chapter 1

Interview with Ekbert Faas, 1970. Reprinted in Faas, Ted Hughes: the Unaccommodated Universe (Black Sparrow Press, 1980), p. 197

Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery (1935), p. 339

Mark Spilka, 'Lawrence's quarrel with tenderness', Critical Quarterly, vol. 9, No. 4 (winter 1967). Ian D. Suttie, The Origins of Love and Hate (Penguin, 1960), esp. chapter.

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

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Unit 6: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Robert Frost;
- Understand the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*.

Introduction

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. He moved to New England at the age of eleven and became interested in reading and writing poetry during his high school years in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He was enrolled at Dartmouth College in 1892, and later at Harvard, though he never earned a formal degree.

Frost drifted through a string of occupations after leaving school, working as a teacher, cobbler, and editor of the Lawrence Sentinel. His first professional poem, "My Butterfly," was published on November 8, 1894, in the New York newspaper The Independent.

In 1895, Frost married Elinor Miriam White, who became a major inspiration in his poetry until her death in 1938. The couple moved to England in 1912, after their New Hampshire farm failed, and it was abroad that Frost met and was influenced by such contemporary British poets as Edward Thomas, Rupert Brooke, and Robert Graves. While in England, Frost also established a friendship with the poet Ezra Pound, who helped to promote and publish his work.

By the time Frost returned to the United States in 1915, he had published two full-length collections, A Boy's Will and North of Boston, and his reputation was established. By the

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nineteen-twenties, he was the most celebrated poet in America, and with each new book—including New Hampshire (1923), A Further Range (1936), Steeple Bush (1947), and In the Clearing (1962)—his fame and honors (including four Pulitzer Prizes) increased.

Though his work is principally associated with the life and landscape of New England, and though he was a poet of traditional verse forms and metrics who remained steadfastly aloof from the poetic movements and fashions of his time, Frost is anything but a merely regional or minor poet. The author of searching and often dark meditations on universal themes, he is a quintessentially modern poet in his adherence to language as it is actually spoken, in the psychological complexity of his portraits, and in the degree to which his work is infused with layers of ambiguity and irony.

In a 1970 review of The Poetry of Robert Frost, the poet Daniel Hoffman describes Frost's early work as "the Puritan ethic turned astonishingly lyrical and enabled to say out loud the sources of its own delight in the world," and comments on Frost's career as The American Bard: "He became a national celebrity, our nearly official Poet Laureate, and a great performer in the tradition of that earlier master of the literary vernacular, Mark Twain."

About Frost, President John F. Kennedy said, "He has bequeathed his nation a body of imperishable verse from which Americans will forever gain joy and understanding."

Robert Frost lived and taught for many years in Massachusetts and Vermont, and died in Boston on January 29, 1963.

6.1 An Overview

Frost wrote the poem in June, 1922 at his house in Shaftsbury, Vermont. He had been up the entire night writing the long poem "New Hampshire" and had finally finished when he realized morning had come. He went out to view the sunrise and suddenly got the idea for "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". He wrote the new poem "about the snowy evening and the little horse as if I'd had a hallucination" in just "a few minutes without strain."

The poem is written in iambic tetrameter in the Rubaiyat stanza created by Edward Fitzgerald. Each verse (save the last) follows an a-a-b-a rhyming scheme, with the following verse's a's rhyming with that verse's b, which is a chain rhyme (another example is the terza rima used in Dante's Inferno.) Overall, the rhyme scheme is AABA-BBCB-CCDC-DDDD.

6.2 Use in Eulogies

In the early morning of November 23, 1963, Sid Davis of Westinghouse Broadcasting reported the arrival of President John F. Kennedy's casket to the White House. As Frost was one of the President's favourite poets, Davis concluded his report with a passage from this poem but was overcome with emotion as he signed off.

At the funeral of former Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau, on October 3, 2000, his eldest son Justin rephrased the last line of this poem in his eulogy: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep. He has kept his promises and earned his sleep.

6.3 In Popular Culture

The poem is discussed in The Sopranos episode "Proshai, Livushka," in which Meadow explains the poem's meaning to her brother, AJ. American composer Randall Thompson included the poem in his choral work, "Frostiana: Seven Country Songs," which was originally conducted by Thompson with Frost in attendance. Another choral interpretation, titled Sleep, was written

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by American composer Eric Whitacre. Due to copyright, the text of the composition was re-written by Charles Anthony Silvestri to comply with the wishes of Frost's estate.

In the 1977 Cold War thriller *Telefon*, the last stanza is used as a trigger phrase to activate brainwashed sleeper agents. In the Quentin Tarantino's film Death Proof, the final stanza of the poem is used by 'Jungle' Julia as the secret phrase that her listeners must say in order to receive a lap dance from Julia's friend while they are out on the town. The night passes and the only person to approach the girls and repeat the line is the homicidal 'Stunt-man' Mike, played by Kurt Russell. This is a pop culture reference to Telefon.

The last stanza of the poem is quoted at the start of the song Bobby Untitled by Nicky Wire, from his debut solo album I Killed The Zeitgeist.

6.4 Stopping by Woods On a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer 5
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake. 10
The only other sounds the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep, 15
And miles to go before I sleep.

On the surface, this poem is simplicity itself. The speaker is stopping by some woods on a snowy evening. He or she takes in the lovely scene in near-silence, is tempted to stay longer, but acknowledges the pull of obligations and the considerable distance yet to be travelled before he or she can rest for the night.

Form

The poem consists of four (almost) identically constructed stanzas. Each line is iambic, with four stressed syllables:

Within the four lines of each stanza, the first, second, and fourth lines rhyme. The third line does not, but it sets up the rhymes for the next stanza. For example, in the third stanza, queer, near, and year all rhyme, but lake rhymes with shake, mistake, and flake in the following stanza.

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The notable exception to this pattern comes in the final stanza, where the third line rhymes with the previous two and is repeated as the fourth line.

Do not be fooled by the simple words and the easiness of the rhymes; this is a very difficult form to achieve in English without debilitating a poem's content with forced rhymes.

6.5 Commentary

This is a poem to be marvelled at and taken for granted. Like a big stone, like a body of water, like a strong economy, however it was forged it seems that, once made, it has always been there. Frost claimed that he wrote it in a single night-time sitting; it just came to him. Perhaps one hot, sustained burst is the only way to cast such a complete object, in which form and content, shape and meaning, are alloyed inextricably. One is tempted to read it, nod quietly in recognition of its splendor and multivalent meaning, and just move on. But one must write essays. Or study guides.

Like the woods it describes, the poem is lovely but entices us with dark depths—of interpretation, in this case. It stands alone and beautiful, the account of a man stopping by woods on a snowy evening, but gives us a come-hither look that begs us to load it with a full inventory of possible meanings. We protest, we make apologies, we point to the dangers of reading poetry in this way, but unlike the speaker of the poem, we cannot resist.

The last two lines are the true culprits. They make a strong claim to be the most celebrated instance of repetition in English poetry. The first "And miles to go before I sleep" stays within the boundaries of literalness set forth by the rest of the poem. We may suspect, as we have up to this point, that the poem implies more than it says outright, but we can't insist on it; the poem has gone by so fast, and seemed so straightforward. Then comes the second "And miles to go before I sleep," like a soft yet penetrating gong; it can be neither ignored nor forgotten. The sound it makes is "Ahhh." And we must read the verses again and again and offer trenchant remarks and explain the "Ahhh" in words far inferior to the poem. For the last "miles to go" now seems like life; the last "sleep" now seems like death.

The basic conflict in the poem, resolved in the last stanza, is between an attraction toward the woods and the pull of responsibility outside of the woods. What do woods represent? Something good? Something bad? Woods are sometimes a symbol for wildness, madness, the pre-rational, the looming irrational. But these woods do not seem particularly wild. They are someone's woods, someone's in particular—the owner lives in the village. But that owner is in the village on this, the darkest evening of the year—so would any sensible person be. That is where the division seems to lie, between the village (or "society," "civilization," "duty," "sensibility," "responsibility") and the woods (that which is beyond the borders of the village and all it represents). If the woods are not particularly wicked, they still possess the seed of the irrational; and they are, at night, dark—with all the varied connotations of darkness.

Part of what is irrational about the woods is their attraction. They are restful, seductive, lovely, dark, and deep—like deep sleep, like oblivion. Snow falls in downy flakes, like a blanket to lie under and be covered by. And here is where many readers hear dark undertones to this lyric. To rest too long while snow falls could be to lose one's way, to lose the path, to freeze and die. Does this poem express a death wish, considered and then discarded? Do the woods sing a siren's song? To be lulled to sleep could be truly dangerous. Is allowing oneself to be lulled akin to giving up the struggle of prudence and self-preservation? Or does the poem merely describe the temptation to sit and watch beauty while responsibilities are forgotten—to succumb to a mood for a while?

The woods sit on the edge of civilization; one way or another, they draw the speaker away from it (and its promises, its good sense). "Society" would condemn stopping here in the dark,

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in the snow—it is ill advised. The speaker ascribes society's reproach to the horse, which may seem, at first, a bit odd. But the horse is a domesticated part of the civilized order of things; it is the nearest thing to society's agent at this place and time. And having the horse reprove the speaker (even if only in the speaker's imagination) helps highlight several uniquely human features of the speaker's dilemma. One is the regard for beauty (often flying in the face of practical concern or the survival instinct); another is the attraction to danger, the unknown, the dark mystery; and the third—perhaps related but distinct—is the possibility of the death wish, of suicide.

Not that we must return too often to that darkest interpretation of the poem. Beauty alone is a sufficient siren; a sufficient protection against her seduction is an unwillingness to give up on society despite the responsibilities it imposes. The line "And miles to go before I sleep" need not imply burden alone; perhaps the ride home will be lovely, too. Indeed, the line could be read as referring to Frost's career as a poet, and at this time he had plenty of good poems left in him.

Notes "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening " is a lyric poem. It was first published in the *New Republic* on March 7, 1923, and republished later that year in a collection of Robert Frost's poems entitled *New Hampshire*. This collection won Frost a Pulitzer Prize and widespread recognition as an important American writer.

6.6 Setting of the Poem

Frost wrote "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" while residing in the village of Franconia in the northwestern corner of New Hampshire. It seems likely that woods near Franconia inspired him to write the poem and that Franconia is the village mentioned in line 2. The time is "the darkest evening of the year." If by this phrase the speaker/narrator means the longest night of the year—that is, the night with the most hours of darkness—then the day is either December 21 or 22. In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice occurs each year on one of those days. The solstice is the moment when the sun is farthest south.

Characters

The Observer (Speaker/Persona/Narrator): A person travelling by a horse-drawn wagon (or cart or carriage) on a rural road. The traveller stops to observe snow piling up in woods.

The Horse: A small horse with a bell attached to its harness. It shakes its head, ringing the bell, to signal that it does not understand why its master has stopped.

Owner of the Woods: A man who lives in a nearby village. He is mentioned in the first stanza of the poem.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Frost wrote "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" while residing in the village of

   (*a*) Franconia (*b*) Macidonia

   (*c*) Lithuania (*d*) none of these

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2. This poem was first published in

   (*a*) Old Republic (*b*) Today's Republic

   (*c*) New Republic (*d*) none of these

3. Woods seemed to Robert Frost a symbol of

   (*a*) railroads (*b*) vanishing wilderness

   (*c*) skyscrappers (*d*) none of these

4. The poem presents one person's momentary encounter with

   (*a*) fate (*b*) nature

   (*c*) self (*d*) none of these

5. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is written in which year?

   (*a*) May 1921 (*b*) June 1922

   (*c*) June 1923 (*d*) May 1923

6. In "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Frost writes that the speaker imagines his horse to think him strange. What might be the significance of this?

   (*a*) Frost is implying that the speaker is insane

   (*b*) The opinion of the horse could represent the opinion of society; the speaker recognises that, in the eyes of his peers, his actions are unusual

   (*c*) Frost is trying to imbue his otherwise somber poem with a bit of humour

   (*d*) The talking horse suggests that animals, as representatives of the natural world, are wise and have important things to say to us

6.7 Summary

- "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a poem written in 1922 by Robert Frost, and published in 1923 in his New Hampshire volume. Imagery and personification are prominent in the work. In a letter to Louis Untermeyer, Frost called it "my best bid for remembrance".
- This is Robert Frost's most well-known poem. It was published in his collection called *New Hampshire* in 1923. This poem illustrates many of the qualities most characteristic of Frost, including the attention to natural detail, the relationship between humans and nature, and the strong theme suggested by individual lines. In this poem, the speaker appears as a character. It is a dark and quiet winter night, and the speaker stops his horse in order to gaze into the woods. The speaker projects his own thoughts onto the horse, who doesn't understand why they have stopped; there's no practical reason to stop. The woods are ominously tempting and acquire symbolic resonance in the last stanza, which concludes with one of Frost's often-quoted lines, "miles to go before I sleep." One interpretation of this stanza is that the speaker is tempted toward death which he considers.

6.8 Keywords

Aster : A flower that blooms in the autumn

Beholden : Obligated

Notes

Bracken	:	A large fern
Clasp	:	A tight grip
Coax	:	To influence or manipulate with gentle persuasion
Consign	:	Entrust
Conspiracy	:	A group of people agreeing to take part in an unlawful or immoral act

6.9 Review Questions

1. What is the basic conflict in the poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"?
2. In which thriller was the last stanza of this poem used and why?
3. Are the woods in this poem particularly wild? If not, why?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*a*)	2. (*c*)	3. (*b*)	4. (*b*)
5. (*b*)	6. (*b*)		

6.10 Further Readings

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Notes

Unit 7: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost– Detailed Study and Analysis

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the meaning of the poem;
- Discuss the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*.

Introduction

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was born in San Francisco, California, where he spent his childhood. In 1885, after his father died of tuberculosis, the Frosts moved to Massachusetts. There, Robert graduated from high school, sharing top honours with a student he would later marry, Elinor White.

Frost attended Dartmouth and Harvard, married Miss White in 1895, worked farms, and taught school. In his spare time, he wrote poetry. Disappointed with the scant attention his poems received, he moved with his wife to Great Britain to present his work to readers there. Publishers liked his work and printed his first book of poems, *A Boy s Will*, in 1913, and a second poetry collection, *North of Boston*, in 1914. The latter book was published in the United States in 1915.

Having established his reputation, Frost returned to the United States in 1915 and bought a small farm in Franconia, N.H. To supplement his income from the farm and his poetry, he taught at universities. Between 1916 and 1923, he published two more books of poetry—the second one, *New Hampshire*, won the 1923 Pulitzer Prize. He went on to win three more

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Pulitzer Prizes and was invited to recite his poem "The Gift Outright" at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in January 1961. Frost died in Boston two years later. One may regard him as among the greatest poets of his generation.

7.1 Meaning of the Poem

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" presents one person's momentary encounter with nature. We do not know whether the speaker (narrator) is a man or a woman. In fact, we know nothing about the person except that he or she has been travelling on a country road in a horse-drawn wagon (or cart or carriage) on "the darkest evening of the year." If by this phrase the speaker/narrator means the longest night of the year—that is, the night with the most hours of darkness–then the day is either December 21 or 22. In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice occurs each year on one of those days. The solstice is the moment when the sun is farthest south. However, if by "darkest evening" he means most depressing, bleakest, or gloomiest, he may be referring to his state of mind.

Let us assume that the speaker is a man, the poet Frost himself, who represents all people on their journey through life. When he sees an appealing scene, woods filling with snow, he stops to observe. Why does this scene appeal to him? Because, he says, the woods are "lovely, dark, and deep."

Perhaps he wishes to lose himself in their silent mystery, away from the routine and regimen of everyday life—at least for a while. Maybe the woods remind him of his childhood, when he watched snow pile up in hopes that it would reach Alpine heights and cancel school and civilization for a day. Or perhaps the woods represent risk, opportunity—something dangerous and uncharted to be explored. It could be, too, that they signify the mysteries of life and the afterlife or that they represent sexual temptation: They are, after all, lovely, dark, and deep.

The traveller might also regard the woods as the nameless, ordinary people who have great beauty within them but are ignored by others. This interpretation recalls a theme in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," in which Gray writes:

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
>
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
>
> Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
>
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Here the gem in the bottom of the ocean and the flower in the desert symbolize neglected people with much to offer the world if only someone would take time notice them. The woods in Frost's poem are just as lovely as the flower and just as dark and deep as the cave holding the gem, but civilization pays little heed to the gem, the flower, and the woods.

Perhaps Frost sees the woods as a symbol of the vanishing wilderness consumed by railroads, highways, cities, shopping centres, parking lots. A man in the village owns the woods now. What will he do with them?

In 1958, poet John Ciardi (1916-1986) suggested in Saturday Review magazine that the woods in Frost's poem symbolize death. He further wrote that the speaker/narrator wants to enter the woods—that is, he wants to die, commit suicide. Frost himself scoffed at this interpretation in public appearances and in private conversations. But is it possible that Frost's subconscious mind was speaking in the poem, revealing thoughts and desires unknown to his conscious mind?

Maybe, in the end, the woods and the snow are what they are: quiet, peaceful, beautiful. Although the traveller wants to stay to look at them, he has promises to keep, and miles to go before he sleeps.

7.2 Detailed Explanation

Stanza 1

Whose woods these are I think I know,

His house is in the village though.

He will not see me stopping here,

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Explanation: In this opening stanza, the setting is clarified as a winter evening in a rural environment. The speaker desires to watch snowfall quietly in some woods. While these woods belong to someone, that person is not present and so will not protest if the speaker trespasses.

Line 1

Whose woods these are I think I know.

- Our speaker is not the most confident person in the world. This line begins as a question, and we're totally ready to get on board the question train, but then, halfway through the line, he switches it up.
- He wonders initially who owns "these woods." The word 'these' makes us realise that our speaker is actually near the woods in question.
- Our speaker then tells us he thinks he knows who owns these woods. Notice how he doesn't say he knows who owns these woods; he says he thinks he knows.
- Why doesn't our speaker say, "I think I know whose woods these are"? What would be lost or gained if the poem began with that rewritten line?

Line 2

His house is in the village though;

- The speaker thinks he knows the owner of woods, and this owner lives in a house in the village. Civilization, sweet, sweet civilization!
- This line tells us that there is a village around here somewhere. The word "village" reminds us of thatched roofs, smoke curling out of little chimneys, and of a few stores and homes clustered around a single main street; in other words, a village is not the most hoppin' place in the world.
- However, our speaker is relieved that the owner of the woods is in the village – now he doesn't have to worry about getting caught trespassing on someone else's property.

Line 3

He will not see me stopping here

- Man, this woods-owner guy must be pretty strict if our speaker is so worried about getting caught taking a breather on his property.
- The speaker is almost trying to calm himself down and reassure himself that the owner "will not see me stopping here," as though he believes that saying so makes it true. It's

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similar to the magical phrase, "If I can't see them, they can't see me," uttered by Haley Joel Osment in the movie Sixth Sense.

- This line also tells us that the speaker has stopped, that he's hanging out at the moment.

Line 4

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

- Our speaker is a total rebel. He's hardcore trespassing so that he can…watch the snow fall?
- Yes, he has stopped in order to take a gander at snow falling on cedars.

Stanza 2

My little horse must think it queer,

To stop without a farmhouse near,

Between the woods and frozen lake,

The darkest evening of the year.

Explanation: The speaker emphasizes that he has no practical reason to stop, that he is stopping for the beauty of the scene only. However, in line 8, an element of darkness appears, which can indicate that all is not well. Because the speaker also emphasizes the cold with "frozen lake," readers begin to understand that the poem may not be a simple lighthearted celebration of nature.

Line 5

My little horse must think it queer

- Our speaker is not alone! He has a horse, and this horse is little. Maybe a pony.
- The speaker and his little horse probably spend a lot of time together, because our speaker is totally able to read the little horse's mind.
- He imagines that his horse is thinking that things are a little strange right now.

Line 6

To stop without a farmhouse near

- Our speaker continues to read his horse's mind, and imagines the horse is thinking something along the lines of, "Who are we, why are we stopping here? We're in the middle of nowhereville. Where's my dinner? I don't know about you, but I'm cold. There isn't even a farmhouse close by – what's going on?"
- The fact that our speaker even attempts to figure out what his horse is thinking shows that he's a caring kind of guy, and that he's aware that stopping in the middle of some snowy woods is kind of a random thing to do.

Line 7

Between the woods and frozen lake

- Now we get the 411 on just where, exactly, the speaker and his horse have stopped: they are currently hanging out between the woods and the "frozen lake," so they must be on a little patch of snowy shoreline with dark trees to one side and a glossy, ice-covered lake to the other.

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- It must be really cold if the lake is frozen, and we also are kind of intrigued by the fact that the speaker is not riding through the woods, but is right beside the woods.

Line 8

The darkest evening of the year.

- Not only is it snowy and wintry, but it's also approaching night-time too.
- Why is this speaker dilly-dallying when the light is dying and the snow is falling? A lot of people in his place would want to scurry home as fast as is humanly possible.
- Besides sounding ominous and like the preview to a horror movie, "the darkest evening of the year" makes us think of the winter solstice, which occurs in late December (in the northern hemisphere) each year and marks the moment at which the sun is at its farthest possible distance from the observer.
- It also happens to mark the beginning of winter.
- Whatever the case may be, it's dark out and it's getting darker by the minute. We don't think that the speaker is the kind of guy to pack flashlights.

Stanza 3

He gives his harness bells a shake,

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep,

Of easy wind and downy flake.

Explanation: Sounds are important in this stanza—namely, the sounds of the bells, the wind, and the snowflakes. All of the sounds are gentle, contrasting with the cacophony of everyday life in a town.

Line 9

He gives his harness bells a shake

- Even though the speaker can read his little horse's mind, the horse can't talk back.
- So, the next best option is to shake his booty. And by shaking his booty, we mean that he shakes his harness a little. There are little bells attached to his harness, which give a nice little jingle (think Santa Claus's sleigh).

Line 10

To ask if there is some mistake.

- Again with the mind reading. Our speaker knows his horse is shaking his bells in order to "ask" his master if something is awry, if there's a problem.
- It's kind of like the horse is saying, "Hey, is everything OK? We've been standing here staring at nothing for a little while, and I just wanted to make sure you didn't need me to keep on truckin'. I'm cool with the standing still thing, but I just wanted to make sure I wasn't misinterpreting you."

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Line 11

The only other sound s the sweep

- Beyond the harness bells' shaking, the only other sound that the speaker can hear is the "sweep."
- The word "sweep" makes us think of the sound brooms make when they sweep dust into a dustpan.
- At this point, we realize that the speaker is taking inventory of all of the sounds around him. He's interested in sounds.

Line 12

Of easy wind and downy flake.

- The sweeping noise comes from the slight wind and the softly falling snow.
- Have you ever listened to snow falling? It's very, very quiet. There's just a gentle whirr. Everything is very, very still.

Stanza 4

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Explanation: The traveller would like to stay awhile and perhaps even enter the woods to absorb their ambience and ponder the mystery of life and nature. However, he has obligations and responsibilities. Therefore, he decides to move on. But the poem does not say whether he in fact moves on. One presumes that he does.

Line 13

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.

- Our speaker finally admits to liking the woods. We knew it all along. He's entranced by the darkness and deepness of the woods, and he thinks they are lovely.
- Dark and deep woods are awesome in our book, but they also make us feel slightly anxious. There's something mysterious about the maze-like nature of woods and forests.
- The point, though, is that our speaker digs these woods.

Line 14

But I have promises to keep,

- Our speaker begins this line with the word "but." The word "but" makes us think that the speaker is contemplating staying in these woods rather than returning to the village to fulfill the promises he's made.
- These promises may be things like, "I'll be home for dinner, mom," or they may be things like, "Let's get married," or "I will take care of you."
- Regardless of whether these are big promises or little promises, our speaker flirts momentarily with the idea of breaking them, before deciding against it.

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Line 15

And miles to go before I sleep,

- Rats. Our speaker really is in the middle of nowhere, because he's still got a few miles to go before he can rest his head on his pillow. He better roll out soon.
- But we feel like we are well acquainted with that feeling of being so far away from where you need to be that it almost seems easier to just give up and hang out.

Line 16

And miles to go before I sleep.

- OK, so our speaker must really be far from home, because he feels the need to *repeat* the fact that he's got miles to go.
- However, when he says the line a second time, we hear the word "sleep" more clearly than when we heard it in the line before. Maybe that's because "sleep" has the honour of wrapping up the entire poem.
- In any case, this line makes us think of how awesome it will be for our speaker to finally rest his head on his pillow after such a long trek.

7.3 Figures of Speech

Following are examples of figures of speech in the poem. For definitions of figures of speech,

Alliteration

His **h**ouse is in the village though (line 2)

He will not **s**ee me **s**topping **h**ere (line 3)

To **w**atch his **w**oods fill up**w**ith snow (line 4)

He gives **h**is **h**arness bells a shake (line 9)

Hyperbole

To watch his woods fill up with snow

Metaphor

He gives his harness bells a shake,

To ask if there is some mistake. (lines 9-10)

Comparison of the sound of the bells to a questioning voice that asks whether there is a mistake

Personification/Metaphor

My little horse must think it queer

Comparison of the horse to a human. Only a human can determine whether something is "queer."

End Rhyme

The end rhyme in the poem is as follows:

First stanza, **aaba**

Second stanza, **bbcb**

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Third stanza, **ccdc**

Fourth stanza, **dddd**

Internal Rhyme

Here are examples of internal rhyme in the poem

H**e** will not s**ee** m**e** stopping here (line 3)

My l**it**tle horse must think **it** queer (line 5)

To stop with**ou**t a farmh**ou**se near (line 6)

B**et**w**ee**n the woods and frozen lake (line 7)

The darkest **e**vening of the y**ea**r (line 8)

7.4 Structure and Meter

The poem consists of four stanzas, each with four lines. (A four-line stanza is called a quatrain.) Each line in the poem has eight syllables (or four feet). In each line, the first syllable is unstressed, the second is stressed, the third is unstressed, the fourth is stressed, and so on. Thus, the poem is in iambic tetrameter. An iamb is a foot containing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. A tetrameter is a line of poetry or verse containing four feet. The following example—the first two lines of the poem–demonstrates the metric scheme. The unstressed syllables are in blue; the stressed are in black in capitals. Over each pair of syllables is a number representing the foot. Also, a black vertical line separates the feet.

.....1..... .....2..... .. ..3.....4

Whose **WOODS**..|..these **ARE**..|..I **THINK**..|..I **KNOW**

.....1.....2.... .....3.....4

His **HOUSE**..|..is **IN**..|..the **VILL**..|..age **THOUGH**

7.5 Themes

The theme of "Stopping by Woods On A Snowy Evening" is obviously not a definite one. It is, moreover, the usage of simplicity at its best, insofar one can enjoy the superficial provocation. Deeper meaning can be drawn from the poem, and the beauty of the initial piece is that you can draw the *deeper meaning* from it. One goes through the poem, seemingly understanding the implications, but then you get to the last two lines: "And miles to go before I sleep/ And miles to go before I sleep" then you think to yourself that there is a deeper meaning. It makes you think of how things must be completed before the man's **death** (implied by sleep). You then go through the poem again, seeking the deeper meaning with a newfound curiosity and if you look hard enough, you'll find it: be it something plausibly visible to all or something one applies (or conjures and relates to) his or her personal lives. –The Professor TNy

In the modern world, man is left with no time to enjoy the breathtaking beauties of nature. Nature presents man with a multitude of her creations, the enjoying of which will relieve him of his tedious daily care and anxiety. It is when they are enjoyed to the fill by somebody that a creator of beautiful things gets his relish. At the same time, even if he decides, a man now cannot spend too much time for enjoying the beauties of nature. In the past he certainly could, as Time was cosmic when there was only dawn, noon and dusk. But now time is machine-made and measured in seconds. He has so many duties to perform, besides. So singing the

following lines, withdrawing his mind from those scenic beauties for the time being, the dutiful poet resumes his journey, leaving the snow-filling forest behind him to be enjoyed some other time :

The woods are lovely dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Theme of Isolation

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a lonely poem, for our speaker finds himself far away from any other human being. He thinks of this aloneness, however, and is glad that no one is there to watch him. We get the feeling that he'd rather be all by his lonesome in the freezing cold than back in the village. Nature helps make things even lonelier, too, for it happens to be freezing cold, snowing, and dark out there.

Theme of Choices

The speaker in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" makes several choices, many of which his dearly beloved horse does not agree with. The biggest choice that he wrestles with is whether to return to the warmth and safety of the village or to stay and watch the woods fill up with snow. Our speaker does seem to have a hard time making his decision. He ultimately decides to return home, but it seems to take all of his willpower.

Theme of Man and the Natural World

We're not going to lie, nature seems pretty darn scary in this poem. Not scary like it's going to throw thunderbolts at our speaker or let hungry tigers lose on him, but scary in that it is mysterious and even rather seductive. Our speaker is almost enticed into staying and watching the woods fill up with snow, but if he stays too long, we've got to believe that he might freeze to death, catch a really bad cold, or forget his way home. Nature is a beautiful siren in this poem, compelling our speaker to hang out in spite of the dangerous consequences.

Theme of Society and Class

We don't get much information about where our speaker comes from or about the nearby village in this poem, but we do know that he's far away from civilization. We also know that the man who owns the woods lives in town in a house. From this little information, we can deduce that if you own things (like the owner of the woods does), then you live in the midst of society. Our speaker is not so concerned with society. In fact, society to him is about as appetizing as cod liver oil. He'd rather be alone with nature. To us, the village sounds quaint, cute, and warm. To our speaker, the village represents his obligations, responsibilities, and promises.

7.6 Analysis

In terms of text, this poem is remarkably simple: in sixteen lines, there is not a single three-syllable word and only sixteen two-syllable words. In terms of rhythmic scheme and form, however, the poem is surprisingly complex. The poem is made up of four stanzas, each with four stressed syllables in iambic meter. Within an individual stanza, the first, second, and fourth lines rhyme (for example, "know," "though," and "snow" of the first stanza), while the

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third line rhymes with the first, second, and fourth lines of the following stanza (for example, "here" of the first stanza rhymes with "queer," "near," and "year" of the second stanza).

One of Frost's most famous works, this poem is often touted as an example of his life work. As such, the poem is often analyzed to the minutest detail, far beyond what Frost himself intended for the short and simple piece. In reference to analyses of the work, Frost once said that he was annoyed by those "pressing it for more than it should be pressed for. It means enough without its being pressed…I don't say that somebody shouldn't press it, but I don't want to be there."

The poem was inspired by a particularly difficult winter in New Hampshire when Frost was returning home after an unsuccessful trip at the market. Realizing that he did not have enough to buy Christmas presents for his children, Frost was overwhelmed with depression and stopped his horse at a bend in the road in order to cry. After a few minutes, the horse shook the bells on its harness, and Frost was cheered enough to continue home.

The narrator in the poem does not seem to suffer from the same financial and emotional burdens as Frost did, but there is still an overwhelming sense of the narrator's unavoidable responsibilities. He would prefer to watch the snow falling in the woods, even with his horse's impatience, but he has "promises to keep," obligations that he cannot ignore even if he wants to. It is unclear what these specific obligations are, but Frost does suggest that the narrator is particularly attracted to the woods because there is "not a farmhouse near." He is able to enjoy complete isolation.

Frost's decision to repeat the final line could be read in several ways. On one hand, it reiterates the idea that the narrator has responsibilities that he is reluctant to fulfill. The repetition serves as a reminder, even a mantra, to the narrator, as if he would ultimately decide to stay in the woods unless he forces himself to remember his responsibilities. On the other hand, the repeated line could be a signal that the narrator is slowly falling asleep. Within this interpretation, the poem could end with the narrator's death, perhaps as a result of hypothermia from staying in the frozen woods for too long.

The narrator's "promises to keep" can also be seen as a reference to traditional American duties for a farmer in New England. In a time and a place where hard work is valued above all things, the act of watching snow fall in the woods may be viewed as a particularly trivial indulgence. Even the narrator is aware that his behavior is not appropriate: he projects his insecurities onto his horse by admitting that even a work animal would "think it queer."

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Where is the house of the owner of the Woods?

   (*a*) in the city (*b*) in the town

   (*c*) in the village (*d*) none of these

2. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a

   (*a*) social poem (*b*) lonely poem

   (*c*) poem of festivals (*d*) none of these

3. In 1923, Robert Frost won Pulitzer Prize for

   (*a*) North of Boston (*b*) New Hampshire

   (*c*) A Boy's Will (*b*) none of these

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4. The poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" was inspired by a particularly difficult weather in

   (*a*) Old Stafford (*b*) New Hampshire

   (*c*) Lankashire (*d*) none of these

5. Robert Frost, the quintessential New England poet, spent his first eleven years in what place?

   (*a*) Derry, Massachusetts (*b*) Londonderry, New Hampshire

   (*c*) London, England (*d*) San Francisco, California

6. What is the rhyme scheme of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (excluding the last stanza)?

   (*a*) AAAB BBBC, etc. (*b*) AABA BBCB, etc.

   (*c*) ABAB BCBC, etc. (*d*) AAAA BBBB, etc.

7. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is written in what meter?

   (*a*) Iambic tetrameter (*b*) Iambic pentameter

   (*c*) Varied meter (*d*) Gas meter

7.7 Summary

- Our speaker is in the woods, but (gasp) he's trespassing. He first wonders who owns these woods. In the same breath, he tells us that he thinks he does know who owns them. The lucky landowner lives in a house in the village. So, our speaker won't get into trouble for trespassing, because there's no one to catch him trespassing.
- Surprise! Our speaker has a horse (neigh), and this horse is little. Our speaker psycho-analyzes his little horse and supposes that said little horse must think it's pretty strange for them to be stopping in the middle of nowhere, with no one in sight, with not even a farmhouse close by, and absolutely no sign of hay. Newsflash: the speaker and his little horse are chilling (pun intended) between the woods and a frozen lake. Ice skating? No. Also, it happens to be the darkest evening of the year.
- Little Horse is starting to really lose it. Fortunately, he has some harness bells on his back, and he gives them a little shake in order to get his master's attention. The only other sounds are of a slight wind and of falling snow. Shhhhhh. It's quiet. Our speaker admits to having a hankering for the dark woods, but he tells us he's got things to do, people to see and places to go. He's got a long way to go before he can rest his head on his little pillow, so he had better got going.

7.8 Keywords

Abode : House

Airy : Light or delicate

Alter : Change

Wages : Money that is paid in exchange for daily or weekly labour

wend : To go one's way

whippoorwill : A small North American bird with white, gray, or black plumage

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whither	:	An archaic term meaning "where"
wist	:	An archaic term meaning "know"
witch hazel	:	A small tree with flexible branches
wither	:	To shrivel up
zephyr	:	A light spring breeze

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*c*)	2. (*b*)	3. (*b*)	4. (*b*)
5. (*d*)	6. (*b*)	7. (*a*)	

7.9 Review Questions

1. It is extremely important to select the right word, with the most appropriate connotation, to present a thought or an image. Why do you suppose Frost chose to use *woods* instead of *the forest*? Why did he choose *easy* instead of *gentle* in the fourth stanza?
2. Write a short profile of the speaker/narrator/traveller.
3. Why did Frost end the poem repeating the same line?
4. Recall and write about the thoughts going through your mind during a snowstorm (or another weather event).

7.10 Further Readings

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Unit 8: A Flight of Pigeons by Ruskin Bond–Detailed Study

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Introduce a well-known Indian writer in English-Ruskin Bond;
- Discuss the Flight of Pigeons.

Introduction

Ruskin Bond is a well known Indian writer in English. He has written more than hundred short stories, six novels, three collections of verse and over thirty books for children. Bond has written two autobiographies. The first, *Scenes from a Writer s Life,* covers the first twenty-one years of his life and the second book, *The Lamp is Lit,* narrates when Bond returned to India after a two-year stay in England. Ruskin Bond received Sahitya Academy Award for his book Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra, 1992, and was honoured with the title Padam Shree in 1999, for his lifetime contribution to Indian literature in English. He has been writing for the last fifty years in different genres of literature.

Ruskin Bond was born on May 19, 1934, at Kasauli H.P. He is the eldest son of late Aubrey Alexander. His sister named Ellen was a little handicapped child. Ellen lived with her grandmother but Ruskin Bond grew up with his father in Jamnagar (Gujarat), Dehradoon and Shimla. He had his primary education in the boarding school of Mussoorie and Shimla. His father had to go from one place to another due to his job and Ruskin Bond also accompanied him. When Ruskin Bond was eight years old his mother Agnet Clark left him under the guardianship of his father. Bond's relationship with his mother, Agnet Clark, seems to have been very distant.

He mentions her as young, pretty, and fun loving, but unfortunately, she did not provide the stability and affection of a mother that the young Bond needed. He claims that his mother frequently left home when he was small, leaving him with a lasting sense of insecurity, from

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which he suffered throughout his life. Both security and affection of a mother were provided by his father, but the untimely death of his father made him spend a lonely childhood. The first twenty years of Ruskin Bond's life were significant regarding the development of his personality and writing skill.

His optimistic attitude toward life, made him attractive. Although he suffered much throughout his life yet he never gave up hope and tried to fulfill the dreams and ambitions of his father, because his father wanted to develop his personality as a writer.

His father writes in his letter to Ruskin Bond:

"I wanted to write before about your writing, Ruskin, but forget… you have written in very small hand writing, as if you wanted to squeeze a lot of news into one sheet of letter-paper. It's not good for you and for your eyes… I know your hand writing is good and that you come first in class for hand writing, but try and form a longer style of writing." Bond has always been interested in books of all types. Some of his favourite authors include Charles Dickens, Emily Bronte, TE Lawrence, Rudyard Kipling, and Tagore. His love of books was inspired by his father. His father loved him very much and wanted to make him a creative writer. He also loved his father and missed him very much after his death. He did not want to leave India but to make his career and improve his creative talent he decided to go to England. When Bond arrived at his Aunt Emily's home in Jersey, he had only three or four pounds left from his travel money. Since he did not want to be a burden on his relatives, he looked for a job in St. Hailer and got his first job in Jersey. Jersey is a small island, which is fourteen miles away from the French coast. He worked there as a junior clerk.

It was easy to find a job in those days, and he held three jobs at various times, including assistant to the Thomas Cook travel agent in Jersey and wages clerk in the Public Health Department, where he earned easily for his living. He also took the Jersey Civil Service examination and was placed fourth in order of merit. The holiday resort atmosphere of Jersey did not suit his temperament. In Jersey; Bond was terribly homesick for India.

He worked in a travel agency, but he did not take much interest in these odd jobs, and started writing, at the age of seventeen he wrote his first successful novel "The Room on the Roof", the novel got immense popularity and he was awarded a prestigious "John Llewellyn Rhys memorial Prize. It was the highest award for a young writer in Britain at that time. Although Ruskin Bond was basically from England and his forefathers were British, yet he always missed India and the friends at Dehra. His autobiography, *Scenes from a Writer's Life,* reveals his longing for the atmosphere of India:

"...even though my forefathers were British, Britain was not really my place. I did not belong to the bright lights of Piccadilly and Leicester Square; or, for that matter, to the apple orchards of Kent or the strawberry fields of Berkshire. I belonged, very firmly, to peepal trees and mango groves; to sleepy little towns all over India; to hot sunshine, muddy canals, the pungent smell of marigolds; the hills of home; spicy odours, wet earth after summer rain, neem pods bursting; laughing brown faces; and the intimacy of human contact".

He decided to return to India because he could not keep himself away from India any more. After returning from England he preferred to live in a small town Dehradoon, away from the hustle bustle of a city life. The town helped him to revive the memories of a dear father and also a forced relationship with his mother and step father. This heavenly landscape helped him to get rid of this gloom. Ruskin Bond developed his habit of walking along the slopes with hands in his pockets. His early romance with Dehradoon is revealed in hundred of his stories, essays, poems and sketches. He recollected pre- Independent Dehradoon in the following words:

"When I was a boy in Dehra in 1940, the place looked like a fairy land. It has been the inspiration for all my stories and my love for it will make me alive here and keep writing about the town."When Ruskin Bond started writing, it was quite difficult to find a publisher who could encourage a new writer, so Ruskin Bond took interest in journalism. He recollects the following effect:

"From my small flat in Dehradoon, I began bombarding every newspaper and magazine editor in the land with articles, stories, essays and even poems".

There were many magazines at that time like Statesman, The Tribune, The Telegraph, The Pioneer, The Leader, The Times of India, The Illustrated Weekly, which published his fictions. His children books began to get published in different parts of the world. His essays and articles, which covered a variety of topics such as animals, nature, plants, ghosts, and movies, were published in the literary sections of The Sunday Statesman (Calcutta), The Hindu (Madras), The Tribune (Ambala), The Pioneer (Lucknow), and The Leader (Allahabad). Some even appeared in non-mainstream publications like Sainik Samachar (New Delhi), which paid him Rs 25 for 1,000 words. For a couple of months, he also contributed a regular column, "Letter from Hollywood," about American movies and new stars, to The Leader, for which he was paid Rs 30.

Ruskin Bond writes that his autobiographical work *The Lamp Is Lit: Leaves from a Journal,* a collection of essays, episodes, and journal entries, is a celebration of his survival as a freelance—this survival being as much the result of his stubbornness. He explains:

"At twenty I was a published author, although not many people had heard of me! And although I wasn't making much money then, and probably never would, it was the general consensus among my friends that I was an impractical sort of fellow and that I would be wise to stick to the only thing that I could do fairly well—putting pen to paper".

Ruskin Bond wrote in the light of his own experience of life and he found impressions about thing and people which had an ordinary effect on him and it was reflected in his work. He was sober by temperament that has an effect on his life style. He was polite and highly adjustable personality like his father. The sadness and love of solitude that was part of his existence and also lack of resources did not allow him to get married and lead a happy life.

Ruskin Bond was a voracious reader, because his father introduced him to the wondrous world through books and thus he made reading his religion. He read fifteen thousand books during his school days and then he started his career as a writer. He says:

"The school library, The Anderson Library was fairly well stocked and it was something of a heaven for me over the next three years. There were always writers past or present, to discover and I still have a tendency to ferret out writers, who have been ignored or forgotten."

His first novel entitled "Nine Months" was written in the Boarding of Shimla. It was an account of his childhood "eulogies to my friends" he calls it but unfortunately it was confiscated by a teacher and never come into light. Ruskin's love for his maid is also retold in the short story "My First Love," where a maid is the mother figure who takes care of his physical needs, and comforts him when he is afraid at night, entertains him with fairy tales of princes, gardens, and palaces. His parents' marital troubles and his father's pain and loneliness had a lasting effect on the shy and sensitive Ruskin Bond, an effect that has influenced his attitude toward life and his writing.

He takes up serious themes for his stories but they are not dull, because he makes them interesting to attract the common reader. His focus of attention is the poor middle class men and women who follow their own way of life. He writes about beggers, villagers and yet they have their point of honour which he generally reveals through his works. Ruskin Bond thinks

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that even a rogue has his point of honour as a virtuous person has his point of dishonor. He therefore loves mankind. He wrote about every aspect of life.

From childhood to old-age, he wrote about his experience and incidents that he was involved in various times. Ruskin fictionalizes his childhood experiences in the novella *Once upon a Monsoon Time* and the short story "The Room of Many Colours," which is actually the first half of the novella, covering the protagonist's life in Jamnagar. The story reveals an innocent and a charmed view of childhood in which the protagonist is brought by his father, maid, and by a gardener, in the same way as Ruskin Bond was brought up by his father in Jamnagar. In 1963 Bond went to live in Mussoorie, where he still resides. Ruskin Bond's first ten years in Mussoorie were difficult for he was trying hard to become a writer, but he became unfortunate, when his mother died of breast cancer in 1969; his half brother Harold died in a car accident in December 1970. And his second half brother Hansel died in a motor cycle accident in 1971. His brother William left India around 1965 for the United Kingdom.

Another significant event of his life was his acquaintance and friendship with Prem Singh. In *From Small Beginning* included in *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* which is dedicated to Prem Singh and his family, Bond narrates how Prem Singh at the age of sixteen, asked for help in finding a job. At that time Prem Singh's uncle was already employed by Ruskin Bond for his own domestic chores, but, by Ruskin Bond's efforts Prem Singh was sent elsewhere, after a few years Prem Singh took his uncle's place and began working for Bond. Prem Singh came from a village near Rudraparyag in Pauri Garhwal on the higher peaks of the Himalayas. Prem Singh married when he was eighteen, and since then Ruskin Bond did not let them go away anywhere else. Ruskin Bond lived in Maple wood Lodge until 1975 when the trees were slaughtered and the mountains were blasted to build a road. Bond and his adopted family moved further up the mountains to Landour where he still lives with his adopted family.

Today Ruskin Bond leads a conventional family life with Prem Singh, Chandra, and their three children, two daughters-in-law and three grandchildren. The children call him Dada giving him a feeling of belonging to a family. Living with the adopted family he still sees himself as the goalkeeper from his soccer—playing days at Bishop Cotton School.

Ruskin Bond has been living in Mussoorie for nearly forty years now and has made the Himalayas as a part of his life. Ruskin Bond is inclined towards nature but since writing poetry is not lucrative, he continues to be a prolific writer of short- stories, essays, travel pieces, and novellas and he writes about people, places, animals and plants of the Himalayas. He also acts as a historian of the region, writing a lot about the past of Mussoorie and its surroundings, recording legends and anecdotes told to him by the hill folk and the old British residents. It was after coming to Mussorie that nature became the object of his attention, and his writing reflects the deep kinship and serenity that he experiences in the midst of the mountains. He admires the natural beauty of the source of the river Ganges as it bursts from its icy originating place, sounds of birds and mountains and rivers, the towering Deodar trees and flower strewn valleys.

Ruskin Bond's early short- stories written in Mussoorie were mainly about those individuals he had met in the small towns and villages of hilly area of India. Ruskin Bond has always lived in small towns in India, he always loved the people of hills as he found them innocent and honest. Many of his stories emerge from his imagination and bear upon his emotional attachment to Indian society.

Bond's stories are largely autobiographical, Bond states the fact that there is more fiction than reality in his stories but he writes in first person to give the authenticity to his stories. Ruskin Bond's focus of attention is the issues of everyday life, he does not think much over social issues like his contemporary writers. The only social issue he writes about is nature. He believes that others have dealt with issues such as caste and class more effectively than he can.

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Many of Bond's stories display his love of nature. They show how man is associated with nature, and how nature is being disrupted by modernization and scientific revolutions. In "*All Creatures Great and Small*," Bond describes a grandfather's love for animals and nature. While this is not a true story, because in reality he never got the love of his grandfather, in his autobiography he only mentions about his grandmother. Bond is concerned with the rapid disappearance of forests and animal wealth. In "Time Stops at Shamli," he writes about a stag's head mounted. He apparently does not like hunting rather he loves animals. Half of his stories have been inspired by the animals, he has seen around him. In his autobiography, Bond raised the voice in favour of animals and suggested that there must be some rights of animals like human beings on earth.

Another common theme in Bond's work is unrequited love. Bond's first real experience with love happened when he was in England to make his career. He fell in love with a Vietnamese girl, Vu Phuong. He describes her as a pretty, attractive and soft-spoken girl. They passed much time with each other. They had very innocent relationship. They walked clasping each other's hands, and she made tea for him, but unfortunately, she regarded him as a brother and when she returned to Vietnam to visit her family, she never came back to him.

In Ruskin Bond's love stories, the paths of two individuals cross briefly on Life's journey; they are attracted to each other but there is no fulfillment or lasting relationship. Most of his stories are related to unanswered love where the "joy" of the lover lies in remembering past happy moments rather than in possessing the object of his love. Bond presents a whole range of love stories from the carefree and natural love between a male and a female, to a love hampered by the restrictions placed on the female by her family, to one in which the female's spontaneous feelings are corrupted by social considerations.

The love stories are always told in the first person; mostly involve an unnamed protagonist in his thirties who falls in love with a young teenager. While relationship between two individuals with such a vast age difference may disturb some readers, suggesting sexual abuse, this is far from the case. It is a mutual relationship where the youth of the female partner denotes anage of innocence, a state of pure, unrestrained love when she gives innaturally to her physical and emotional needs. For instance, as Ruskin Bond writes in the introduction to The Night Train at Deoli, The male protagonist cherishes the memory of the brief encounter as a perfect love. Bond's love stories is always loyal and steady, the female is erratic, immature, orsusceptible to the social considerations of respectability, status, financial security, and social approval. His love stories are exposing of the intricacies involved in arranging a marriage and the controls placed on men and women.

He takes up the real situation in life and writes stories related to them. He is never harsh or deadly to his characters. He joins the sweeper boy, sleeps with him and holds his broom and bucket that is way of his life, he follows.

In fact Ruskin Bond is a living legend who has been portraying life and experiences through various genres of literature. Ruskin Bond has contributed in making three generations of Indian school children into readers. His short- stories, poems and essays- even those written forty or fifty years back- are widely authorized in school texts, and his books are recommended for reading in many schools throughout the country where English is the medium of communication.

8.1 A Flight of Pigeons

Ruskin Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* is based on the life of Ruth Labadoor of Shahjahanpur who survived the mutiny of 1857 (First war of Independence). Just enough imagination is used to weave Ruth's life, accounts and records of the mutiny into a novella highlighting the lifestyle,

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politics, people of that era and, of course, humanity, which according to the author is what the book is all about.

Ruskin Bond in 2002 introduced the book thus:

"In retelling the tale for today's reader I attempted to bring out the common humanity of most of the people involved—for in times of conflict and inter-religious or racial hatred, there are always a few (just a few) who are prepared to come to the aid of those unable to defend themselves."

"It was Pascal who wrote: 'Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.' Fortunately for civilization, there are exceptions."

As promised, the main theme in the book is how the defenseless members of an English family is protected by Hindu and Muslim families and later Sikh soldiers from the Indian rebels as they move from one house to another, one village to another till they reach their English relatives.

Some passages of the book make humorous reading and also give an insight to the people of that time, especially their creativity uninfluenced by western education and Bollywood:

'O thou who hast vanished like mustard oil which, when absorbed by the skin, leaves only its odor behind; thou with the rotund form dancing before my eyes which were wont to stare at me vacantly; wilt thou still snap thy fingers at me when this letter is evidence of my unceasing thoughts of thee? Why did you call me your lado, your loved one, when you had no love for me? And why have you left me to the taunts of that stick of a woman whom you in your perversity used to call a precious stone, your Ratna? Who has proved untrue, you or I? Why have you sported thus with my feelings? Drown yourself in a handful of water, or return and make my hated rival an ornament for your neck, or wear her effigy nine times around your arm as a charm against my longings for you.'

A vivid account of the battle of Bichpuri goes like this:

'And who was it who got the worst of the fight?'

'Why, the Kafirs, of course, Chachi. We made a clean sweep of them,'

'There was not one man left, Chachi, so do you know what they did? They sent their women out to fight us!'

'This becomes more intriguing,' said Kothiwali. 'You are a gifted boy, Faisullah—you have a wonderful imagination! Tell us, what did their women look like?'

'Well, they were rather big for women. Some of them wore false beards and moustaches. But each one of them had a high skirt with a metal disc hanging down in front.' (It suddenly dawned on me that Faisullah was describing a Scots regiment of Highlanders.) 'Such horrid-looking women, I assure you. Of course, there was no question of fighting them. I don't lift my hand against women and out of sheer disgust I left the camp and came away.'

This story provides for more such dialogues and situations of quaint humor.

"While most of the British wives in the cantonment thought it beneath their dignity to gossip with servants, Mariam Labadoor, who made few social calls, enjoyed these conversations of hers. Often they enlivened her day by reporting the juiciest scandals on which they were always well-informed. But from what Mariam had heard recently, she was convinced that it was only a matter of hours before rioting broke out in the city."

It is this wisdom of hers which helps Mariam save her family and herself from rebels time and again. It brought to mind how advantageous it is to mingle with sections beyond your social

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circle, especially those belonging to your rivals, anti-social elements and rebels, because who else will have a better knowledge of them.

Another interesting point is the way a lot of the Indian rebels or freedom fighters of 1847 believed that they could wipe out the Firangis off the face of India, typical of misplaced optimism created by misinformation and emotion over intelligence. Some may say they tried at least but I wonder if any good came out of it. I suspect it only worsened the situation and eventually led to partition.

'Only yesterday the fakir was saying that the Firangis had been wiped off the face of the land'.

'I am not so sure of that,' Remarked Hafizullah.

'Nor I, ' said Qamran. 'The fact is, we do not get much news here.'

'Though my uncle did boast the other day that there were no Firangis left, I overheard him whispering to Sarfaraz Khan that they were not yet totally extinct. The hills are full of them.'

'It is foolish to expect that the Firangis will be victorious. Have I not seen a score of them running for their lives pursued by one of our soldiers?'

People start coming back to senses after the news of Delhi being taken over by Firangis reach Shahjahanpur.

'Javed Khan will look quite small now, won't he?' said Kothiwali merrily. Apparently the news did not affect her one way or the other: she dealt in individuals, not in communities.

'And so much for the rebellion,' said Sarfaraz Khan philosophically. 'The city of Delhi was a garden of flowers, and now it is a ruined country; the stranger is not my enemy, nor is anyone my friend…'

The Notes section of the story had interesting references to the records and accounts of that time and later. Some of the enlightening ones were:

"Pathans formed thirty per cent of the Muslim population of Shahjahanpur (Muslims forming twenty-three per cent of the entire population) according to the 1901 census. Most were cultivators although many were landed proprietors of the district. (True Pathans are descendents of Afghan immigrants.) "Their attitude during the Mutiny cost them dear, as many estates were forfeited for rebellion." (Gazetteer)

"The number of Muslims whose services (to the British) were recognized are extremely small, as, apart from the two men who sheltered their Eutopoean kinsman, Mr Maclean, in pargana Tilhar, the only persons recognized were Nasir Khan and Amir Ali of Shahjahanpur, who buried the bodies of the Englishmen murdered on the occasion of the outbreak and Ghulam Husain, who saved the commissariat buildings from destruction and for some time protected several Hindis on the district staff." (Gazetteer, 1900)

Did u know? A Flight of Pigeons is a novella by Indian author, Ruskin Bond. The story is set in 1857, and is about Ruth Labadoor and her family (who are British) who take help of Hindus and Muslims to reach their relatives when their father is killed in a church by the Indian rebels. The novella is a mix of fiction and non fiction and was made into a film in 1978 called Junoon by Shyam Benegal, starring Shashi Kapoor, Nafisa Ali, and Jennifer Kendal.

I am ending the review in a romantic note, the whole truth of which only Ruth Labadoor knows:

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"Secretly, I have always hoped that he (Javed Khan) succeeded in escaping. Looking back on those months when we were his prisoners, I cannot help feeling a sneaking admiration for him. He was very wild and muddle-headed, and often cruel, but he was also very handsome and gallant, and there was in him a streak of nobility which he did his best to conceal."

8.2 Plot

The novel starts with the death of the father of Ruth Labadoor in front of her eyes in a church. This murder is committed by the Indian rebels who are a part of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and who have decided to kill all the Britishers of the small town Shahjahanpur. It is then that Mariam Labadoor, who is the mother of the narrator, Ruth Labadoor comes into action. She takes their entire family of 6 to their trusted friend Lala Ramjimal who keeps them at his home and gives them the maximum security and shelter he can give. The Pathan leader Javed Khan comes to know that there are a few foreigners living in Lala's home and he suddenly comes into their house and forcefully takes away Ruth and Mariam Labadoor to his home. The rest of the book is followed by the various happening in the Labadoor family, who are very warmly welcomed by different family members of Javed Khan. But, Javed Khan himself is a cunning man and he pleads to marry Ruth Labadoor. Mariam saves her daughter many times as she does not want her to marry Javed Khan. She keeps a condition that if the British are able to take on the country once again, then she would not let him marry her daughter and if they lose from the rebels, then she would give her daughter to him. The British are able to take the hold of the country and Javed Khan is killed in one of the fights with the Britishers. With lots of help and support, the Labadoor family finally reach their relatives.

8.3 Main Characters

Ruth Labadoor

She is the narrator of the novel and the eyewitness of the death of her father.

Mariam Labadoor

She is a strong-from-the-heart lady and saves her family from any harm. It is her stern behaviour that makes Javed Khan change his mind to kill the Labadoor family. She also saves her daughter from being married to Javed Khan. She is a very good knitter and knits beautiful clothes for the kind family members of Javed Khan. She is a very courageous girl who fought against Javed Khan. She was smart and always cared of her daughter and had a very merciful behaviour.

Lala Ramjimal

He is the most trusted friend of the Labadoor family and he gives them shelter when Mr. Labadoor passes away.

Javed Khan

He is a courageous Pathan. His commitment goes loose when he finds Ruth Labadoor and falls in love with her, although despite many pleads, he is not able to please Mariam Labadoor to marry her daughter with him.

8.4 Analysis

In any instance of violence, war, etc, there are the active participants—those that actually go out to war, actually take part in the violence as the perpetrators or as the victims, who die in battle. And then there are those behind the scenes, who are equal stakeholders in the fallout

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of the war, those who do not actually take up arms, but are silent sufferers as a result of it. Those who need to survive it all, with dignity, and re-build their lives. Those who have no wish for the violence around them, and who would rather go quietly about their lives in peace. The civilian victims, the women and the children. Often those who lose the most.

This book deals with some such survivors. It is historical fiction, which, according to the writer, may be based on fact. On actual events that probably took place during the 1857 uprising against British rule.

A study of the 1857 uprising is usually from the point of view of the Indian participants. We speak about Mangal Pandey, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Nana Saheb, and the like. And that is but natural when we speak of it as an uprising. But the British looked at it as the mutiny, being the rulers at the time.

In this book, the story is told from the point of view of Ruth Labadoor, a teenage British girl, who witnesses the massacre of British civilians in the church in the town of Shahajahanpur, including that of her father, at the hands of Indian militants.

Ruth and her mother, Miriam, grandmother, aunt and cousins are given refuge in Lala Ramjimal's house. They are tracked down there by Javed Khan, who has been enamoured of Ruth, since before her father's assassination. He forces the women to come to stay in his household, much to the chagrin of his wife, who is aware of his intentions. Which according to what he tells Ruth's mother, are honourable. He intends to marry Ruth, but he is willing to wait till Miriam gives her permission.

Javed Khan thus becomes an unlikely hero, whose passion for Ruth, combined with the surprising restraint he shows in waiting for her mother's permission keeps them safe through the days of peril for the British women. Mariam does the best thing that she could do as a mother fighting for her and her daughter's survival—keeps him at bay with the assurance that he could marry her daughter if the British fail in taking over Delhi, all the time hoping for the victory of the British, as that would ensure their safety. She knows that if she had stood up in open rebellion of him, she and her daughter would lose all chance of surviving honourably.

They had to spend the whole of 1857, and many months of 1858, in Javed Khan's household. We are told early in the book, that Miriam's mother is a girl from a *Nawab* family from Rohilon-ka-Rampur, married to a British officer. They therefore have Indian cultural roots, and integrate quite easily. They spend all their time in the *zenana* of Javed Khan, working as members of the household.

Except for Javed Khan's wife, Khan Begum, who dislikes their presence for obvious reasons, the rest of the women of the household soon get attached to them. They get invited to spend a few months at Khan-Begum's sister Qamran's and Javed Khan's aunt Kothiwali's place. Miriam is only too happy to take them up on their invitations, as it means that she can be safe, yet not worry about Javed Khan's repeated proposals for Ruth's hand.

It is at Qamran's place that a relative comes with the news of a prophecy made by Mian Saheb, a *Pir* (holy man).

'…that the restoration of the Firangi rule was as certain as the coming of doomsday. It would be another hundred years, he said, before the foreigners could be made to leave. **"See, here they come!"** he cried, pointing to the north where a flock of white pigeons could be seen hovering over the city. **"They come flying like white pigeons which, when disturbed, fly away and circle, and come down to rest again. White pigeons from the hills!" …'**

This prediction of Mian Saheb comes true, luckily for Miriam and Ruth. The British take over Delhi, and the uprising is put down. The British army then moves to take back every town, every post from where it has been ousted.

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True to his word, Javed Khan releases the women from his bondage, and they are free to go and join the British, no longer needing to be in hiding from the militants. But not before he gets Ruth to come before him, so that he could gaze on her face once, something he has not done till now, in spite of his passion for her.

A very perceptive, wonderfully written book, complete with a detailed look into the mechanisms of the *zenana* or women's quarters in a segregated household. A tale of survival of the refugee women who probably did so only because of a mother playing by her wits, guts and an ability to adapt and accept her circumstances.

The detailed and very perceptive (considering that Ruskin Bond is a man, and culturally a British one, at that!) potrayal of the camarederie and internal politics inside all Indian Muslim household women from a hundred years ago.

The book has an introduction by Ruskin Bond, in which he says that there was probably some truth in accounts of an actual girl called Ruth Labadoor, whose account is to be found in old records of the 1857 uprising. He quotes these specific references in the notes at the end of the book, as also gives us a perspective on the period in which the book is set.

In his own words, in the introduction to this 2002 edition, he says, *"In retelling the tale for today's reader I attempted to bring out the common humanity of most of the people involved— for in times of conflict and inter-religious or racial hatred, there are always a few (just a few) who are prepared to come to the aid of those unable to defend themselves."*

Something that is true of all such situations. As I discovered in my pursuit of books on the Holocaust, human beings are really good, and they often rise above themselves at such times.

He goes on to say, *"I published this account as a novella about thirty years ago. I feel it still has some relevance today, when communal strife and religious intolerance threaten the lives and livelihood of innocent, law-abiding people. It was Pascal who wrote,* ***'Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.'*** *Fortunately for civilization, there are exceptions."*

Very true even today, and will always be so until there are dystopian conditions anywhere on earth.

An analysis of *A Flight of Pigeons* will be incomplete without a mention of its 1978 movie adaptation, *Junoon*, which translated means 'a kind of madness,' whether it was the conditions during the uprising, or the madness of Javed Khan's passion for Ruth. This movie directed by Shyam Benegal, with Jennifer Kendal as Mariam, Nafisa Ali as Ruth, Shabana Azmi as Khan-Begum, and Jennifer's real-life husband Shashi Kapoor as Javed Khan, is that rare instance when, a Hindi movie matches the expectations raised by the book, if not betters it. A must watch for someone who enjoyed the book.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The story starts with the capture of ..... a small town village in U. P.
2. In ..... Bond went to live in Mussoorie, where he still resides.
3. Bond has written two autobiographies. The first, *Scenes from a Writer's Life,* covers the first twenty-one years of his life and the second book, ... narrates when Bond returned to India after a two-year stay in England.
4. Bond fell in love with a ..... .

Notes

8.5 Summary

- This one is different among most of Ruskin Bond's books, though I have not yet read all of his work. Most of his stories are either based on his own life's experiences, involve nature in one way or the other, and are concerned mostly with normal people and their normal lives and that's what makes them very realistic. This one is like a chapter from the history of our country, INDIA.
- The story starts with the capture of Shahjahanpur, a small town village in U. P., from English army by Indian Freedom fighters. With that starts killing and looting of English people settled over there with burning out their houses and capturing and imprisoning of their women, if there were any. Ruth, her mother (Mariam) and rest of her family, all women, were one such group. First they take refuge in the house of Lala Ramjimal, a friend of her father, but soon people around find out that there is group of English women hiding in his house. Then a Pathan named Javed Khan, one of the men of then Nawab of that area, takes them to his house. He puts the proposal of marrying Ruth before her mother, though he can have her forcibly, but he wants to do so with the will of the girl. Well, its hard to know, whether he loves her, but surely he likes her very much and is fond of her beauty. Mariam being a captive under Javed didn't have much options but somehow manages to save her daughter from the Pathan using one excuse or the other. In the backdrop of this story the events of the Revolt of 1857 is presented beautifully in bits and pieces. Finally story ends with English army once again taking over the city almost after an year in 1858.
- The story is narrated by the lead character Ruth. There are two main characters leaving Ruth—Javed Khan and Mariam, her mother. The character of Mariam is the one which is most impactful and strong, so much so that it makes you admire her. A strong willed woman with a great presence of mind! The way she saves her daughter from Javed is very impressive. Then Javed Khan a strong and powerful Pathan who can possess the girl any time he wants, but he waits for the agreement of Mariam. You like him somehow, like Ruth, though it is a negative character. The story is a real one told to Ruskin by his father and to him by someone.
- This novel has been made into a T.V. serial called "JUNOON". The book is readable, at least for one time, though not a very happy reading, it is interesting surely and humorous too at times. Consists of 120 pages with very simple words, it can be found in the "Collected Fiction Books of Ruskin Bond".

8.6 Keywords

Humorous : Humour or humor, the tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement.

Expectations : A strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future.

A belief that someone will or should achieve something.

Dystopian : An imaginary place or state in which the condition of life is extremely bad, as from deprivation, oppression, or terror.

8.7 Review Questions

1. Who is the best character in 'A Flight of Pigeons' and why?

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2. Who is the most trusted friend of the Labadoor family?
3. How does the story in 'A Flight of Pigeons' start?
4. From whom did Ruskin Bond get this story?

Answers: Self Assessment

1.	Shahjahanpur	2.	1963
3.	The Lamp is Lit,	4.	Vietnamese girl

8.8 Further Readings

Books Bond, Ruskin. *Scenes from a Writer s Life: A Memoir.* New Delhi: Penguin, 1997, p. 28-29.

Bond, Ruskin. *Scenes from a Writer s Life: A Memoir.* New Delhi: Penguin, 1997, p. 154-55.

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

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Unit 9: The Shroud by Munshi Premchand

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Introduce one of the greatest literary figures of modern Hindi and Urdu literature, Premchand;
- Discuss *The Shroud*.

Introduction

Munshi Premchand, (July 31, 1880 - October 8, 1936) was one of the greatest literary figures of modern Hindi and Urdu literature.

Premchand, whose original name was Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, was born on 31 July 1880, in the village Lamahi near Varanasi, where his father was a clerk in the postoffice. He was also known as Saala. Premchand's parents died young—his mother when he was seven and his father when he was fourteen and still a student. Premchand was left responsible for his step-mother and step-siblings.

Early in life, Premchand faced immense poverty. He earned five rupees a month tutoring a lawyer's child. He was married at the early age of fifteen but that marriage failed, later he married again, to Shivrani Devi, a balavidhava, (child widow), and had several children. She supported him through life struggles.

Premchand passed his matriculation exam with great effort in 1898, and in 1899 he took up school-teaching job, with a monthly salary of rupees eighteen.

Later, Premchand worked as the deputy sub-inspector of schools in what was then the United Provinces of Agra and Gorakhpur. Now, there is a very lushgreen park on the name of Premchand—"Premchand park"and government of India has also an autonomous body for research purpose on his literature in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.

In 1910, he was hauled up by the District Magistrate in Gorakhpur (near Normal school where DIET - Training centre for B.Ed and B.T.C is eshtablished nowadays)for his anthology of short stories S*oz-e-Watan* (*Dirge of the Nation*), which was labelled seditious. The first story of the

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anthology was *Duniya ka Sabse Anmol Ratan* (*The Most Precious Jewel in the World*), which according to him was "the last drop of bloodshed in the cause of the country's freedom". All the copies of Soz-e-Watan were confiscated and burnt. Initially Premchand wrote in Urdu under the name of Nawabrai. However, after the confiscation of *Soz-e-Watan* he started writing under the pseudonym Premchand. Before Premchand, Hindi literature consisted mainly of fantasy or religious works. Premchand brought realism to Hindi literature. He wrote over 300 stories, a dozen novels and two plays. The stories have been compiled and published as Maansarovar.

In 1921, he answered Mahatma Gandhi's call and resigned from his government job. Then he worked as the proprietor of a printing press, editor of literary and political journals (Jagaran and Hans). Briefly, he also worked as the script writer for the Bombay film world. He didn't think much of the film world and once remarked about film *Mazdoor* (*The Labourer*)- "The director is the all in all in cinema. The writer may be the king of his pen, but he is an ordinary subject in the director's empire...Idealism creeps into the plots I conceive and I am told there is no entertainment value in them."

Premchand's first marriage was a disaster. The second time, he married a child widow, Shivarani Devi, which was considered a taboo in India at that time. Premchand had three children - Sripat Rai, Amrit Rai and Kamla Devi Srivastava.

Premchand lived a life of financial struggle. Once he took a loan of two-and-a-half rupees to buy some clothes. He had to struggle for three years to pay it back.

When asked why he doesn't write anything about himself, he answered: "What greatness do I have that I have to tell anyone about? I live just like millions of people in this country; I am ordinary. My life is also ordinary. I am a poor school teacher suffering family travails. During my whole lifetime, I have been grinding away with the hope that I could become free of my sufferings. But I have not been able to free myself from sufferings. What is so special about this life that needs to be told to anybody?".

Premchand chaired the first all-India conference of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in April 1936 at Lucknow.

During his last years, he became terribly ill. The money his wife used to give for his treatment was used in running his press "The Saraswati". He was also writing a book "Mangalsutra" which would never be completed. All this had serious impact on his health leading to his early death on 8th October 1936, at the age of 56.

The main characteristic of Premchand's writings is his interesting story-telling and use of simple language. His novels describe the problems of the rural peasant classes. He avoided the use of highly Sanskritized Hindi (as was the common practice among Hindi writers), but rather he used the dialect of the common people.

Premchand called literature a work that expresses the truths and experiences of life impressively. Presiding over the Progressive Writers' Conference in Lucknow in 1936, he said that attaching the word "Progressive" to a writer was redundant, because "A writer or an artist is progressive by nature, if this was not his/her nature, he/she would not be a writer at all."

Before Premchand, Hindi literature was confined to the raja-rani (king and queen) tales, the stories of magical powers and other such escapist fantasies. It was flying in the sky of fantasy, until Premchand brought it on the grounds of reality. Premchand wrote on the realistic issues of the day - communalism, corruption, zamindari, debt, poverty, colonialism etc.

Some criticise Premchand's writings as full of too many deaths and too much of misery. They believe Premchand does not stand anywhere near contemporary literary giants of India—Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. But it should be noted, that many

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of Premchand's stories were influenced by his own experiences with poverty and misery. His stories represented the ordinary Indian people as they were, without any embellishments. Unlike many other contemporary writers, his works didn't have any "hero" or "Mr. Nice"—they described people as they were.

Premchand was a contemporary of some other literary giants of that era like Acharya Ram Chandra Shukla and Jaishankar Prasad.

Premchand wrote about 300 short stories, several novels as well as many essays and letters. He also wrote some plays. He also did some translations. Many of Premchand's stories have been translated into English and Russian.

Godaan (The Gift of a Cow), his last novel, is considered the finest Hindi novel of all times.The protagonist, Hori, a poor peasant, desperately longs for a cow, a symbol of wealth and prestige in rural India. Hori gets a cow but pays with his life for it. After his death, the village priests demand a cow from his widow to bring his soul to peace.

In Kafan (Shroud), a poor man collects money for the funeral rites of his dead wife, but spends it on food and drink.

Satyajit Ray filmed two of Premchand's works *Sadgati* and *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*. *Sadgati* (*Salvation*) is a short story revolving around poor Dukhi, who gets exhausted to death while hewing wood for a paltry favour. *Shatranj ke Khiladi* (*The Chess Players*) revolved around the decadence of nawabi Lucknow, where the obsession with a game consumes the players, making them oblivious of their responsibilities in the midst of a crisis.

Sevasadan (first published in 1918) was made into a film with M.S. Subbulakshmi in the lead role. The novel is set in Varanasi, the holy city of Hindus. Sevasadan ("House of Service") is an institute built for the daughters of courtesans. The lead of the novel is a beautiful, intelligent and talented girl called Suman. She belongs to high caste. She is married to a much older, tyrannical man. She realizes that marriage is just like prostitution except that there is only one client. Bholi, a courtesan, lives opposite Suman. Suman realizes that Bholi is "outside purdah", while she is "inside it". Suman leaves her husband and becomes a successful entertainer of gentlemen. But after a brief period of success, she ends up as a victim of a political drama played out by self-righteous Hindu social reformers and moralists.

He also worked with the film director Himanshu Rai of Bombay Talkies, one of the founders of Bollywood.

An extremely famous name that comes to mind when we talk of Urdu novel writers is that of Munshi Premchand. The life history of Prem Chand is like that of any ordinary man. But what makes him stand out are the numerous works he composed in his lifetime. They are still read with much enthusiasm and admiration. Though he had financial crunches all through his life, he had the rich collection of his works and compositions. Read on further about Munshi Premchand's biography to know more about the life of this common man who was an extraordinary genius.

Born in a village called Pandepur near Varanasi, he was named Dhanpat Rai by his parents. Tragedy struck early in his life when he lost his mother at the tender age of seven. His father, Munshi Ajayab Lal worked as an ordinary clerk in the postal department. He left Premchand in the guardian of his grandmother and married someone else. He grew up without the love of his parents and was given responsibility at a very young age. His grandmother also died soon and he was left with no one to take care of him.

At the age of 15, he got married and it didn't work out well. Meanwhile, his father died and he had to curtail his studies, as he had to take care of not just himself but also his stepsiblings.

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He managed to secure a job as a teacher in a primary school and rapidly got promoted to the post of Deputy Inspector of Schools. When Mahatma Gandhi announced the non-cooperation movement, Premchand quit his job and devoted his time to writing fully. His first short story was published in a magazine called Zamana that was circulated in Kanpur.

When it comes to write Urdu novels and short stories, Premchand definitely has his own special place. His style of writing novels began as fantasy tales of kings and queens. But as he became more and more conscious of what was happening around him, he started to write on social problems and his novels had the element of evoking the feeling of social consciousness and responsibility. He wrote about the realities of life and the various problems faced by the common man in a turbulent society.

His main focus remained rural India and exploitation faced by a common villager at the hands of priests, landlords, loan sharks, etc. He also emphasized the unity of Hindus and Muslims. Some of his well-known works are Godaan, Gaban, Karmabhoomi, Pratigya, etc. His famous short stories include popular names like Atmaram, Udhar Ki Ghadi, Bade Ghar Ki Beti, etc. Some of his works were also made into films by the noted filmmaker, Satyajit Ray. This great literary personality of India breathed his last on October 8, 1936.

9.1 The Shroud

Outside the hut, father and son sat before the dying embers in silence. Inside, the son's young wife, Budhiya, was thrashing about in labour. Every now and then, a blood-curdling shriek emerged from her mouth and they felt their hearts stop. It was a winter night, the earth was sunk in silence and the whole village had dissolved into the darkness.

Ghisu said, "Looks like she's not going to make it. She's been like this all day. Go take a look."

Madhav replied irritably, "If she's going to die, why doesn't she do it quickly? What's the point of taking a look?"

"You're pretty harsh. You've had a good time with her all year, and now? Such callousness?"

"Well, I can't stand to see her suffer and throw herself about like this."

This clan of cobblers was notorious in the village. If Ghisu worked a day, he would rest for three. Madhav was such a shirker that if he worked for half an hour, he'd smoke dope for one. Which was why they were never hired. If there was even a fistful of grain in the house, they took it to mean they didn't have to work. When they'd been starving for a few days, Ghisu would climb a tree and break off some branches and Madhav would sell them in the bazaar. As long as the money lasted, they'd loaf around here and there. And when the calamity of starvation came upon them again, they would break off more branches or look for work. There was no shortage of work in the village, it was a village of farmers and there were at least fifty jobs for a hard-working man. But these two were called in only when you had to be satisfied with two men doing the work of one.

Had they been renunciants, they would have had no need to exercise control or practice discipline in order to experience contentment and fortitude. Theirs was an unusual existence – apart from a few mud pots, there were no material possessions in their house. They went on with their lives, covering their nakedness with rags, free of worldly cares, burdened with debt. They'd suffer abuse, they'd suffer blows, but they had not a care in the world. They were so wretched that even though there was no hope of being repaid, people always loaned them something. During the potato harvest, they'd pull up peas or potatoes from other people's fields, cook them in some fashion and eat them. Or, they'd uproot a few stalks of sugarcane and suck on them at night. Ghisu had lived out sixty years with such supreme detachment and now Madhav, his worthy son, walked in his father's footsteps, determined to become even more illustrious.

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At this moment, too, they were roasting potatoes, which they had dug up from someone else's field, in the embers. Ghisu's wife had died many years ago. Madhav had married only the previous year. After the woman had come, she had laid the foundations for some kind of discipline in the household and managed to fill those shameless stomachs. And since she'd arrived, the two had become even more inclined to relax and had even started acting pricey. If someone called them in to work, they'd ask for double wages without batting an eyelid. Today, that woman was dying in childbirth and it was quite likely the pair were waiting for her to die so that they could get a good night's sleep.

Ghisu pulled out a potato and, peeling it, he said, "Go and see what's happening to her. There'll be the business of a witch, you can bet on it."

Madhav was afraid that, if he went into the hut, Ghisu would grab a larger share of the potatoes. He said, "I'm scared to go in there."

"What's there to be scared of? I'm right here."

"So why don't you go and see, then?"

"When my wife was dying, I didn't move from her side for three days. This one, she'll be embarrassed in front of me, won't she? I've never even seen her face. Now to look at her uncovered body! She'll be uncomfortable. If she sees me, she won't be able to throw her arms and legs around so freely."

"I'm wondering what will happen if there's a child—ginger, jaggery, oil—there's nothing in the house."

"Everything will come, when God is good and ready. This lot, who aren't giving us any money now, these same people will call us tomorrow and give us cash. I've had nine sons, there was never anything in the house, but God got us through the mess somehow."

In a society where people who toil day and night are not much better off than these two, and instead of farmers it's those who exploit them that grow rich, it's no surprise that attitudes like this develop. Let's say that Ghisu was cleverer than the farmers, that instead of joining those simple-minded peasants, he'd joined the company of conmen. Of course, he did not have the capacity to follow that company's rules and regulations, which was why others of his ilk had become chiefs and headmen in the village while he remained the one at whom fingers were pointed. Still, he had the consolation that, however badly off he was, he didn't have to work as achingly hard as the others and that people could not take undue advantage of his simplicity and helplessness.

The two of them pulled out the potatoes and devoured them, hot as they were. They had eaten nothing since the previous day. They didn't even have the patience to let them cool so, every now and then, they scalded their tongues. When it was peeled, the outer part of the potato did not seem that hot but, as soon as it was bitten, the inner part burned the tongue, the throat and the palate. Instead of holding that burning coal in one's mouth, it seemed wiser to send it down as soon as possible to where there was more to cool it. That's why they were swallowing so quickly, although the effort made their eyes water.

Ghisu thought back to a landlord's wedding feast that he had been to twenty years ago. The contentment he had felt at that feast was worth remembering for a lifetime and, even today, the memory was fresh. He said, "I'll never forget that meal. I've never eaten that kind of food—or that much of it – ever again. The girl's family fed everyone as many puris as they could eat. Everyone. The rich, the poor – everyone ate those puris. And they were made with pure ghee, mind you. Chutney, raita, three kinds of greens, one curried vegetable, curds – I can't tell you how delicious that food was. There was no holding back. Ask for whatever your heart desired, eat as much as you want. People ate and ate, so much that they couldn't even

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drink water. But those who were serving, they kept putting freshly cooked, perfectly round, fragrant kachoris onto our plates. We refused, we covered our plates with our hands, but they just kept serving! And when we were done, we even got paan and cardamom. I was in no shape to take the paan, I could barely stand. I went off immediately and wrapped myself in my blanket and lay down. That's how big-hearted he was, that landlord. Like an ocean!"

Madhav savored those delicacies in his mind and said, "No one gives us a meal like that now."

"There's no one to feed us like that anymore. That was a different time. Now everyone's counting pennies – don't spend on weddings, don't spend on religious festivals. Ask them, where will they stash all the money they take from the poor? There's no problem stashing the money, but when it comes to spending, then they think of thrift."

"You must have eaten about 20 puris, no?"

"I ate more than 20."

"I would have eaten 50."

"I ate no less than 50. I was pretty sturdy those days. You're not half of what I used to be."

They ate the potatoes, drank some water, curled up, covered themselves with their dhotis and fell asleep right there, by the embers, like two enormous pythons that had eaten their fill.

And still, Budhiya moaned.

In the morning, when Madhav looked inside the hut, his wife lay there, stone cold, flies buzzing around her face, her expressionless eyes rolled upwards. Her body was covered with dust, the child had died in her womb. Madhav ran to Ghisu. They started to wail loudly and beat their chests. The neighbours heard the weeping and wailing and came and, as was customary, began to console the two unfortunates. But this was not the time for full-throated lament, the shroud and the wood had to be considered. Money disappeared from that house like a piece of meat in a kite's nest. Father and son went, wailing, to the village landlord who could not stand the sight of them. He'd beaten them himself often enough, for stealing, for not showing up for work after they had promised to. He asked, "What is it, Ghisua, why are you crying? I don't see you around much these days, seems like you don't want to live in this village anymore."

His eyes filled with tears, Ghisu touched his head to the ground and said, "Master, I am ruined. Madhav's wife died last night. She suffered all night, Master. The two of us sat by her side half the night, we gave her all the medicines we could. But she has abandoned us. And now there's no one to give us even a piece of bread, Master. We've been destroyed, our home has been uprooted. I am your slave! There's no one but you – who will organize her funeral? Who else can I turn to except you?"

The landlord was a compassionate man but having pity on Ghisu was like trying to dye a black blanket. In his heart, he felt like saying, "Get away from here! You don't come when you are called and now, when you need me, you come here and flatter me! Bastard! Rascal!" But this was not the moment for anger or for retribution. He tossed a reluctant two rupees at him but not a single word of consolation escaped his lips. He did not even look at Ghisu, as if he'd rid himself of a burden.

Once the landlord had given two rupees, how could the village merchants and traders have the courage to refuse? And Ghisu knew how to use the landlord's name to his advantage. Some gave two annas, others gave four. Within an hour, Ghisu had collected the healthy sum of five rupees. Grain came from one place, wood from another. In the afternoon, Ghisu and

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Madhav went off to the bazaar to buy the shroud. People began to cut bamboo poles and the soft-hearted women of the village would come and stare at the corpse and shed a few tears at Budhiya's misfortune.

What a sad custom, that the woman who didn't even have rags to cover her body while she was alive now needed a shroud. After all, the shroud burned with the body. And then what's left? If the same 5 rupees had come earlier, there might have been some medicine. Ghisu and Madhav were trying to gauge each other's thoughts. They wandered around the bazaar, from this cloth shop to the next. They looked at all kinds of fabric, from silk to cotton, but nothing seemed right. Eventually, it became evening. And who knows by what divine inspiration the pair landed up in front of a bar and, as if they'd planned it earlier, sauntered in. They stood around uncertainly for a while. Then Ghisu went up to the counter and said, "Mister, give us a bottle." Soon, snacks arrived and then some fried fish, and the two of them sat on the porch, drinking calmly. After knocking back a few rather quickly, their spirits rose.

Ghisu said, "What's the point of the shroud? It only gets burned, it's not as if goes with her."

Madhav looked at the sky, as if calling the Gods to witness his innocence, and said, "It's the way of the world. Otherwise, why would people spend thousands feeding brahmins? Who knows whether you benefit in the other world? Rich people have money, let them blow it. What do we have to waste? But we're still answerable to others. They're sure to ask, 'Where's the shroud?'"

Ghisu laughed. "Let's say I dropped the money. That we looked and looked but could not find it anywhere. They won't believe a word, but the same lot will give again."

Madhav also laughed at this unexpected good luck. He said, "She was a good woman, poor thing. She's dead, but she's given us food and drink."

More than half the bottle was gone. Ghisu ordered two rounds of puris and chutneys and pickles and liver. There was an eating place just in front of the bar. Madhav leapt across and brought all the food back on two leaf plates. Another one and half rupees well spent. There was only a little change left. The two of them sat eating their puris, as grandly as if they were lions hunting in the jungle. They were not afraid of being responsible to anyone, nor did they worry about their reputations. They had conquered those virtues long ago.

Ghisu said philosophically, "We're feeling good. She'll get some credit for that, won't she?"

Madhav bowed his head piously and said, "Of course. Definitely. Lord, you are present in each of us, let her go to the highest of heavens. We're both blessing her from the bottom of our hearts. The meal we've had today! We've never eaten like this in our lives."

A moment later, a tiny doubt rose in Madhav's mind. He said, "We'll go there one day, too, won't we father?"

Ghisu ignored the naive question. He wasn't going to ruin the pleasure of the moment with thoughts of the world beyond.

"She's there. If she asks us why we didn't provide her with a shroud, what are we going to say?"

"We'll say, go to hell!'

"She's sure to ask."

"And you're sure that she's not going to have a shroud? You think I'm an ass? You think I've spent 60 years on earth just digging up grass? She'll have a shroud. And a finer one than this."

Madhav was still doubtful. He said, "Who's going to give it? You've spent all the money. And I'm the one she'll ask, I'm the one that married her."

Notes

Hotly, Ghisu said, "I'm telling you, she'll have a shroud. Why don't you trust me?"

"Why don't you tell me who's going to give it?"

"The same people who gave us this one! Though, this time, we're not going to see the cash."

As the darkness deepened and the light of the stars grew brighter, so the bar grew more radiant. Some sang, some prattled, some embraced their companions, some pressed a cup to their friends' lips. The atmosphere was heady, the air intoxicating. So many came here and got high on a single sip. More than the drink, it was the air that got them drunk. They came, drawn there by the drudgery of living and, for a short while, they forgot whether they were alive or dead. Or neither.

Meanwhile, father and son tippled away happily. Everyone was staring at them. How favoured by fortune they were—they had an entire bottle between them. Having eaten his fill, Madhav gave the left-over puris to a beggar who had been watching them with hungry eyes. And, for the first time in his life, he felt the pride, the pleasure, the exultation of giving.

Task What is real name of Premchand?

Ghisu said, "Here. Eat it all. And bless us! The one who earned this is dead. But your blessings will surely reach her. Bless her with every part of your being, this is hard-earned money."

Madhav gazed up at the sky again and said, "She'll go to heaven, father. She'll be the queen of heaven!"

Ghisu stood up and, swimming as he was through waves of joy, said, "Son, she's going to heaven. She never bothered anyone, never hassled anyone. She's fulfilled the biggest wish of our lives by dying. If she doesn't go to heaven, you think those fat cats will, those guys who loot the poor with both hands and then bathe in the Ganga and make offerings of holy water in temples to wash off their sins?"

But this rush of piety soon passed, for impermanence is the essence of intoxication. Sadness and despair crept in. Madhav said, "But father, she suffered a lot in her life. She endured so much before she died." He covered his eyes with his hands and began to weep, shrieking more and more loudly.

Ghisu reassured him, "Why are you crying, son? Be glad for her – she's been freed from this world of illusion, she's been released from the cage. She's the lucky one, she's already broken the bonds that tie us to the world."

And then, they stood there, both of them, and started to sing loudly, "Liar! Why do you lower your eyes, you liar?" They began to dance. They leaped, they jumped, they wriggled their hips, they even fell. They expressed emotion with their eyes, they acted out feelings and, finally, they surrendered to their drunkenness and slumped down in a heap.

9.2 Analysis

I

About the story 'The Shroud' places before the reader two of the most unappealing characters to be found in fiction: Ghisu and Madhav, a father and son who are poor and lazy, uncaring about their own welfare as well as that of their 'family': in this case Madhav's wife, Budhiya, who when the story starts is in the throes of labour with no help at hand.

Notes

As the story unfolds, the reader is told about the way of life of these characters: marked by poverty, hunger and want yet also by a determination to do as little work as possible to get by.

At the door of their hut, father and son sat silendy beside dead fire while inside the son's young wife, Budhiya, was dirashing about in the agony of childbirth. From time to time, she would let out such a piercing scream that both would get startled. It was a winter night.

Nature slept under a heavy blanket of silence. The entire village lay submerged beneath a spell of darkness.

'It seems she is not likely to make it. You have spent the whole day running to-and-fro—just go in and have another look,' Ghisu said.

Madhav answered in an irritated tone, 'If she has to die, why doesn't she get it over and done with? What can I do by looking at her?'

'You are a heartless fellow. Such infidelity to someone you lived with for a whole year.'

'I can't see her writhing and thrashing about' They belonged to a family of *chamars*—the lowest among the untouchable castes since their caste dealt with animal hides. And these two had earned a particularly bad name for themselves in the entire village. Ghisu was notorious for working for one day and taking off for three days. Madhav was such a shirker that if he worked for half an hour, he would stop and smoke his pipe for an hour. So the two of them seldom found work. If they had even a handful of grain in the house, they would swear off work. A couple of days' starvation would induce Ghisu to climb a tree and break off some twigs for firewood, which Madhav would sell in the market. After this the two would loiter about for as long as the money would last.

There was no dearth of work in the village. It was a village of farmers and for a hardworking man there were any number of chores to be done. But these two were called only when one was willing to be satisfied by getting one man's work out of the two. If these two had been a pair of wandering anchorites, they would have had no call to practise contentment and fortitude, restraint and regulation. It was their nature. It came naturally to them. Theirs was indeed a strange life. Their home could boast of no other worldly possession beside a pair of clay pots. They covered the nakedness of their bodies with a few tattered rags and went on with the business of living. Their lives were free of all worldly cares. They were steeped under debt. People heaped abuses on them, even beat them — but they were without a care in the world. They were so poor that no one could expect to have their money back, yet people would occasionally lend them a little something They would steal some potatoes or peas from someone's fields and roast them or pluck half-a-dozen sugarcane to suck at night. Ghisu had led this happy-go-lucky existence for sixty years and Madhav, like a dutiful son, was following in his father's footsteps and, if anything, he was giving an extra shine to his father's name.

The two of them now sat before the fire, roasting potatoes they had earlier dug up from someone's field. Ghisu's wife had died a long time ago. Madhav had got married last year. Ever since his wife had entered their house, she had established some kind of order in their disordered lives and strived to stoke the bellies of these two shameless wretches. With her arrival, the father and son had become more slothful than ever, and cocky too, to boot. If someone wanted to hire them for some work, they would boldly ask for double the normal wages. And this same woman now lay dying in the agony of childbirth and these two were probably waiting for her to die, so that they could go to sleep in peace and quiet.

Ghisu dug out another potato and spoke while peeling it, 'Go and see how she is. Must be under the spell of some she-devil, what else? If we call the village exorcist he won't ask for less than a rupee.'

Notes

Madhav was afraid that if he went inside the hut, Ghisu would finish off most of the potatoes. So he said, T am scared of going in there.'

'What are you afraid of? I'll be right here.'

'Why don't you go inside and see her?'

'When my wife died, I didn't move from her side for three days. And, just think, she would be ashamed if I saw her lying like that, wouldn't she? I have never even seen her face behind the veil, so how can I now see her uncovered body? She would be in no condition to cover her modesty. If she were to see me she won't be able to thrash about freely.'

'I have been thinking—what will happen if there is a baby?

'There is no ginger, sugar or oil that one needs for such occasions.'

'Everything will be taken care of. May the good Lord give us a baby. The same people who now refuse to give us even one ***paisa,*** will call us tomorrow to give us rupees. I had nine sons and there was never anything in the house; but each time God saw us through somehow or the other'.

In a society where the lot of those who toiled day and night was little better than Ghisu's and where those who knew how to exploit the peasants were much richer, it is no wonder that Ghisu had such an outlook. One could say that Ghisu was much more intelligent than the peasants, and instead of joining the hordes of mindless toilers, he had gone over to the disreputable band of idle gossips, though he didn't have the will to follow the rules and regulations of diehard gossips. Therefore, while others of this motely gang were chiefs and big wigs of the village, everyone pointed a disapproving finger at them. Anyhow, Ghisu for one, was happy that despite his rags, at least he didn't have to put in the back-breaking labour that the peasants had to and that no one could possibly take undue advantage of his simplicity and innocence.

The father and son were digging out the roasted potatoes and eating them piping hot. They hadn't eaten a morsel since the day before and now they didn't have the patience to let the potatoes cool. They burnt their tongues several times. After peeling, the outer surface didn't seem very hot but the moment one dug one's teeth into it, the fiery inside would scorch the tongue, throat and palate. It was safer to swallow that live-hot coal rather than let it stay in one's mouth. Once it reached the stomach, there was enough material there to cool it. And so the two of them would swallow the hot potatoes as soon as they could, though the effort made their eyes smart with tears.

At this moment Ghisu remembered that Thakur's wedding, which he had attended twenty years ago. The satiation he had experienced at that wedding feast was something to remember all his life, and its memory was still vivid. He said, 'I can't ever forget that feast. I have never eaten such a meal again—nor have I gorged myself like that ever again. The bride's family had served everybody with *puris* everybody. Old and young, everybody ate those *puris, puris* made in real ghee. Chutney, spicy yoghurt, three different kinds of greens, a curried vegetable, curd, sweets—how can 1 describe the relish and taste of that food. And no shortage of anything—you could ask for whatever you wanted and eat as much as you wanted. Everyone ate so much that they couldn't sip even a drop of water. And those who were serving us just went on putting hot, round, savoury pasties on our plates. We would tell them that we didn't want any more, we would even put our hands above our plates to deter them, but they would insist on plying us with more. And after everyone had rinsed their mouths, there was betel and cardamom too. But I was too far gone to worry about the betel leaves; I could barely stand on my feet. I ran towards my blanket and lay down on it. What a large-hearted man that Thakur was.'

Relishing the taste of every one of these delicacies in his imagination, Madhav said, 'No one gives us such feasts now.'

'Who will give such feasts now? That was an altogether different time and age. Now, everyone thinks of cutting corners. Don't, spend on marriages, don't spend on funerals. Someone ought to ask such people where they are going to stash all the wealth they have hoarded by fleecing the poor. They never think of cutting down on their hoarding, though when it comes to spending some of that money, they start talking of economising.'

'You must have eaten about twenty *puris*?'

'I ate more than twenty.' T would have eaten fifty.'

'I couldn't have eaten any less than fifty. I was a strong young lout; you are barely half my size.'

After finishing the potatoes, they drank some water and right there, in front of burnt-out fire, wrapped themselves in their ***dhotis*** anil went off to sleep. They looked like two enormous coiled pythons.

And Budhiya was still moaning.

II

In the morning Madhav entered the hut and saw that his wife had turned cold. Flies were buzzing around her face and her stony eyes were gazing upwards. Her body was coated with dust. The child had died in her womb.

Madhav ran towards Ghisu and the two began to scream and shout and beat their chests. When the neighbours heard their weeping and wailing, they came running and, according to the age-old custom, tried to comfort the bereaved. However, there was no time to indulge in excessive grief. They had to worry about the shroud and pyre-wood. Money was as scarce in their house as meat in an eagle's nest.

Father and son went crying to meet the village zamindar. He detested the sight of the two and had, on several occasions, thrashed them with his own hands for stealing or not turning up for work despite promising to do so. Now he asked, 'What the hell is the matter with you? Why are you crying? I hardly ever see you around these days; it seems you don't want to live in this village anymore.'

Ghisu, with his head lowered to the ground and his eyes brimming with tears, said, 'My lord, a catastrophe has befallen us. Madhav's wife passed away last night. She writhed with pain all night long while both of us sat beside her. We did whatever we could, gave her medicines but, to cut a long story short, she left us. Now there is no one left to give us even a morsel of food, my lord. We've been ruined. Our lives have been destroyed. You are our lord and master, there is no one else to see that she has a decent cremation. Whatever little we had went towards her care and medicines. Now, if your excellency is benevolent, she can be given her last rites. Whose door can we go to except yours?'

Zamindar *sahib* was a kind man but to show kindness to Ghisu was like trying to dye a black blanket. Zamindar *sahib* felt like telling him to go to hell. Normally the fellow doesn't even bother to show up even when you send for him. And now that he wants something, he has come with his ingratiating words. Lazy beggar. But he knew it was not the right moment for giving vent to his anger or meting out punishment. Thwarted, he pulled out two rupees and flung them on the ground, but he did not utter one word of sympathy. He did not utter one word or look at Ghisu. It was as though he had done his duty and eased a load from his head.

Since Zamindar *sahib* had given two rupees, how could the village money-lenders and merchants dare refuse? Ghisu knew how to broadcast the fact that Zamindar *sahib* had already given him

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the money. Someone gave two *annas*$_y$ another contributed four *annas.* Within an hour Ghisu had collected the tidy sum of five rupees. He got grain from somewhere, wood from another. At noon he and Madhav set off for the market to buy the shroud. Already a few people had offered to chop some bamboo for the pyre.

The soft-hearted village women came to take a look at the corpse, shed a few tears at its helplessness and went away.

III

On reaching the market Ghisu said, 'There is going to be enough wood to cremate her, isn't there, Madhav?'

'Oh yes, we have enough wood. Now we just need the shroud.'

'Then let's go and pick up some cheap material.'

'Yes, that's right. It will be night by the time we carry the corpse for cremation. Who's going to look at the shroud in the darkness?'

'What a horrible custom! One who doesn't even have a rag to cover one's nakedness during one's life, needs a brand new shroud after death.'

The shroud gets burnt along with the corpse, doesn't it?'

'Do you think it remains intact? If we had these five rupees earlier, we could have bought her some medicine.'

Each could read the other's thoughts. So, they loitered about for some time in the market—stopping at one clothmerchant's shop after another. They looked at different kinds of fabrics—silks as well as cotton—but found nothing that met with their approval. Dusk had fallen by this time. By some divine inspiration, they found themselves at the door of a toddy-house and entered it with unspoken, mutual consent. Once inside, they stood about undecided for a while. Then Ghisu approached the counter and said, 'Mister, give us a bottle too.'

Then he ordered some snacks and fried fish, and father and son sat down on the verandah and began to drink in companionable silence.

After gulping down several cups in a row, the two became quite pleasurably drunk.

Ghisu said, 'What's the point of placing a shroud over her? After all, it gets burnt along with the corpse. It is not likely to go with her to her next abode.'

Madhav spoke while looking up at the heavens, as though invoking the Gods to bear witness to his complete innocence in the matter, 'It is the way of the world or else why would people give thousands of rupees to Brahmins? Who is there to ensure whether one gets it back in the next world?'

The rich have money to burn, so let them! What do we have?'

'But what will you say to everyone? Won't people ask where the shroud is?'

Ghisu laughed and said, 'Hell, we'll say the money slipped and fell from our waist-bands. We searched all over but couldn't find it. They might not believe us but the same people will again give us the money.'

Madhav also laughed—at this unexpected good fortune—and said, 'She was a good woman, poor thing! Even in her death, she ensured us a hearty meal!'

They had polished off almost half the bottle by now. Ghisu sent for four pounds of *puris,* and also chutney, pickles and braised liver to go with it. There was a shop right in front of the toddy-house. Madhav ran to do his father's bidding and returned with two laden leaf-plates. It cost exactly two-and-a-half rupees. Now all they had left with were a few paise.

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The two of them sat there, gorging themselves on the *puris,* in the manner of the Lord of the Jungle feasting on a prize catch. Neither fear of accountability nor concern for scandal worried them at this moment. They had long since triumphed over such finer feelings.

Ghisu spoke in a philosophic tone, 'If, because of her, our souls arc gladdened, won't it bring her God's grace?'

Madhav bowed his head with respect and agreed, 'Absolutely. God, you are omniscient. Take her to heaven, please. Both of us are praying for her from the depths of our hearts. I had never tasted such food as 1 have eaten today in my entire life.'

A minute later, a doubt rose in Madhav's mind. He said, 'Say, Father, won't we also be going there some day or the other?'

Ghisu forebore to answer such a naive query. He didn't want thoughts of the other world to intrude upon his present state of bliss.

'Suppose she asked us there why wc didn't give her a shroud, what'll we say?'

'We'll tell her to get lost!'

'She's sure to ask us!'

'What makes you think she won't get a shroud? Do you take me for a complete dunce? Do you think I have learnt nothing the past sixty years of my life? She'll get a shroud and very nice one too.'

Madhav found this hard to believe. He said, 'But who will give it? You have polished off all the money. She is going to ask me, not you. I was the one who married her; 1 put the vermillion in her hair to mark her as my wife.'

Ghisu answered in a heated voice, 'I tell you, she will get the shroud. Why don't you believe me?'

'But who will give it? Why don't you tell me?'

Those who gave it before. Though, this time we won't get the chance to lay our hands on the money.'

As the night wore on and the stars shone brighter, the excitement inside the toddy-house increased palpably. Someone started singing, another was busy boasting about his exploits and someone else was clinging about the neck of his companion. One man was urging a friend to drink from his cup.

There was intoxication in the atmosphere; the very air was redolent with headiness. There were some who got high on just one mouthful. The air in that room, more than any potent brew, made a man feel drunk. The worries of their lives attracted them to this place and once there, men forgot for a while whether they were dead or alive. Or neither dead nor alive, for that matter.

The father and son were still busy guzzling down their drink. Everyone had their eyes trained on them. What a pair of lucky devils! With a whole bottle between them.

After the two had eaten their fill, Madhav gave the leftover *puris* to a beggar who had been eyeing them hungrily. And, for the first time in his entire life, experienced the pride, the pleasure and the happiness of giving.

Ghisu said, 'Go on, take it... eat your fill and give your blessings. She whose earning this is, is dead, but your blessings will certainly reach her. You ought to bless her from every fibre of your being; this is hard-earned money!'

Madhav again looked up at the sky and said, 'She will certainly go to heaven; she will live like a queen in heaven.'

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Ghisu stood up and spoke as though he were swimming in a vast sea of pleasure, 'Yes, son, she'll certainly go to heaven. She never hurt a fly, never bothered a soul all her life. Even in her death, she managed to fulfil our dearest wish. If she won't go to heaven, who will? These rich, fat slobs who fleece the poor and then, to wash away their sins, take a dip in the Ganga river or offer its holy water in the temples?'

The mood of complacency shattered. Flux is a quality peculiar to the state of inebriety. Now started a phase of sorrow and despair.

Madhav said, 'But, Father, the poor woman suffered all her life. She faced such hardships before death took her!'

Saying this he put his hand over his eyes and began to cry and sob.

Ghisu tried to console him, "What is the good of crying, my son? You should be happy that she is free of this world of *maya,* that she has escaped this web of illusion. She was indeed fortunate to break free from the mortal ties of this life.'

With this both stood up and began singing an old ballad:

'*Enchantress*! *dazzle us not with your eyes*

Enchantress!...'

The other revellers in the room looked at them, but these two, lost in a pleasurable world of their own, went on singing. Then they started dancing. They hopped, skipped and jumped. They stumbled, then got up and gyrated and gesticulated. This lively song and dance ensemble went on for quite some time. Till, finally, they fell down in **a druken stupor.**

Self Assessment

1. Premchand, whose original name was Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, was born on 31 July .....

   (*a*) 1890 (*b*) 1875

   (*c*) 1880 (*d*) None of these

2. Prem Chand was born in village .....

   (*a*) Lamahi (*b*) Varanasi

   (*c*) Jonpur (*d*) None of these.

3. Ghisu had collected the healthy sum of .....

   (*a*) 8 rupees (*b*) 5 rupees

   (*c*) 9 rupees (*d*) None of these

4. "Her body was covered with dust, the child had died in her womb".

   (*a*) Ghisu (*b*) Dhania

   (*c*) Madhav's Wife (*d*) None of these

9.3 Summary

- "The Shroud" (1935) is the last story by Dhanpat Rai Shrivastav "Premchand" (1880-1936), father of the Urdu and Hindi short-story tradition(s). I think Kafan is the best South Asian short story, in any language, that I've ever read. The harshness and bleakness of the story, the utter awfulness of the two characters, balanced against the sporadic,

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limited, but genuine sympathy we're forced to feel for them, and even a sort of morbidly comic effect— how far beyond the achievements of Premchand's previous stories! And above all there's the extraordinary final scene at the wine-house, in which the whole human condition seems to be held up for reflection in the light of pie-in-the-sky longings, bread-on-the-ground cynicism, touches of (sincere?) compassion, absurdity, and the wild mood swings of intoxication. The scene becomes a stage for Ghisu and Madhav's last drunken dance, under a sky full of coldly brilliant stars, before an audience of desperately poor peasants, as they sing about a murderous beauty and the glance of her eye. Then, of course, they pass out, ending the story abruptly and depriving us of any final authorial interpretation.

- Premchand is famous for his village-level "realism," and indeed it's there, but it has its limits. He was notably casual about the exact wording and details of his stories, for theoretical reasons discussed in "The Chess Players: From Premchand to Satyajit Ray" (Journal of South Asian Literature 22,2, Summer-Fall 1986, pp. 65-78). His casualness about detail is a primary reason for the textual discrepancies studied and reconciled in this translation. (It's not the only reason, alas, since even now all too few important Urdu and Hindu stories have texts that have been reliably established and carefully edited.)
- As a very small illustration of such casualness, in the present story the list of foods enjoyed by Ghisu at the landowner's long-ago wedding feast includes two separate mentions of "chutney." Larger awkwardnesses also exist: if Ghisu really had nine sons (or anyway a number of them, if we assume that he exaggerates), why don't we hear anything at all about the others? And there are some truly serious implausibilities as well. Why would any village family have given their daughter in marriage to the awful Madhav? And if other villagers lived close enough to hear the funereal "weeping and wailing" and come running, why did nobody hear Budhiya's shrieks and cries during her prolonged agony of labour and death? And above all, why did an admirable woman like Budhiya have no support network among the other women of her neighbourhood? Since she worked in the village grinding grain for other families, her pregnancy must have been apparent. Her need of help in her terrible, isolated situation should surely have evoked at least as much compassion and support from the women as her need of funeral rites did from the men.
- These questions don't occur at once, of course, and they don't at all vitiate the story; they're beside the point. They just show that Premchand's stories are often highly stylized, and don't depend on literal "realism" for their impact. While we're on the subject of the village women, a further question about their role also lingers in my mind. At the end of section (2), is the description of the women's brief visits to view Budhiya's corpse, and their shedding of a tear or two, meant sarcastically? I tend to think so, but how can we be sure? We also, in that passage, can't tell whether "the sensitive-hearted women of the village" — gaa))o;N kii raqiiq ul-qalb ((aurate;N (U), gaa;Nv kii narm-dil striyaa; N (D) — are a subset of the village women, or all of them. And when we look even more closely, we notice that raqiiq ul-qalb is a more ambiguous description than narm-dil ("tender-hearted"), since raqiiq means "thin, fine, delicate, attenuated" (Platts, p.596). The adjective in the Urdu-script version thus looks more likely to be meant ironically than the one in the Devanagari version; so we're brought back again to intriguing (or infuriating) textual questions. Which version did Premchand himself compose; or which did he compose first; or which did he compose with more attention and subtlety?

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- I'd also like to say a word about Premchand's religious vocabulary in this story. Unquestionably the worldview of the two main characters is Hindu; in both versions, their religious terms and concepts are drawn entirely from the Hindu side. But the same is not true of the omniscient narrator who describes it all for us. In the Devanagari version, this narrative voice uses Sanskritic vocabulary that harmonizes well with the characters' religious views. But in the Urdu-script version, the narrator's religious vocabulary is not Sanskritic, nor is it any kind of neutral description. It's quite overtly Islamic in its associations. The effect is to make the story feel more general: its satiric barbs are directed not at Hindu religious hypocrisy and exploitation in particular, but at religious hypocrisy and exploitation in general. (And of course they're directed even more forcefully at political and economic exploitation.)
- The story has sometimes been attacked by Dalit critics, on the grounds that it paints an unflattering and hostile picture of two anti-heroes who are explicitly identified as Chamars. But of course, throughout the story these two are repeatedly and emphatically depicted as unique, as isolated individuals. Their behaviour and attitudes are described as peculiar to them alone; the narrator tells us very clearly that they should be seen as deviants. Everybody else in the story, of every caste and social level, finds them contemptible. So the idea that the story embodies or expresses prejudice against Dalits doesn't seem plausible.

9.4 Keywords

Anchorite : *A hermit*

Pasties : Pasties *a small container made of pastry with a savoury filling such as meat, vegetables or cheese*

Cut comers : *Do something perfunctorily so as to save money or time*

Writhe : *To make large twisting movements with the body*

Ingratiating : *Describes behaviour that is intended to make people like you*

Palpably : *Very obviously*

Redolent : *Smelling strongly of something or having qualities that make you think of something else*

Flux : *Change*

Inebriety : *Alcoholic intoxication*

Gyrate : *To move around a fixed point or to dance*

Gesticulate : *To make movements with your hands and arms*

9.5 Review Questions

1. The story hinges on death and the paraphernalia that death demands. But is death seen as a calamity or a tragedy in the story? How do you reach this conclusion?
2. What is told to the readers about Ghisu and Madhav directly by the author? In addition, are there any clues or markers in the text which tell us about them as well as their attitudes towards a. each other, b. family ties, c. their position in society, and d, their responsibility towards society and vice versa?
3. Budhiya, Madhav's wife is central to the story yet is seen by the readers only through the eyes of Madhav and Ghisu. What is the image of Budhiya that is conveyed to the

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readers from the conversations of the two men? Also, if Ghisu and Madhav are poor and oppressed, Budhiya is doubly so. Drawing on evidence from the text, analyse how her situation is infinitely worse than that of her men folk.

4. Why do you think this story is entitled The Shroud'? How is this article significant? Is the shroud referred to only the actual piece of doth used to cover the dead or is there a more symbolic shroud within the text? (The symbolic shroud could be the poverty which covers over the 'humanity' of Madhav and Ghisu, or the social structures which render man unfeeling to both his fellow men and women.) Analyse the story to see the varieties of shrouds that are visible.

5. This story gains its effect from the tone and the mood created by Premchand as much as from the plot itself. How does the author evoke a mood of despair and helplessness while also focusing on the sly resourcefulness of the poor? Think in terms of the *reader s* feeling of helplessness: is the despair only the result of the acute poverty of the father and son which is central to the story or does Premchand by focussing on their reluctance to work, their willingness to be hungry, poor and dependant on others, increase the feeling of hopelessness?

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*c*) 2. (*a*) 3. (*b*) 4. (*c*)

9.6 Further Readings

Books Madan Gopal, The shroud and 20 other stories—Premchand, Sagar Publications, 1972

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

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Unit 10: The Right to Arms by Edward Abbey

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Edward Abbey;
- Discuss the essay *The Right to Arms*.

Introduction

Edward Paul Abbey was an American author and essayist noted for his advocacy of environmental issues, criticism of public land policies, and anarchist political views. His best-known works include the novel The Monkey Wrench Gang, which has been cited as an inspiration by radical environmental groups, and the non-fiction work Desert Solitaire. Writer Larry McMurtry referred to Abbey as the "Thoreau of the American West".

Abbey was born in Indiana, Pennsylvania on January 29, 1927 to Mildred Postlewait and Paul Revere Abbey. Mildred was a schoolteacher and a church organist, and gave Abbey an appreciation for classical music and literature. Paul was a socialist, anarchist, and atheist whose views strongly influenced Abbey.

Abbey graduated from high school in Indiana, Pennsylvania in 1945. Eight months before his 18th birthday, when he would be faced with being drafted into the United States military, Abbey decided to explore the American southwest. He travelled on foot, by bus, hitchhiking, and freight train hopping. During this trip he fell in love with the desert country of the Four Corners region. Abbey wrote: "[...]crags and pinnacles of naked rock, the dark cores of ancient volcanoes, a vast and silent emptiness smoldering with heat, color, and indecipherable significance, above which floated a small number of pure, clear, hard-edged clouds. For the first time, I felt I was getting close to the West of my deepest imaginings, the place where the tangible and the mythical became the same."

Upon his return Abbey was drafted into the military, where he served two years as a military police officer in Italy, after which he was honorably discharged.

When he returned to the United States, Abbey took advantage of the G.I. Bill to attend the University of New Mexico, where he received a B.A. in philosophy and English in 1951, and

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a master's degree in philosophy in 1956. During his time in college, Abbey supported himself by working at a variety of odd jobs, including being a newspaper reporter and bartending in Taos, New Mexico. During this time he had few male friends but had intimate relationships with a number of women. Shortly before getting his bachelors degree, Abbey married his first wife, Jean Schmechal (another UNM student). While an undergraduate, Abbey was the editor of a student newspaper in which he published an article titled "Some Implications of Anarchy". A cover quotation of the article, "ironically attributed to Louisa May Alcott" stated "Man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest." University officials seized all of the copies of the issue, and removed Abbey from the editorship of the paper. Abbey had an FBI file opened on him in 1947, after he posted a letter while in college urging people to rid themselves of their draft cards.

After graduating, Schmechal and Abbey travelled together to Edinburgh, Scotland, where Abbey spent a year at Edinburgh University as a Fulbright scholar. During this time, Abbey and Schmechal separated and ended their marriage. In 1951 Abbey began having an affair with Rita Deanin, who in 1952 would become his second wife after he and Schmechal divorced. Deanin and Abbey had two children, Joshua N. Abbey and Aaron Paul Abbey.

Abbey's master's thesis explored anarchism and the morality of violence, asking the two questions: "To what extent is the current association between anarchism and violence warranted?" and "In so far as the association is a valid one, what arguments have the anarchists presented, explicitly or implicitly, to justify the use of violence?". After receiving his masters degree, Abbey spent 1957 at Stanford University on a Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellowship.

Abbey's voluminous writings, mostly about or set in the Western deserts, ranged from intensely detailed descriptions of the natural world to angry or satirical commentaries on effects of modern civilization on American wildlands. One of Abbey's most widely quoted aphorisms, first appearing in the essay collection *Desert Solitaire* , held that "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell." Abbey held anarchist convictions, and he viewed government and industry as collaborators in the destruction of the natural environment. *Desert Solitaire* and Abbey's comic novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* achieved mass success, winning Abbey a strong following among members of the counterculture of the 1970s and beyond. The overarching emphasis of Abbey's writing, however, was personal and philosophical; like the 19th-century New England essayist Henry David Thoreau, to whom he has sometimes been compared, Abbey viewed the natural world in almost mystical terms.

Family Suffered Hard Times

The oldest of five children, Abbey sometimes suggested that he had been born in a farmhouse in a tiny community with the idyllic name of Home, Pennsylvania. In fact his birth occurred on January 29, 1927, in a hospital in Indiana, Pennsylvania, a considerably larger town nearby. His tendency toward unconventional attitudes was partly shaped by his father, Paul Revere Abbey, a committed socialist who subscribed to *Soviet Life* magazine for many years. A rootless, searching quality in Edward Abbey's life may also have had its beginnings in his childhood: the family was hard hit by the economic depression of the early 1930s, moving from place to place as Paul Abbey searched for work as a real estate agent and camping out during several stretches when money was at its tightest.

Abbey's family made the best of their situation; his mother, Mildred Postlewaite Abbey, instilled in him an appreciation of nature. In 1941 the family moved to a farm, located near Home, that Abbey dubbed the Old Lonesome Briar Patch. His creative energy began to show itself early on when he began to write and draw little comic books for which he would demand series subscriptions from siblings and friends. In high school he did well in English classes and was thought of as highly intelligent but as something of an intimidating loner.

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This perception changed in 1944, for that summer, between his junior and senior years at Indiana High School, Abbey lived out a dream held by many young people: he took off from home and travelled around the country, relying mostly on hitchhiking and freight trains for transportation. The trip, described in an essay called "Hallelujah on the Bum" included in Abbey's book *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West* , took him through Chicago and Yellowstone National Park to Seattle, San Francisco, and the desert Southwest in the middle of summer. He had all his possessions and money stolen by one driver who gave him a ride, and in Flagstaff, Arizona, he spent a night on the floor of a jail cell with a group of drunks after being arrested for vagrancy. He also fell in love with the West. "I became a Westerner at the age of 17, in the summer of 1944, while hitchhiking around the USA," Abbey later wrote (as quoted by biographer James Cahalan). "For me it was love at first sight—a total passion which has never left me." And he began to write about that passion in articles published in his high school newspaper, the *High Arrow*.

For the next several years, Abbey's life resembled those of many other young American men. Drafted into the U.S. Army in the summer of 1945 after graduating from high school, he was sent to Italy and served as a clerk and military motorcycle police officer. Honorably discharged in 1947, he used the stipends he received as a result of the socalled G.I. Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act) to attend college, first at Indiana University in Pennsylvania, and then at the University of New Mexico, where he graduated with a philosophy degree in 1951. He married a college sweetheart, Jean Schmechel, in 1950.

Published First Novel

Underneath these activities, however, brewed various ideas of a nonconformist cast. As an undergraduate, he had already run into trouble when he adorned the cover of a student literary journal with a controversial quotation ascribed to the 18th-century French philosopher Denis Diderot—"Mankind will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest"—and then compounded the insult by attributing the line to *Little Women* author Louisa May Alcott. Abbey found himself drawn toward creative writing. In 1954 he finished a novel, *Jonathan Troy* . He later disparaged the work, which drew heavily on the locale of his Pennsylvania boyhood, but the book landed with a major publisher (Dodd, Mead) and successfully launched his long literary career. Later critics found much to admire in this early effort, and in 1956 Abbey found a ready market for his second novel, *The Brave Cowboy: An Old Tale in a New Time* . The book, which dealt with the doomed heroics of an old-time cowboy in the modern world, was adapted to screen in the 1962 film *Lonely Are the Brave* with actor Kirk Douglas in the lead role of Jack Burns. Douglas insisted on making the film over studio objections.

Abbey also took steps that brought him closer to the desert he loved. For many years between 1956 and 1971 he took temporary jobs with the U.S. National Park Service as a ranger and fire lookout. For his first two summers he worked at Utah's Arches National Monument (later Arches National Park). A compulsive journal-keeper by this time, he wrote voluminously about the awe-inspiring rock formations that gave the park its name, about the ecology of the area, and about the future Abbey saw coming—a future in which fragile natural areas would be overrun with hordes of tourist automobiles. Abbey's journals later became the basis for one of his most celebrated books, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*.

For much of the 1950s and 1960s, Abbey's life was restless. His first marriage quickly ended in divorce, but in 1952 he married New York-born New Mexico art student Rita Deanin, and the couple had two sons. Abbey enrolled in a master's program in philosophy at Yale University in 1953 but hated his symbolic logic class and left. The family bounced back and forth between

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the New York area, where Abbey held various jobs (he was a technical writer, factory employee, and at one point a welfare caseworker) and Albuquerque, where he received a master's degree in philosophy at the University of New Mexico in 1959. His thesis was entitled *Anarchism and the Morality of Violence* . Around that time, Abbey and some like-minded friends began to commit occasional acts of sabotage against development projects in the West—they would, for example, pour sugar syrup into the oil tanks of construction equipment, thus putting it out of commission. He continued to write fiction; his third novel, *Fire on the Mountain*, was drawn on the real-life story of a rancher who refused to turn over land to the government for a missile test site.

In 1965 Abbey's marriage to Deanin, long on the rocks, came to an end. Close to 40 years old, with few stable employment prospects, he seemed to have hit a career stall. But with the publication of *Desert Solitaire* in 1968 (by the McGraw-Hill house) his fortune as a writer turned around for good. Abbey alternated chapters on parks development and on such topics as water in the Western ecosystem with grand philosophical themes, and the mixture caught on among young readers in whom an environmental consciousness was just beginning to awaken. The book was reprinted well over a dozen times, and by the mid-1970s Abbey was able to augment his income from his books and his park ranger work with writing professorships at several schools. Chief among these was the University of Arizona, which provided Abbey with a base for his work in his later years.

Inspired Radical Environmentalists

Always productive as a writer, Abbey was distracted from his work by the death of his third wife, Judith Pepper, from leukemia in 1970. With Pepper Abbey had a third child, Susannah. A fourth marriage, to Renee Dowling, lasted from 1974 to 1980, and a fifth, to Clarke Cartwright, began in 1982 and endured for the rest of Abbey's life. Two more children, Rebecca and Benjamin, were born to Abbey and Cartwright. Abbey published a novel, *Black Sun* , in 1971, and he furnished text for several large-format books of Southwest photographs, including the Time-Life series volume *Cactus Country* in 1973. His most important book of the 1970s, however, was 1975's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* , a comic novel drawing on Abbey's development-sabotage activities. Not strongly promoted by its publisher, Lippincott, the book was reported to have sold 500,000 copies thanks mostly to word-of-mouth publicity. The activities of the loosely knit Earth First! group were sometimes modelled on those in Abbey's novel, and the term "monkeywrenching" entered the vocabulary of radical environmentalism.

Abbey discouraged violence and remained ambivalent about the more radical applications of his ideas. He characterized *The Monkey Wrench Gang* as something of a rant, inspired by anger over such events as the inundation of a spectacular stretch of Colorado River scenery after the river was impounded by the Glen Canyon Dam in the 1960s. Abbey was never afraid to stir controversy, however, and he alienated some of his allies within the environmental movement with various positions he took in the 1970s and 1980s. He advocated closing the U.S.-Mexican border to Mexican immigration, for example. And he was unsympathetic to the feminist movement; critics complained that the female characters in some of his novels were little more than thin stereotypes. In the West, Abbey had admirers and detractors on all points of the political spectrum. He was defended by fellow anti-development activist Wendell Berry in an influential 1985 essay entitled "A Few Words in Favor of Edward Abbey." Arguing that Abbey had never claimed the environmentalist mantle, Berry asked, "If Mr. Abbey is not an environmentalist, what is he? He is, I think, at least in the essays, an autobiographer." Indeed, Abbey's larger-than-life personality showed through in everything he wrote, whether fiction, non-fiction, or the poetry that was published at the end of his life.

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In poor health in the 1980s, Abbey was at one point given a terminal cancer diagnosis and told he had six months to live. The diagnosis proved erroneous, however, and Abbey lived to complete several more books—essay collections and several novels, including the autobiographical *The Fool s Progress* and the posthumously published *Hayduke Lives!* (1990, featuring characters from *The Monkey Wrench Gang*). Abbey's journals and essays provided material for a steady stream of publications that appeared after his death. Suffering from increasingly serious esophageal bleeding, Abbey laid plans to die in the open, under the desert skies. He and several friends went out into the desert in early March of 1989, but he rallied and was brought back to his cabin in Oracle, Arizona, near Tucson, where he died on March 14, 1989. His friends buried him, illegally, at an unspecified location said to be on federal land, and the legend of his burial, together with the outlaw mystique and the philosophical vigour of his writings, continued to strengthen his reputation in the years after he passed away.

10.1 The Right to Arms

Meaning weapons. The right to own, keep, and bear arms. A sword and a lance, or a bow and a quiverful of arrows. A crossbow and darts. Or in our time, a rifle and a handgun and a cache of ammunition. Firearms.

In medieval England a peasant caught with a sword in his possession would be strung up on a gibbet and left there for the crows. Swords were for gentlemen only. (Gentlemen!) Only members of the ruling class were entitled to own and bear weapons. For obvious reasons. Even bows and arrows were outlawed—see Robin Hood. When the peasants attempted to rebel, as they did in England and Germany and other European countries from time to time, they had to fight with sickles, bog hoes, clubs—no match for the sword-wielding armored cavalry of the nobility.

In Nazi Germany the possession of firearms by a private citizen of the Third Reich was considered a crime against the state; the statutory penalty was death—by hanging. Or beheading. In the Soviet Union, as in Czarist Russia, the manufacture, distribution, and ownership of firearms have always been monopolies of the state, strictly controlled and supervised. Any unauthorized citizen found with guns in his home by the OGPU or the KGB is automatically suspected of subversive intentions and subject to severe penalties. Except for the landowning aristocracy, who alone among the population were allowed the privilege of owning firearms, for only they were privileged to hunt, the ownership of weapons never did become a widespread tradition in Russia. And Russia has always been an autocracy—or at best, as today, an oligarchy.

In Uganda, Brazil, Iran, Paraguay, South Africa—wherever a few rule many—the possession of weapons is restricted to the ruling class and to their supporting apparatus: the military, the police, the secret police. In Chile and Argentina at this very hour men and women are being tortured by the most up-to-date CIA methods in the effort to force them to reveal the location of their hidden weapons. Their guns, their rifles. Their arms. And we can be certain that the Communist masters of modern China will never pass out firearms to their 800 million subjects. Only in Cuba, among dictatorships, where Fidel's revolution apparently still enjoys popular support, does there seem to exist a true citizen's militia.

There must be a moral in all this. When I try to think of a nation that has maintained its independence over centuries, and where the citizens still retain their rights as free and independent people; not many come to mind. I think of Switzerland. Of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland. The British Commonwealth. France, Italy. And of our United States.

When Tell shot the apple from his son's head, he reserved in hand a second arrow, it may be remembered, for the Austrian tyrant Gessler. And got him too, shortly afterward. Switzerland has been a free country since 1390. In Switzerland basic, national decisions are made by

initiative and referendum—direct democracy—and in some cantons by open-air meetings in which all voters participate. Every Swiss male serves a year in the Swiss Army and at the end of the year takes his government rifle home with him—where he keeps it for the rest of his life. One of my father's grandfathers came from Canton Bern.

There must be a meaning in this. I don't think I'm a gun fanatic. I own a couple of small-caliber weapons, but seldom take them off the wall. I gave up deer hunting fifteen years ago, when the hunters began to outnumber the deer. I am a member of the National Rifle Association, but certainly no John Bircher. I'm a liberal—and proud of it. Nevertheless, I am opposed, absolutely, to every move the state makes to restrict my right to buy, own, possess, and carry a firearm. Whether shotgun, rifle, or handgun.

Of course, we can agree to a few commonsense limitations. Guns should not be sold to children, to the certifiably insane, or to convicted criminals. Other than that, we must regard with extreme suspicion any effort by the government—Iocal, state, or national—to control our right to arms. The registration of firearms is the first step toward confiscation. The confiscation of weapons would be a major and probably fatal step into authoritarian rule—the domination of most of us by a new order of "gentlemen." By a new and harder oligarchy.

The tank, the B-52, the fighter-bomber, the state-controlled police and military are the weapons of dictatorship. The rifle is the weapon of democracy. Not for nothing was the revolver called an "equalizer." Egalite implies liberte. And always will. Let us hope our weapons are never needed—but do not forget what the common people of this nation knew when they demanded the Bill of Rights: An armed citizenry is the first defense, the best defense, and the final defense against tyranny.

If guns are outlawed, only the government will have guns. Only the police, the secret police, the military. The hired servants of our rules. Only the government—and a few outlaws. I intend to be among the outlaws.

Notes Edward Abbey lives in Wolf Hole, Arizona. A former ranger for the National Park Service, Abbey now describes himself as an "Agrarian anarchist." He writes frequently about the beauty of the American west and the ways in which that beauty has been spoiled by government, business, and tourism. His many books include such as novels *Fire on the Mountain* (1963), *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), and *Good News* (1980), and several collections of essays, such as *Desert Solitaire* (1968), *Abbey s Road* (1979), and, most recently, *Beyond the Wall: Essays from the Outside* (1984). As the following 1979 essay reveals, Abbey values the importance of the individual in a world in which individuals are at risk.

10.2 Analysis

The first thing to note about Abby's essay is the introduction. He prefaces the text of his essay with a well known saying (If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns)but then adds his own questions (True? False? Maybe?). This is a provocative interest catcher. Then in the first paragraph, he defines by example what the term "arms" has meant through history, concluding that in our time the word refers to firearms. The quotation and the first paragraph together constitute his introduction.

The second point to notice is that Abby provides ample evidence with historical examples to support the idea that private ownership of arms has always been associated with personal freedom and political liberty. He says that oppressive rules in medieval Europe, Nazi Germany,

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and the Soviet Union, as well as other modern nations, keep their populations under control by forbidding ownership of firearms.

In contrast to these cases where political repression and an unarmed populace are facts of life, Abby notes that nations that have traditionally maintained political liberty have also had private ownership of guns, and among these is the United States.

Abby concludes the presentation of this contrasting evidence with the statement that "There must be a meaning in this." And the meaning he finds is asserted as his thesis. He declares that he is "opposed, absolutely, to every move the state makes to restrict my right to buy, own, possess, and carry a firearm. Whether shotgun, rifle, or handgun." His reason is clear: The final defense of liberty lies in the hands of an armed populace.

Placing the thesis near the end gives the essay an inductive organization. His thesis is based on the conclusion that he draws from the historical evidence: oppressive governments maintain control by denying their people the means to resist.

Finally, because Abby wants to present himself as a reasonable proponent of the right to arms, he makes a concession to opponents who favour gun control. He acknowledges that there should be "a few commonsense limitations" to gun ownership." Firearms "should not be sold to children, the certifiably insane, or to convicted criminals."

The last two paragraphs of the essay constitute its conclusion. Abby ends forcefully by associating the private ownership of guns with two great historical events. First he makes an allusion to the French Revolution of 1789 where the people chanted the motto of Liberte', Egalite', Fraternite'. Then he points out that in our own Bill of Rights, the founding fathers guaranteed the right of United States citizens to own guns because "an armed citizenry is the first defense, the best defense, and the final defense against tyranny." He ends the essay neatly by rewording the quotation in the introduction: "If guns are outlawed, only the government will have guns."

Abby's conclusion is as effective as his introduction. He identifies his position with historical events that support the thesis that an armed populace is the last defense against tyranny, and he connects his introduction through the restatement of the opening quotation.

Thus, Abby successfully employs several rhetorical techniques to make a successful argument: He catches the reader's attention in his introduction, he presents sufficient and relevant evidence by way of historical example, he positions his thesis near the end of his essay, presenting it as a logical conclusion drawn from his evidence (inductive organization), he ends forcefully by alluding to historical events that support his thesis, and he refers back to his introduction in words that restate his position on the issue.

Self Assessment

Choose the Correct Option:

1. Abbey completed the novel, *Jonathan Troy* in

   (*a*) 1959 (*b*) 1956

   (*c*) 1954 (*d*) none of these

2. The novel, *The Brave Cowboy: An Old Tale in a New Time* has been written by

   (*a*) Thomas Hardy (*b*) Edward Abbey

   (*c*) Francis Bacon (*d*) none of these.

3. Abbey married a college sweetheart, Jean Schmechel, in

   (*a*) 1951 (*b*) 1959

   (*c*) 1950 (*d*) none of these

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4. Abbey's autobiographical sketch is presented in

(*a*) The Fool's Progress (*b*) Hayduke Lives

(*c*) The Monkey Wrench Gang (*d*) none of these

10.3 Summary

- Abbey's literary influences included Aldo Leopold, Henry David Thoreau, Gary Snyder, Peter Kropotkin, and A.B. Guthrie, Jr..[38][39] Although often compared to authors like Thoreau or Aldo Leopold, Abbey did not wish to be known as a nature writer, saying that he didn't understand "why so many want to read about the world out-of-doors, when it's more interesting simply to go for a walk into the heart of it." The theme that most interested Abbey was that of the struggle for personal liberty against the totalitarian techno-industrial state, with wilderness being the backdrop in which this struggle took place.
- Regarding his writing style, Abbey states: "I write in a deliberately provocative and outrageous manner because I like to startle people. I hope to wake up people. I have no desire to simply soothe or please. I would rather risk making people angry than putting them to sleep. And I try to write in a style that's entertaining as well as provocative. It's hard for me to stay serious for more than half a page at a time." Abbey felt that it was the duty of all authors to "speak the truth—especially unpopular truth. Especially truth that offends the powerful, the rich, the well-established, the traditional, the mythic".
- Abbey's abrasiveness, opposition to anthropocentrism, and outspoken writings made him the object of much controversy. Agrarian author Wendell Berry claimed that Abbey was regularly criticized by mainstream environmental groups because Abbey often advocated controversial positions that were very different from those which environmentalists were commonly expected to hold.
- It is often stated that Abbey's works played a significant role in precipitating the creation of Earth First! The Monkey wrench Gang inspired environmentalists frustrated with mainstream environmentalist groups and what they saw as unacceptable compromises. Earth First! was formed as a result in 1980, advocating eco-sabotage or "monkey wrenching." Although Abbey never officially joined the group, he became associated with many of its members, and occasionally wrote for the organization.

10.4 Keywords

Allegory : A symbolic story disguised to represent meanings other than those indicated on the surface. The characters in an allegory often have no individual personality, but are embodiments of moral qualities and other abstractions. The allegory is closely related to the parable, fable, and metaphor, differing from them largely in intricacy and length. A great variety of literary forms have been used for allegories. John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, a prose narrative, is an allegory of man's spiritual salvation.

Allusion : An allusion is a reference to a person, place, event, or thing that bears an association to the topic of a discourse. This association expands the discourse by drawing in ideas that illustrate the topic, provide a comparison or contrast, suggest consequences, evoke an image, or otherwise enlarge

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or elucidate the author's ideas. In much "classic" literature, allusions are made to the Bible, to Greek and Roman writers, and to mythology. However, allusions may be made to any field: history, politics, science, etc.

: The nature of the allusions affect both immediate comprehension of the discourse as well as its eventual fate. While allusions enhance the understanding of informed readers, they impede the comprehension of those less knowledgeable. And if the allusions are to people, places, events, and literary works of significance, they also help embed the literature within the cultural cannon, enhancing its interest, relevance, and longevity. On the other hand, if they point to minor events, little known persons, or passing fads, the accessibility of the discourse is eventually diminished, making it dated and obscure, a fit subject for doctoral students writing dissertations. E. M. Forster's essay "My Wood" is rich in allusions of the first kind.

Anecdote : A brief narrative or story often serving to make a point. Anecdotal evidence may be accumulated to substantiate a case or suggest a conclusion. Or, an anecdote may be amusing or entertaining within itself. Anecdotes may be fictional, or non-fictional. Anecdotes are often expressed orally, but good anecdotes find their way into print. For example: Recall the anecdote of George Washington, that he could not tell a lie when he cut down the cherry tree.

10.5 Review Questions

1. Briefly describe *The Right to Arms* written by Edward Abbey.
2. Discuss *The Right to Arms* as an argumentative essay about democracy in South Africa.
3. Who was the audience of *The Right to Arms* by Edward Abbey?
4. Introduce Edward Abbey as an essayist. Discuss his life and works.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*c*) 2. (*b*) 3. (*c*) 4. (*a*)

10.6 Further Readings

Books Bishop, James, Jr., *Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist: The Life and Legacy of Edward Abbey*, Atheneum, 1994.

Cahalan, James M., *Edward Abbey: A Life* , University of Arizona Press, 2001.

Dictionary of Literary Biography , Volume 256: Twentieth-Century American Western Writers (Gale Group, 2002); Volume 275: Twentieth-Century American Nature Writers (Gale Group, 2003).

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

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Unit 11: Of Revenge by Francis Bacon

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11.8 Further Readings

Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about Francis Bacon;
- Discuss *Of Revenge*.

Introduction

Sir Francis Bacon (later Lord Verulam, the Viscount St. Albans and Lord Chancellor of England) was an English lawyer, statesman, essayist, historian, intellectual reformer, philosopher, and champion of modern science. Early in his career he claimed "all knowledge as his province" and afterwards dedicated himself to a wholesale revaluation and re-structuring of traditional learning. To take the place of the established tradition (a miscellany of Scholasticism, humanism, and natural magic), he proposed an entirely new system based on empirical and inductive principles and the active development of new arts and inventions, a system whose ultimate goal would be the production of practical knowledge for "the use and benefit of men" and the relief of the human condition.

At the same time that he was founding and promoting this new project for the advancement of learning, Bacon was also moving up the ladder of state service. His career aspirations had been largely disappointed under Elizabeth I, but with the ascension of James his political fortunes rose. Knighted in 1603, he was then steadily promoted to a series of offices, including Solicitor General (1607), Attorney General (1613), and eventually Lord Chancellor (1618). While serving as Chancellor, he was indicted on charges of bribery and forced to leave public office. He then retired to his estate where he devoted himself full time to his continuing literary, scientific and philosophical work. He died in 1626, leaving behind a cultural legacy that, for better or worse, includes most of the foundation for the triumph of technology and for the modern world as we currently know it.

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11.1 Life and Political Career

Sir Francis Bacon (later Lord Verulam, the Viscount St. Albans, and Lord Chancellor of England) was born in London in 1561 to a prominent and well-connected family. His parents were Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Seal, and Lady Anne Cooke, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, a knight and one-time tutor to the royal family. Lady Anne was a learned woman in her own right, having acquired Greek and Latin as well as Italian and French. She was a sister-in-law both to Sir Thomas Hoby, the esteemed English translator of Castiglione, and to Sir William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), Lord Treasurer, chief counselor to Elizabeth I, and from 1572-1598 the most powerful man in England.

Bacon was educated at home at the family estate at Gorhambury in Herfordshire. In 1573, at the age of just twelve, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where the stodgy Scholastic curriculum triggered his lifelong opposition to Aristotelianism (though not to the works of Aristotle himself).

In 1576 Bacon began reading law at Gray's Inn. Yet only a year later he interrupted his studies in order to take a position in the diplomatic service in France as an assistant to the ambassador. In 1579, while he was still in France, his father died, leaving him (as the second son of a second marriage and the youngest of six heirs) virtually without support. With no position, no land, no income, and no immediate prospects, he returned to England and resumed the study of law.

Bacon completed his law degree in 1582, and in 1588 he was named lecturer in legal studies at Gray's Inn. Meanwhile, he was elected to Parliament in 1584 as a member for Melcombe in Dorsetshire. He would remain in Parliament as a representative for various constituencies for the next 36 years.

In 1593 his blunt criticism of a new tax levy resulted in an unfortunate setback to his career expectations, the Queen taking personal offense at his opposition. Any hopes he had of becoming Attorney General or Solicitor General during her reign were dashed, though Elizabeth eventually relented to the extent of appointing Bacon her Extraordinary Counsel in 1596.

It was around this time that Bacon entered the service of Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, a dashing courtier, soldier, plotter of intrigue, and sometime favourite of the Queen. No doubt Bacon viewed Essex as a rising star and a figure who could provide a much-needed boost to his own sagging career. Unfortunately, it was not long before Essex's own fortunes plummeted following a series of military and political blunders culminating in a disastrous coup attempt. When the coup plot failed, Devereux was arrested, tried, and eventually executed, with Bacon, in his capacity as Queen's Counsel, playing a vital role in the prosecution of the case.

In 1603, James I succeeded Elizabeth, and Bacon's prospects for advancement dramatically improved. After being knighted by the king, he swiftly ascended the ladder of state and from 1604-1618 filled a succession of high-profile advisory positions:

- 1604 – Appointed King's Counsel.
- 1607 – Named Solicitor General.
- 1608 – Appointed Clerk of the Star Chamber.
- 1613 – Appointed Attorney General.
- 1616 – Made a member of the Privy Council.
- 1617 – Appointed Lord Keeper of the Royal Seal (his father's former office).
- 1618 – Made Lord Chancellor.

As Lord Chancellor, Bacon wielded a degree of power and influence that he could only have imagined as a young lawyer seeking preferment. Yet it was at this point, while he stood at the very pinnacle of success, that he suffered his great Fall. In 1621 he was arrested and charged with bribery. After pleading guilty, he was heavily fined and sentenced to a prison term in the Tower of London. Although the fine was later waived and Bacon spent only four days in the Tower, he was never allowed to sit in Parliament or hold political office again.

The entire episode was a terrible disgrace for Bacon personally and a stigma that would cling to and injure his reputation for years to come. As various chroniclers of the case have pointed out, the accepting of gifts from suppliants in a law suit was a common practice in Bacon's day, and it is also true that Bacon ended up judging against the two petitioners who had offered the fateful bribes. Yet the damage was done, and Bacon to his credit accepted the judgment against him without excuse. According to his own Essayes, or Counsels, he should have known and done better. (In this respect it is worthnoting that during his forced retirement, Bacon revised and republished the Essayes, injecting an even greater degree of shrewdness into a collection already notable for its worldliness and keen political sense.) Macaulay in a lengthy essay declared Bacon a great intellect but (borrowing a phrase from Bacon's own letters) a "most dishonest man," and more than one writer has characterized him as cold, calculating, and arrogant. Yet whatever his flaws, even his enemies conceded that during his trial he accepted his punishment nobly, and moved on.

Bacon spent his remaining years working with renewed determination on his lifelong project: the reform of learning and the establishment of an intellectual community dedicated to the discovery of scientific knowledge for the "use and benefit of men." The former Lord Chancellor died on 9 April, 1626, supposedly of a cold or pneumonia contracted while testing his theory of the preservative and insulating properties of snow.

11.2 Thought and Writings

In a way Bacon's descent from political power was a fortunate fall, for it represented a liberation from the bondage of public life resulting in a remarkable final burst of literary and scientific activity. As Renaissance scholar and Bacon expert Brian Vickers has reminded us, Bacon's earlier works, impressive as they are, were essentially products of his "spare time." It was only during his last five years that he was able to concentrate exclusively on writing and produce, in addition to a handful of minor pieces:

- Two substantial volumes of history and biography, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* and *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Eighth*.
- De Augmentis Scientiarum (an expanded Latin version of his earlier Advancement of Learning).
- The final 1625 edition of his Essayes, or Counsels.
- The remarkable Sylva Sylvarum, or A Natural History in Ten Centuries (a curious hodge-podge of scientific experiments, personal observations, speculations, ancient teachings, and analytical discussions on topics ranging from the causes of hiccups to explanations for the shortage of rain in Egypt). Artificially divided into ten "centuries" (that is, ten chapters, each consisting of one hundred items), the work was apparently intended to be included in Part Three of the Magna Instauratio.
- His utopian science-fiction novel The New Atlantis, which was published in unfinished form a year after his death.
- Various parts of his unfinished magnum opus Magna Instauratio (or Great Instauration), including a "Natural History of Winds" and a "Natural History of Life and Death."

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These late productions represented the capstone of a writing career that spanned more than four decades and encompassed virtually an entire curriculum of literary, scientific and philosophical studies.

Literary Works

Despite the fanatical claims (and very un-Baconian credulity) of a few admirers, it is a virtual certainty that Bacon did not write the works traditionally attributed to William Shakespeare. Even so, the Lord Chancellor's high place in the history of English literature as well as his influential role in the development of English prose style remain well-established and secure. Indeed even if Bacon had produced nothing else but his masterful Essayes (first published in 1597 and then revised and expanded in 1612 and 1625), he would still rate among the top echelon of 17th-century English authors. And so when we take into account his other writings, e.g., his histories, letters, and especially his major philosophical and scientific works, we must surely place him in the first rank of English literature's great men of letters and among its finest masters (alongside names like Johnson, Mill, Carlyle, and Ruskin) of non-fiction prose.

Bacon's style, though elegant, is by no means as simple as it seems or as it is often described. In fact it is actually a fairly complex affair that achieves its air of ease and clarity more through its balanced cadences, natural metaphors, and carefully arranged symmetries than through the use of plain words, commonplace ideas, and straightforward syntax. (In this connection it is noteworthy that in the revised versions of the essays Bacon seems to have deliberately disrupted many of his earlier balanced effects to produce a style that is actually more jagged and, in effect, more challenging to the casual reader.)

Furthermore, just as Bacon's personal style and living habits were prone to extravagance and never particularly austere, so in his writing he was never quite able to resist the occasional grand word, magniloquent phrase, or orotund effect. (As Dr. Johnson observed, "A dictionary of the English language might be compiled from Bacon's works alone.") Bishop Sprat in his 1667 History of the Royal Society honoured Bacon and praised the society membership for supposedly eschewing fine words and fancy metaphors and adhering instead to a natural lucidity and "mathematical plainness." To write in such a way, Sprat suggested, was to follow true, scientific, Baconian principles. And while Bacon himself often expressed similar sentiments (praising blunt expression while condemning the seductions of figurative language), a reader would be hard pressed to find many examples of such spare technique in Bacon's own writings. Of Bacon's contemporary readers, at least one took exception to the view that his writing represented a perfect model of plain language and transparent meaning. After perusing the New Organon, King James (to whom Bacon had proudly dedicated the volume) reportedly pronounced the work "like the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

The New Atlantis

As a work of narrative fiction, Bacon's novel New Atlantis may be classified as a literary rather than a scientific (or philosophical) work, though it effectively belongs to both categories. According to Bacon's amanuensis and first biographer William Rawley, the novel represents the first part (showing the design of a great college or institute devoted to the interpretation of nature) of what was to have been a longer and more detailed project (depicting the entire legal structure and political organization of an ideal commonwealth). The work thus stands in the great tradition of the utopian-philosophical novel that stretches from Plato and more to Huxley and Skinner.

The thin plot or fable is little more than a fictional shell to contain the real meat of Bacon's story: the elaborate description of Salomon's House (also known as the College of the Six Days

Works), a centrally organized research facility where specially trained teams of investigators collect data, conduct experiments, and (most importantly from Bacon's point of view) apply the knowledge they gain to produce "things of use and practice for man's life." These new arts and inventions they eventually share with the outside world.

In terms of its sci-fi adventure elements, the New Atlantis is about as exciting as a government or university re-organization plan. But in terms of its historical impact, the novel has proven to be nothing less than revolutionary, having served not only as an effective inspiration and model for the British Royal Society, but also as an early blueprint and prophecy of the modern research centre and international scientific community.

Scientific and Philosophical Works

It is never easy to summarize the thought of a prolific and wide-ranging philosopher. Yet Bacon somewhat simplifies the task by his own helpful habits of systematic classification and catchy mnemonic labeling. (Thus, for example, there are three "distempers" – or diseases – of learning," eleven errors or "peccant humours," four "idols," three primary mental faculties and categories of knowledge, etc.) In effect, by following Bacon's own methods it is possible to produce a convenient outline or overview of his main scientific and philosophical ideas.

The Great Instauration

As early as 1592, in a famous letter to his uncle, Lord Burghley, Bacon declared "all knowledge" to be his province and vowed his personal commitment to a plan for the full-scale rehabilitation and reorganization of learning. In effect, he dedicated himself to a long-term project of intellectual reform, and the balance of his career can be viewed as a continuing effort to make good on that pledge. In 1620, while he was still at the peak of his political success, he published the preliminary description and plan for an enormous work that would fully answer to his earlier declared ambitions. The work, dedicated to James, was to be called Magna Instauratio (that is, the "grand edifice" or Great Instauration), and it would represent a kind of summa or culmination of all Bacon's thought on subjects ranging from logic and epistemology to practical science (or what in Bacon's day was called "natural philosophy," the word science being then but a general synonym for "wisdom" or "learning").

Like several of Bacon's projects, the Instauratio in its contemplated form was never finished. Of the intended six parts, only the first two were completed, while the other portions were only partly finished or barely begun. Consequently, the work as we have it is less like the vast but well-sculpted monument that Bacon envisioned than a kind of philosophical miscellany or grab-bag. Part I of the project, De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum ("Nine Books of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning"), was published in 1623. It is basically an enlarged version of the earlier Proficience and Advancement of Learning, which Bacon had presented to James in 1605. Part II, the Novum Organum (or "New Organon") provides the author's detailed explanation and demonstration of the correct procedure for interpreting nature. It first appeared in 1620. Together these two works present the essential elements of Bacon's philosophy, including most of the major ideas and principles that we have come to associate with the terms "Baconian" and "Baconianism."

The Advancement of Learning

Relatively early in his career Bacon judged that, owing mainly to an undue reverence for the past (as well as to an excessive absorption in cultural vanities and frivolities), the intellectual life of Europe had reached a kind of impasse or standstill. Yet he believed there was a way beyond this stagnation if persons of learning, armed with new methods and insights, would

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simply open their eyes and minds to the world around them. This at any rate was the basic argument of his seminal 1605 treatise The Proficience and Advancement of Learning, arguably the first important philosophical work to be published in English.

It is in this work that Bacon sketched out the main themes and ideas that he continued to refine and develop throughout his career, beginning with the notion that there are clear obstacles to or diseases of learning that must be avoided or purged before further progress is possible.

The "Distempers" of Learning

"There be therefore chiefly three vanities in studies, whereby learning hath been most traduced." Thus Bacon, in the first book of the Advancement said. He had referred to these vanities as the three "distempers" of learning and identified them (in his characteristically memorable fashion) as "fantastical learning," "contentious learning," and "delicate learning" (alternatively identified as "vain imaginations," "vain altercations," and "vain affectations").

By fantastical learning ("vain imaginations") Bacon had in mind what we would today call pseudo-science: i.e., a collection of ideas that lack any real or substantial foundation, that are professed mainly by occultists and charlatans, that are carefully shielded from outside criticism, and that are offered largely to an audience of credulous true believers. In Bacon's day such "imaginative science" was familiar in the form of astrology, natural magic, and alchemy.

By contentious learning ("vain altercations") Bacon was referring mainly to Aristotelian philosophy and theology and especially to the Scholastic tradition of logical hair-splitting and metaphysical quibbling. But the phrase applies to any intellectual endeavour in which the principal aim is not new knowledge or deeper understanding but endless debate cherished for its own sake.

Delicate learning ("vain affectations") was Bacon's label for the new humanism insofar as (in his view) it seemed concerned not with the actual recovery of ancient texts or the retrieval of past knowledge but merely with the revival of Ciceronian rhetorical embellishments and the reproduction of classical prose style. Such preoccupation with "words more than matter," with "choiceness of phrase" and the "sweet falling of clauses" – in short, with style over substance – seemed to Bacon (a careful stylist in his own right) the most seductive and decadent literary vice of his age.

Here we may note that from Bacon's point of view the "distempers" of learning share two main faults:

1. Prodigal ingenuity—i.e., each distemper represents a lavish and regrettable waste of talent, as inventive minds that might be employed in more productive pursuits exhaust their energy on trivial or puerile enterprises instead.
2. Sterile results—i.e., instead of contributing to the discovery of new knowledge (and thus to a practical "advancement of learning" and eventually to a better life for all), the distempers of learning are essentially exercises in personal vainglory that aim at little more than idle theorizing or the preservation of older forms of knowledge.

In short, in Bacon's view the distempers impede genuine intellectual progress by beguiling talented thinkers into fruitless, illusory or purely self-serving ventures. What is needed—and this is a theme reiterated in all his later writings on learning and human progress—is a program to re-channel that same creative energy into socially useful new discoveries.

The Idea of Progress

Though it is hard to pinpoint the birth of an idea, for all intents and purposes the modern idea of technological "progress" (in the sense of a steady, cumulative, historical advance in applied

scientific knowledge) began with Bacon's The Advancement of Learning and became fully articulated in his later works.

Knowledge is power, and when embodied in the form of new technical inventions and mechanical discoveries it is the force that drives history – this was Bacon's key insight. In many respects this idea was his single greatest invention, and it is all the more remarkable for its having been conceived and promoted at a time when most English and European intellectuals were either reverencing the literary and philosophical achievements of the past or deploring the numerous signs of modern degradation and decline. Indeed, while Bacon was preaching progress and declaring a brave new dawn of scientific advance, many of his colleagues were persuaded that the world was at best creaking along towards a state of senile immobility and eventual darkness. "Our age is iron, and rusty too," wrote John Donne, contemplating the signs of universal decay in a poem published six years after Bacon's *The Advancement.*

That history might in fact be progressive, i.e., an onward and upward ascent – and not, as Aristotle had taught, merely cyclical or, as cultural pessimists from Hesiod to Spengler have supposed, a descending or retrograde movement, became for Bacon an article of secular faith which he propounded with evangelical force and a sense of mission. In the Advancement, the idea is offered tentatively, as a kind of hopeful hypothesis. But in later works such as the New Organon, it becomes almost a promised destiny: Enlightenment and a better world, Bacon insists, lie within our power; they require only the cooperation of learned citizens and the active development of the arts and sciences.

The Reclassification of Knowledge

In Book II of *De Dignitate* (his expanded version of *The Advancement*) Bacon outlines his scheme for a new division of human knowledge into three primary categories: History, Poesy, and Philosophy (which he associates respectively with the three fundamental "faculties" of mind – memory, imagination, and reason). Although the exact motive behind this reclassification remains unclear, one of its main consequences seems unmistakable: it effectively promotes philosophy – and especially Baconian science – above the other two branches of knowledge, in essence defining history as the mere accumulation of brute facts, while reducing art and imaginative literature to the even more marginal status of "feigned history."

Evidently Bacon believed that in order for a genuine advancement of learning to occur, the prestige of philosophy (and particularly natural philosophy) had to be elevated, while that of history and literature (in a word, humanism) needed to be reduced. Bacon's scheme effectively accomplishes this by making history (the domain of fact, i.e., of everything that has happened) a virtual sub-species of philosophy (the domain of realistic possibility, i.e., of everything that can theoretically or actually occur). Meanwhile, poesy (the domain of everything that is imaginable or conceivable) is set off to the side as a mere illustrative vehicle. In essence, it becomes simply a means of recreating actual scenes or events from the past (as in history plays or heroic poetry) or of allegorizing or dramatizing new ideas or future possibilities (as in Bacon's own interesting example of "parabolic poesy," the *New Atlantis*.)

The New Organon

To the second part of his *Great Instauration* Bacon gave the title New Organon (or "True Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature"). The Greek word organon means "instrument" or "tool," and Bacon clearly felt he was supplying a new instrument for guiding and correcting the mind in its quest for a true understanding of nature. The title also glances at Aristotle's Organon (a collection that includes his Categories and his Prior and Posterior Analytics) and thus suggests a "new instrument" destined to transcend or replace the older, no longer serviceable

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one. (This notion of surpassing ancient authority is aptly illustrated on the frontispiece of the 1620 volume containing the *New Organon* by a ship boldly sailing beyond the mythical pillars of Hercules, which supposedly marked the end of the known world.)

The *New Organon* is presented not in the form of a treatise or methodical demonstration but as a series of aphorisms, a technique that Bacon came to favour as less legislative and dogmatic and more in the true spirit of scientific experiment and critical inquiry. Combined with his gift for illustrative metaphor and symbol, the aphoristic style makes the New Organon in many places the most readable and literary of all Bacon's scientific and philosophical works.

The Idols

In Book I of the *New Organon* (Aphorisms 39-68), Bacon introduces his famous doctrine of the "idols." These are characteristic errors, natural tendencies, or defects that beset the mind and prevent it from achieving a full and accurate understanding of nature. Bacon points out that recognizing and counteracting the idols is as important to the study of nature as the recognition and refutation of bad arguments is to logic. Incidentally, he uses the word "idol" – from the Greek eidolon ("image" or "phantom") – not in the sense of a false God or heathen deity but rather in the sense employed in Epicurean physics. Thus a Baconian idol is a potential deception or source of misunderstanding, especially one that clouds or confuses our knowledge of external reality.

Bacon identifies four different classes of idol. Each arises from a different source, and each presents its own special hazards and difficulties.

1. The Idols of the Tribe.

These are the natural weaknesses and tendencies common to human nature. Because they are innate, they cannot be completely eliminated, but only recognized and compensated for. Some of Bacon's examples are:

- Our senses—which are inherently dull and easily deceivable. (Which is why Bacon prescribes instruments and strict investigative methods to correct them.)
- Our tendency to discern (or even impose) more order in phenomena than is actually there. As Bacon points out, we are apt to find similitude where there is actually singularity, regularity where there is actually randomness, etc.
- Our tendency towards "wishful thinking." According to Bacon, we have a natural inclination to accept, believe, and even prove what we would prefer to be true.
- Our tendency to rush to conclusions and make premature judgments (instead of gradually and painstakingly accumulating evidence).

2. The Idols of the Cave.

Unlike the idols of the tribe, which are common to all human beings, those of the cave vary from individual to individual. They arise, that is to say, not from nature but from culture and thus reflect the peculiar distortions, prejudices, and beliefs that we are all subject to owing to our different family backgrounds, childhood experiences, education, training, gender, religion, social class, etc. Examples include:

- Special allegiance to a particular discipline or theory.
- High esteem for a few select authorities.
- A "cookie-cutter" mentality – that is, a tendency to reduce or confine phenomena within the terms of our own narrow training or discipline.

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3. The Idols of the Market Place.

These are hindrances to clear thinking that arise, Bacon says, from the "intercourse and association of men with each other." The main culprit here is language, though not just common speech, but also (and perhaps particularly) the special discourses, vocabularies, and jargons of various academic communities and disciplines. He points out that "the idols imposed by words on the understanding are of two kinds": "they are either names of things that do not exist" (e.g., the crystalline spheres of Aristotelian cosmology) or faulty, vague, or misleading names for things that do exist (according to Bacon, abstract qualities and value terms – e.g., "moist," "useful," etc. – can be a particular source of confusion).

4. The Idols of the Theatre.

Like the idols of the cave, those of the theatre are culturally acquired rather than innate. And although the metaphor of a theatre suggests an artificial imitation of truth, as in drama or fiction, Bacon makes it clear that these idols derive mainly from grand schemes or systems of philosophy—and especially from three particular types of philosophy:

- Sophistical Philosophy – that is, philosophical systems based only on a few casually observed instances (or on no experimental evidence at all) and thus constructed mainly out of abstract argument and speculation. Bacon cites Scholasticism as a conspicuous example.
- Empirical Philosophy – that is, a philosophical system ultimately based on a single key insight (or on a very narrow base of research), which is then erected into a model or paradigm to explain phenomena of all kinds. Bacon cites the example of William Gilbert, whose experiments with the lodestone persuaded him that magnetism operated as the hidden force behind virtually all earthly phenomena.
- Superstitious Philosophy – this is Bacon's phrase for any system of thought that mixes theology and philosophy. He cites Pythagoras and Plato as guilty of this practice, but also points his finger at pious contemporary efforts, similar to those of Creationists today, to found systems of natural philosophy on Genesis or the book of Job.

Induction

At the beginning of the Magna Instauratio and in Book II of the New Organon, Bacon introduces his system of "true and perfect Induction," which he proposes as the essential foundation of scientific method and a necessary tool for the proper interpretation of nature. (This system was to have been more fully explained and demonstrated in Part IV of the Instauratio in a section titled "The Ladder of the Intellect," but unfortunately the work never got beyond an introduction.)

According to Bacon, his system differs not only from the deductive logic and mania for syllogisms of the Schoolmen, but also from the classic induction of Aristotle and other logicians. As Bacon explains it, classic induction proceeds "at once from . . . sense and particulars up to the most general propositions" and then works backward (via deduction) to arrive at intermediate propositions. Thus, for example, from a few observations one might conclude (via induction) that "all new cars are shiny." One would then be entitled to proceed backward from this general axiom to deduce such middle-level axioms as "all new Lexuses are shiny," "all new Jeeps are shiny," etc.—axioms that presumably would not need to be verified empirically since their truth would be logically guaranteed as long as the original generalization ("all new cars are shiny") is true.

As Bacon rightly points out, one problem with this procedure is that if the general axioms prove false, all the intermediate axioms may be false as well. All it takes is one contradictory

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instance (in this case one new car with a dull finish) and "the whole edifice tumbles." For this reason Bacon prescribes a different path. His method is to proceed "regularly and gradually from one axiom to another, so that the most general are not reached till the last." In other words, each axiom—*i.e.*, each step up "the ladder of intellect" – is thoroughly tested by observation and experimentation before the next step is taken. In effect, each confirmed axiom becomes a foothold to a higher truth, with the most general axioms representing the last stage of the process.

Thus, in the example described, the Baconian investigator would be obliged to examine a full inventory of new Chevrolets, Lexuses, Jeeps, etc., before reaching any conclusions about new cars in general. And while Bacon admits that such a method can be laborious, he argues that it eventually produces a stable edifice of knowledge instead of a rickety structure that collapses with the appearance of a single disconfirming instance. (Indeed, according to Bacon, when one follows his inductive procedure, a negative instance actually becomes something to be welcomed rather than feared. For instead of threatening an entire assembly, the discovery of a false generalization actually saves the investigator from the trouble of having to proceed further in a particular direction or line of inquiry. Meanwhile the structure of truth that he has already built remains intact.)

Is Bacon's system, then, a sound and reliable procedure, a strong ladder leading from carefully observed particulars to true and "inevitable" conclusions? Although he himself firmly believed in the utility and overall superiority of his method, many of his commentators and critics have had doubts. For one thing, it is not clear that the Baconian procedure, taken by itself, leads conclusively to any general propositions, much less to scientific principles or theoretical statements that we can accept as universally true. For at what point is the Baconian investigator willing to make the leap from observed particulars to abstract generalizations? After a dozen instances? A thousand? The fact is, Bacon's method provides nothing to guide the investigator in this determination other than sheer instinct or professional judgment, and thus the tendency is for the investigation of particulars—the steady observation and collection of data—to go on continuously, and in effect endlessly.

One can thus easily imagine a scenario in which the piling up of instances becomes not just the initial stage in a process, but the very essence of the process itself; in effect, a zealous foraging after facts (in the New Organon Bacon famously compares the ideal Baconian researcher to a busy bee) becomes not only a means to knowledge, but an activity vigorously pursued for its own sake. Every scientist and academic person knows how tempting it is to put off the hard work of imaginative thinking in order to continue doing some form of rote research. Every investigator knows how easy it is to become wrapped up in data – with the unhappy result that one's intended ascent up the Baconian ladder gets stuck in mundane matters of fact and never quite gets off the ground.

It was no doubt considerations like these that prompted the English physician (and neo-Aristotelian) William Harvey, of circulation-of-the-blood fame, to quip that Bacon wrote of natural philosophy "like a Lord Chancellor" – indeed like a politician or legislator rather than a practitioner. The assessment is just to the extent that Bacon in the New Organon does indeed prescribe a new and extremely rigid procedure for the investigation of nature rather than describe the more or less instinctive and improvisational – and by no means exclusively empirical – method that Kepler, Galileo, Harvey himself, and other working scientists were actually employing. In fact, other than Tycho Brahe, the Danish astronomer who, overseeing a team of assistants, faithfully observed and then painstakingly recorded entire volumes of astronomical data in tidy, systematically arranged tables, it is doubtful that there is another major figure in the history of science who can be legitimately termed an authentic, true-blooded Baconian. (Darwin, it is true, claimed that The Origin of Species was based on "Baconian

principles." However, it is one thing to collect instances in order to compare species and show a relationship among them; it is quite another to theorize a mechanism, namely evolution by mutation and natural selection, that elegantly and powerfully explains their entire history and variety.)

Science, that is to say, does not, and has probably never advanced according to the strict, gradual, ever-plodding method of Baconian observation and induction. It proceeds instead by unpredictable—and often intuitive and even (though Bacon would cringe at the word) imaginative—leaps and bounds. Kepler used Tycho's scrupulously gathered data to support his own heart-felt and even occult belief that the movements of celestial bodies are regular and symmetrical, composing a true harmony of the spheres. Galileo tossed unequal weights from the Leaning Tower as a mere public demonstration of the fact (contrary to Aristotle) that they would fall at the same rate. He had long before satisfied himself that this would happen via the very un-Bacon-like method of mathematical reasoning and deductive thought-experiment. Harvey, by a similar process of quantitative analysis and deductive logic, knew that the blood must circulate, and it was only to provide proof of this fact that he set himself the secondary task of amassing empirical evidence and establishing the actual method by which it did so.

One could enumerate – in true Baconian fashion – a host of further instances. But the point is already made: advances in scientific knowledge have not been achieved for the most part via Baconian induction (which amounts to a kind of systematic and exhaustive survey of nature supposedly leading to ultimate insights) but rather by shrewd hints and guesses – in a word by hypotheses – that are then either corroborated or (in Karl Popper's important term) falsified by subsequent research.

In summary, then, it can be said that Bacon underestimated the role of imagination and hypothesis (and overestimated the value of minute observation and bee-like data collection) in the production of new scientific knowledge. And in this respect it is true that he wrote of science like a Lord Chancellor, regally proclaiming the benefits of his own new and supposedly foolproof technique instead of recognizing and adapting procedures that had already been tested and approved. On the other hand, it must be added that Bacon did not present himself (or his method) as the final authority on the investigation of nature or, for that matter, on any other topic or issue relating to the advance of knowledge. By his own admission, he was but the Buccinator, or "trumpeter," of such a revolutionary advance – not the founder or builder of a vast new system, but only the herald or announcing messenger of a new world to come.

11.3 Reputation and Cultural Legacy

If anyone deserves the title "universal genius" or "Renaissance man" (accolades traditionally reserved for those who make significant, original contributions to more than one professional discipline or area of learning), Bacon clearly merits the designation. Like Leonardo and Goethe, he produced important work in both arts and science. Like Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, he combined wide and ample intellectual and literary interests (from practical rhetoric and the study of nature to moral philosophy and educational reform) with a substantial political career. Like his near contemporary Machiavelli, he excelled in a variety of literary genres – from learned treatises to light entertainments – though, also like the great Florentine writer, he thought of himself mainly as a political statesman and practical visionary: a man whose primary goal was less to obtain literary laurels for himself than to mold the agendas and guide the policy decisions of powerful nobles and heads of state.

In our own era Bacon would be acclaimed as a "public intellectual," though his personal record of service and authorship would certainly dwarf the achievements of most academic

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and political leaders today. Like nearly all public figures, he was controversial. His chaplain and first biographer William Rawley declared him "the glory of his age and nation" and portrayed him as an angel of enlightenment and social vision. His admirers in the Royal Society (an organization that traced its own inspiration and lineage to the Lord Chancellor's writings) viewed him as nothing less than the daring originator of a new intellectual era. The poet Abraham Cowley called him a "Moses" and portrayed him as an exalted leader who virtually all by himself had set learning on a bold, firm, and entirely new path:

Bacon at last, a mighty Man, arose

Whom a wise King and Nature chose

Lord Chancellour of both their Lawes. . . .

The barren Wilderness he past,

Did on the very Border stand

Of the great promis'd Land,

And from the Mountains Top of his Exalted Wit,

Saw it himself and shew'd us it. . . .

Similarly adulatory if more prosaic assessments were offered by learned contemporaries or near contemporaries from Descartes and Gassendi to Robert Hooke and Robert Boyle. Leibniz was particularly generous and observed that, compared to Bacon's philosophical range and lofty vision, even a great genius like Descartes "creeps on the ground." On the other hand, Spinoza, another close contemporary, dismissed Bacon's work (especially his inductive theories) completely and in effect denied that the supposedly grand philosophical revolution decreed by Bacon, and welcomed by his partisans, had ever occurred.

The response of the later Enlightenment was similarly divided, with a majority of thinkers lavishly praising Bacon while a dissenting minority castigated or even ridiculed him. The French encyclopedists Jean d'Alembert and Denis Diderot sounded the keynote of this 18th-century re-assessment, essentially hailing Bacon as a founding father of the modern era and emblazoning his name on the front page of the Encyclopedia. In a similar gesture, Kant dedicated his Critique of Pure Reason to Bacon and likewise saluted him as an early architect of modernity. Hegel, on the other hand, took a dimmer view. In his "Lectures on the History of Philosophy" he congratulated Bacon on his worldly sophistication and shrewdness of mind, but ultimately judged him to be a person of depraved character and a mere "coiner of mottoes." In his view, the Lord Chancellor was a decidedly low-minded (read typically English and utilitarian) philosopher whose instruction was fit mainly for "civil servants and shopkeepers."

Probably the fullest and most perceptive Enlightenment account of Bacon's achievement and place in history was Voltaire's laudatory essay in his Letters on the English. After referring to Bacon as the father of experimental philosophy, he went on to assess his literary merits, judging him to be an elegant, instructive and witty writer, though too much given to "fustian."

Bacon's reputation and legacy remain controversial even today. While no historian of science or philosophy doubts his immense importance both as a proselytizer on behalf of the empirical method and as an advocate of sweeping intellectual reform, opinion varies widely as to the actual social value and moral significance of the ideas that he represented and effectively bequeathed to us. The issue basically comes down to one's estimate of or sympathy for the entire Enlightenment/Utilitarian project. Those who for the most part share Bacon's view that nature exists mainly for human use and benefit, and who furthermore endorse their opinion that scientific inquiry should aim first and foremost at the amelioration of the human condition and the "relief of man's estate," generally applaud him as a great social visionary. On the

other hand, those who view nature as an entity in its own right, a higher-order estate of which the human community is only a part, tend to perceive him as a kind of arch-villain – the evil originator of the idea of science as the instrument of global imperialism and technological conquest.

On the one side, then, we have figures like the anthropologist and science writer Loren Eiseley, who portrays Bacon (whom he calls "the man who saw through time") as a kind of Promethean culture hero. He praises Bacon as the great inventor of the idea of science as both a communal enterprise and a practical discipline in the service of humanity. On the other side, we have writers, from Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Lewis Mumford to, more recently, Jeremy Rifkin and eco-feminist Carolyn Merchant, who have represented him as one of the main culprits behind what they perceive as western science's continuing legacy of alienation, exploitation, and ecological oppression.

Clearly somewhere in between this ardent Baconolotry, on the one hand there is a strident demonisation of Bacon and on the other lies the real Lord Chancellor: a Colossus with feet of clay. He was by no means a great system-builder (indeed his Magna Instauratio turned out to be less of a "grand edifice" than a magnificent heap) but rather, as he more modestly portrayed himself, a great spokesman for the reform of learning and a champion of modern science. In the end we can say that he was one of the giant figures of intellectual history—and as brilliant, and flawed, a philosopher as he was a statesman.

11.4 Of Revenge

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong pulleth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Salomon, I am sure, saith, *It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence.*

That which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do with things present and to come: therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labour in past matters.

There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honour, or the like. There why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me? And if any man should do wrong merely out of ill nature, why, yet it is but like the thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other.

The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law or remedy; but then let a man take heed the revenge be such as there is no law to punish; else a man's enemy is still beforehand, and it is two for one. Some, when they take revenge, are desirous the party should know whence it cometh: this is the more generous. For the delight seemeth to be not so much in doing the hurt as in making the party repent: but base and crafty cowards are like the arrow that flieth in the dark.

Cosmus, Duke of Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable: *You shall read* (saith he) *that we are commanded to forgive our friends.* But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: *Shall we* (saith he) *take good at God s hands, and not be content to take evil also?* And so of friends in a proportion. This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.

Public revenges are for the most part fortunate; as that for the death of Caesar; for the death of Pertinax; for the death of Henry the Third of France; and many more. But in private revenges it is not so. Nay rather, vindictive persons live the life of witches; who as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.

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Self Assessment

Choose the Correct Option

1. The work, dedicated to James, was to be called .....

   (*a*) Of Studies (*b*) Magna Instauratio

   (*c*) Edward the Second (*d*) none of these.

2. In our own era, Bacon would be acclaimed as a

   (*a*) Private Intellectual (*b*) Pseudo Intellectual

   (*c*) Public Intellectual (*d*) none of these.

3. Bacon was named lecturer in legal studies at Gray's Inn in

   (*a*) 1588 (*b*) 1589

   (*c*) 1567 (*d*) none of these.

4. Bacon was elected to Parliament in ..... as a member for Melcombe in Dorsetshire.

   (*a*) 1955 (*b*) 1954

   (*c*) 1960 (*d*) none of these.

11.5 Summary

- Revenge, according to Bacon, is a wild justice because it offends the law by putting it out of effect and to violate the very purpose of it. Yet it also allows for an ability to place fairness in a given situation by allowing a victim to be even with his enemy.
- Bacon states that if a man does ill will by nature than it is wrong to be spiteful for his love for himself over others. As well, he also suggests that it is necessary to bare pain and evil through his quote of Job. These therefore show moral arguments.
- Bacon's historical and biblical allusions allow for an ability to compare situations with those that were precedents for his philosophy. By doing this he is able to justify the benevolence in his theories by establishing such experiences with good morals.
- Francis Bacon attempts to define Love's effects on man and its impact through its existence. Love is inevitable to man as he clearly states towards the beginning of his essay. Bacon concludes that love can help make the world a better place or its misuse may corrupt mankind.
- Bacon uses the quote to establish the fact that love may disrupt rationality. By relating love with flattery, Bacon explains of love corrupting abilities. It is only through the receiving persons love can be truly defined.
- Bacon does contradict himself by first saying that a mad degree love is felt by all of man, and yet then tells of two men who are exceptions to this. He also uses the feelings of others towards love as evidence to the support of his theory as shown through the previous quote. The last sentence remains part of the evolutionary thought/revelation that Bacon has dealing with love's effects. Bacon does indeed discuss the three types of love but explains them in a continuous thought by leading one into the other.
- The line "It is a strange thing to note the excess of this passion," can be separated to start a new paragraph, and to make another paragraph starting with "As for the other losses, " These two points separate the ideas of an introduction to love's existence, and carries over to love's possible misuse, and the losses incurred through this process.

What is gained by using one paragraph is a non-stop idea that love is both embracing yet also dangerous, and overall more complex than what it appears to be.

- If Bacon had eliminated the contradictions and qualifications of love, he would also be guiding the reader too much on how he perceived love's effects. Therefore, he would rid of the reader's ability to incorporate experience with theory and come about with a revelation on the subject as he has. Love is both a blessing and a punishment at the same time yet its proper universal usage allows for the world to unite in a way beyond that which we may perceive. "Of Youth and Age".
- Bacon starts off each essay in the form of a continuous thought which evolves through the possibilities which branch off from this thought. He utilizes contradictory views towards the issue in order to permit a state of uncertainty and to ultimately allow for the reader to believe in a guided point of view. As well he uses quotes and examples to illustrate his point.
- The structure of all of Bacon's essays are relatively the same. He begins with a general statement and gradually begins to present contradictory views. This can be seen in "Of Youth and Age" when Bacon says, "Generally youth is like ... not so wise as the second...And yet the invention of young men is more lively than that of the old...". He then uses quotes and examples to prove his theories in order to come to a conclusion. Diction plays a vital role in assisting Bacon to portray both the time period of the writing as well as further persuasive techniques. His use of "innovate", "mediocrity", and "preeminence" stress meaning into the words of the writing to help support his theories. Imagery lightens the perception of the issue in question by illuminating actions in order to portray them persuasively to the reader. Bacon uses examples in particular through his preplanned word choice. Syntax of his essays include complex sentences which elaborates thoroughly on his opinions and thoughts on the issue. Organization is key to Bacon's essays by setting up the writing by maintaining a consistent position to the issue and its faults. Then, the use of examples such as the passage from Job in "Of Revenge."

11.6 Keywords

Pec"cant, : 1. Sinning; guilty of transgression; criminal; Morbid; corrupt; as, peccant humours, Wrong; defective; faulty.

Mediocrity : The state or quality of being mediocre, Mediocre ability, achievement, or performance.

Diction : The choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing, the style of enunciation in speaking or singing.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*c*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*d*)

11.7 Review Questions

1. Why can revenge be defined as "a kind of wild justice"? What is wild about revenge? What about it is just?

2. Does Bacon contradict himself? Does he give evidence to support his argument? Give examples of both.

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3. Discuss Bacon's life and works.

4. What arguments does Bacon make against revenge? Are his objections primarily moral or practical?

11.8 Further Reading

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Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html

Notes

Unit 12: Indian Weavers by Sarojini Naidu

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about poetry and the poet Sarojini Naidu;
- Eenjoy the rhythm of the poem;
- Discover the special use of language in poetry;
- Use comparisons for effective writing;
- Identify the use of words to create visual images.

Introduction

Poetry is a pleasure-giving medium. This medium is handled by different poets in the world. Most of the poets in India present their poetry in their mothertongue only. Those who present poetry in languages other their own have not succeeded so well as Sarojini Naidu.

There are not many in India who have written poetry in English. Among them, Sarojini Naidu stands first. Her poems are praised not only in India, but all over the world.

Though she has written poems on religion, country, women's freedom, etc., her poems on nature occupy the first place in her poetry. Even in sorrow, her nature poems glow with a touch of her suffering.

Poetry is a medium through which the poets express their emotion and thought with a musical tone by words. In the words of Wordsworth, poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, emotions recollected in tranquillity.

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Poetry treats of two kinds of subject matter – that which is supplied by the external objects, such as deeds, events and the things we see around us and that which is supplied by the poet's own thoughts and feelings. The former gives rise to objective poetry, the latter to subjective. In the first, it is about what he has seen or heard; in the latter he brings to bear his own reflections upon what he has seen or heard. The same subject may be treated either way. If the poet views it from without, confining himself that is to say, merely to its externals, his treatment is objective; if he views it from within, giving expression, that is to say, to the thoughts and feelings it arouses in his mind, his treatment is subjective. Simply, it can be said in yet another fashion, i.e., objective poetry is impersonal and subjective poetry personal. In the former, the focus of attention is something that is outward—a praiseworthy act, a thrilling occurrence, a beautiful sight; in the latter, it is the poet himself; whatever the subject may be, his mind is centered round his own thoughts and feelings.

Though, theoretically, subjective and objective poetry belong to two distinct categories, in actual practice, it is almost impossible to separate the one from the other.

Poetry is divided into several types. The major types are given below;

1. The Lyric
2. The Ode
3. The Sonnet
4. The Elegy
5. The Idyll
6. The Epic
7. The Ballad
8. The Satire

Poetry is the effective medium to express the ideas or feelings, which are experienced by an individual, through whom the same experience is aroused in the readers. It is common to all people in the world. Regarding English poetry, since the medium, i.e. language, is very flexible, all the literary works of certain writers/poets of the world are presented in the English Language. It may also be due to the impact of the English rule all over the world for a certain period.

Indian English Writing

Besides the railway system, the civil service, the game of cricket, IT development and a host of other distinctive aspects of Indian life today, the British bestowed upon us the aspiration of creating literature in the English language. The other British-bestowed elements acquired Indian reincarnations without much effort or delay; but creative writing in English by Indians had to struggle long and hard to obtain a separate identity.

At the beginning, the term Anglo-Indian literature subsumed the early attempts by the Indians to write poetry, drama or fiction in the English language. Edward Farley Oaten's prize-winning essay '1907' at Cambridge did not actually discuss any Indian writing, but the appendix provided at the end of his book lists eleven Indians among the authors of Anglo-Indian works. In the opening chapter of his massive Indian Writing in English, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has given an account of how the Indian writer of English was weaned terminologically away from the 'Anglo-Indian' fold to the 'Indo-Anglican' flock with an involuntary but happily brief sojourn in an 'Indo-Anglican' realm.

Today, the term 'Indo-Anglican' is more or less accepted without dispute as descriptive of original literary creation in the English language by the Indians. Its status in relation to other

literatures in the Indian languages continues to be as undefined as the status of English itself in relation to other Indian languages. But, R.K.Narayan's novel, The Guide (1958) has been made into an expensive and popular Hindi film, and this may well be taken as one kind of public approval of Indian writing in English.

The establishment of Indo-Anglican literature as a valid and distinct form of Indian literary writing has not, however, solved the epistemological problem of such Indian writing as is available in translation in English. Oaten's 1907 list includes Michael Madhusudan Datta's 'Is This Called Civilization?' as an Anglo-Indian Work without conceding that it is a translation of the original Bengali play 'Ekeyi ki boley savyata?'

As recently as 1960, Dorothy M. Spencer's introductory essay to her annotated bibliography, Indian Fiction in English makes no serious distinction between Indian novels written in English and Indian language novels translated into English. VK Gokak, in concluding his powerful plea in favour of recognising what he calls 'Indo-English literature', says.

"I cannot help thinking that one of the befitting ways of honouring the message and significance of Gitanjali is to create a body of Indo-English writing, which will wear Gitanjali as a jewel in its crown. I cannot help thinking that the area so persuasively opened by Prof.Gokak needs to be sharply defined and delimited in order to forestall any boundary disputes" (1972,p.22).

Those who have read and invariably derived benefit from Gokak's pioneering book, English in India, will have noticed that he has devoted a separate chapter to Indian Literature in Trasnlation wherein he has argued that scholarly translations into English from classical Indian literary works—not only in Sanskrit, but in the older regional languages as well—should constitute valid post graduate work towards the doctoral degree in the department of English or of Comparative Literature in Indian Universities.

The historical evaluation of Indian writing in English is also bound to deal with the patterns of continuity and differentiation which have marked out the various phases and movements in its complex and often overlapping, growth. Literary history does not flow so smoothly, for the progression of creative concentrations and transitions reveal the operation of a multiple causation, of which the individual personality or achievement is but one, if readily discernible factor.

The Carlylean approach to literary history as primarily a collective literary biography has no doubt done its necessary service in the cause of identifying and establishing an essential frame of reference for the appreciation of Indo-Anglican literature as a coherent, self-consistent and autonomous tradition; but it must now give room for a more comprehensive and qualitative histriographical and comparativistic strategy. Indian writing in English, produced over the last hundred odd years, does not reveal a homogeneous continuity, but rather a complex cyclical continuity.

In its initial stages, one witnesses a self-conscious approximation of the 'singing strength' to the ferment of ideas and the corresponding upheaval of talents during the so-called Indian Renaissance. The Indian mind was at this time concentrating on a patriotic rediscovery of a national identity and a national destiny. The first writers like the writers of colonial and revolutionary America, or the expatriates of Colonial Australia, had used the gift of the English language of a direct descriptive statement of the physical discovery of a newly accessible experience. They were engrossed in the immediacies of political argument, social rethinking, and dissemination of modern enlightenment and revaluation of the Indian Spirit. Their rhetorical simplicity and forthrightness were more conducive to effective debate rather than to an imaginative discourse.

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The Indo-Anglican pen was employed in the battle of wits and in the collision of arguments and perspectives with a simple urgency commensurate with the new-won power of an expressive resource. The process has continued, with the result that it overlaps the next successive phases.

From Vivekananda to Aurobindo, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Tagore, from Tilak, Gokhale, and Gandhi to Nehru, Radhakrishnan and Rajaji, the Indian writers of English Prose have been primarily concerned with the exploration of thought on a level of stylistic empiricism rather than with the pursuit of vision on the level of creative imagination. Nevertheless, the polemical effectiveness and the empirical vitalism of their writing have tempered and refined the linguistic idiom itself. In a sense, their writings represent a substantial framework of preparation for the aesthetic and creative transformation of our interest in the English language.

The next distinctive, chronological phase in the growth of the Indo-Anglican literature reveals our writers aiming at a consciously enhanced and heightened discourse, and their literary production reflects the whole process of absorption, assimilation, synthesis and creative tempering of the language.

At the same time, Indian writing in English enters the mainstream of modern Indian vernacular literatures, adumbrating, within the specific structures of its own distinctive myth, discourse and logos the same cyclicality of influences, movements, dimensions and extensions. First, Romanticism appears in a variety of local habitations and their co-ordinate mutations. From Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu and Derozio to Armando Menezes, Bhushan and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, one finds the activization of the romantic impulse with its mixed vintage of idealism, mysticism, regionalism and nationalism.

With the fading away of the romantic impulse, the Indo-Anglican sensibility seems to have turned increasingly towards Realism and its ancillary modifications of Regionalism and Naturalism.

Further, it is considered that there has been Indian literary activity in English for the past 200 years. It began with the insistence of the reformist Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other like-minded Indians that for India to take its rightful place among nations, a knowledge of education in English was considered essential. English literary activity took on a new aspect with the independence movement whose leaders and followers found in English the one language that united them.

Among the first poets were Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose and Michael Madhusudan Datta, all of whom wrote narrative verse. In the following generation, there was Toru Dutt, the most important among the women poets in this genre. Carrying on this tradition was Sarojini Naidu, judged by many as the greatest of women poets; among her poetic collections may be mentioned The Golden Threshold (1905), The Bird of Time (1912) and The Broken Wing (1917). Best known of the Indian poets in English was the Bengali Rabindranath Tagore, who, wrote his poems first in Bengali, and then translated some of them into English. A very different figure from Tagore is Sri Aurobindo.

The independence movement gave a strong impetus to expository prose. Important contributions to this genre were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who edited an English journal Maharatta, Lala Lajpat Rai, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and T. Prakasam. Mahatma Gandhi, too, wrote widely in English and edited Young India and The Harijan. He also wrote the autobiography My Experiments with Truth (originally published in Gujarati, 1927-29), now an Indian classic. In this he was followed by Jawarhalal Nehru, whose Discovery of India is justly popular. Prose fiction in English began in 1902 with the novel The Lake of Palms, by Romesh Chunder Dutt. The next important novelist is Mulk Raj Anand, who spoke against class and cast distinction in a series of novels, The Coolie (1936), Untouchable (1935), Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) and The Big Heart (1945). Less fierce, though a better craftsman, is R.K.Narayan, who has published nine novels (as well as many short stories), among them The Guide (1958), The Man-Eater of

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Malgudi (1961) and The Vendor of Weets (1967) are famous; his work has a wider circle of readers outside India than within. Other Indian novelists in the English medium are Santha Rama Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markendeya and Khushwant Singh. The most popular is Raja Rao, whose novels Kanthapura (1938), The Cow of the Barricades (1947) and The Serpent and the Rope have attracted a wide audience.

12.1 Introduction to the Poet

Of all the celebrated women of modern India, Mrs. Sarojini Devi Naidu's name is at the top. Not only that, her birthday is celebrated as 'Women's Day'. She was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad. Her father, Dr.Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, was the founder of Nizam College of Hyderabad and a scientist. Her mother, Mrs. Barada Sundari Devi was a Bengali poetess. Sarojini Devi inherited qualities from both her father and mother. Sarojini was a very bright and proud girl. Her father aspired for her to become a mathematician or scientist, but she loved poetry from a very early age.

When her father saw that she was more interested in poetry than mathematics or science, he decided to encourage her. With his support, she wrote the play "Maher Muneer" in the Persian language. Dr.Chattopadhyaya distributed some copies among his friends and sent one copy to the Nawab of Hyderabad. Reading a beautiful play written by a young girl, the Nizam was very impressed. The college gave her a scholarship to study abroad.

At the age of 16, she got admitted to King's College of England. There she met Dr. Govind Naidu from Southern India. After finishing her studies at the age of 19, she got married to him during the time when inter-caste marriages were not allowed. Her father was a progressive thinking person and he did not care what others said. Her marriage was a very happy one.

Sarojini was brought up in the liberal intellectual and imaginative milieu of her father's home at Hyderabad steeped in both Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. Her vast reading in English Literature prompted the early fluttering of the Nightingale, Hindu mythology and Urdu and Persian folklore.

Sarojini wrote her first published poem The Song of a Dream as a college girl at Cambridge. Subsequently, she published a series of poems exhibiting a mixture of romanticism and idealism in the manner of Keats and Tennyson.

The early poems show a strain of melancholy born out of loneliness, a combination of fantasy and delight and an unbelievable command over words, phrases, rhythm and rhyme–traits which would be developed to perfection in her later poems.

The English critics, Edmund Gosse and Arthur Symons, were struck by the charm of Sarojini's poems. They noted her passionate delight in the beauty of the sounds and words.

However, they advised her not to be skylarks and nightingales. She was told to stir the soul of the East to reveal the heart of India to the westerners.

Edmund Gosse asked her to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid population of her own and unfamiliar province, in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of English classics.

After her return to India, Sarojini decided to confine herself to Indian themes. The next twenty years of her life was dedicated to writing poetry, fulfilling an ardent mission of introducing the exotic oriental world of beauty and mystery to the English speaking world.

Though several of her themes are light and ephemeral, Sarojini's poetry is intensely Indian. She has poetised the sights and sounds, situations and experiences familiar to us.

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Though she reached the peak of excellence only rarely, for sheer variety of themes, range of feelings, colour, rhythm, fancy and conceit, metaphor and similies Sarojini remains unsurpassed even today.

In 1905, her first collection of poems, *The Golden Threshold* was published.

Subsequently, she published *The Bird of Time*, *The Broken Wings*, *The Magic Trees*, *The Wizard Mask* and *A Treasury of Poems*.

Gandhi whom she addressed as a 'Mystic Loyus' in her famous sonnet, was to transform her from a romantic singer of life's beautiful ephemeralities to a determined and impassioned fighter for her country's liberation. Ten years younger to the Mahatma and ten years elder to Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini entered the vortex of the freedom struggle immediately after the publication of her last collection of poems The Broken Wing in 1917.

During the next thirty-two years of her life, Sarojini did not write any substantial poetry; she gave place to the fiery patriotism. Sarojini met Gandhi for the first time in 1914 in England and was impressed by his simplicity and singleness of purpose. Later, she met Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. In fact, her place in the national struggle for freedom was exactly equidistant from both. She was seen along with Gandhi in the thick of the protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales in November 1921. Later we could see her reading out the presidential address of Deshbandhu C. R. Das at the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress at the Kenyan Indian Congress in 1923. She was elected President of the Indian National Congress at its Kanpur session in 1925 and she took over the Presidentship from Mahatma Gandhi himself.

In that session, in her message to the country she said, "Mine, as a woman, is a most domestic programme merely to restore to India her true position as the supreme mistress in her own home, the sole guardian of her own vast resources and the sole dispenser of her own hospitality" (1987, p.90). Her emphasis was always on communal harmony, removal of untouchability and emancipation of woman.

In all the phases of Gandhi's movement Sarojini stood like a rock beside him and courted arrest and imprisonment several times. She attended the Round Table Conference along with Gandhi in 1931. Her flawless English, grasp of the subject, and oratorical power got interlinked with flashes of wit. She was applauded and admired wherever she spoke. In The Battle of Liberty she says that fear is the one unforgivable treachery and despair, the one unforgivable sin. Sarojini was, by all accounts, a warm and gracious personality. She loved good food, attractive clothes and good company. Sarojini fully enjoyed the abundance of life in spite of her ill-health. She was like her master, an adherent to ahimsa, but was not a vegetarian.

What brought Sarojini and Gandhi together, apart from their patriotism, was their sense of humour. Both loved to joke especially at themselves. "Of all the Things", wrote Sarojini to Arthur Symons, "that perhaps life or my temperament has given me as I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price" (1987, p.91). She used to enliven the high level parleys of Congress leaders including Gandhi and Nehru with her witty comments and humorous anecdotes. In fact, Sarojini was often described, as the licensed jester of the Mahatma's little court. Gandhi on his part was indulgent and affectionate towards her and warm-heartedly tolerated all her jokes at his expense. She called him the 'Mickey Mouse' of Indian politics and remarked that "it costs a great deal of money to keep Gandhi living in poverty" (1987, p.91).

Though Gandhi always insisted that his visitors sit cross-legged on the floor, he made an exception in the case of Sarojini and always kept a stool ready at the Sevagram Ashram for her because she had difficulty sitting on the floor. Even Morarji Desai, that indomitable Gandhian, remembers Sarojini's 'kindness' when he first met her to invite her to speak in Wilson College, Mumbai, "Smt.Naidu talked to us" he writes, "in her beautiful sweet and inspiring style. We

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were tremendously inspired by her speech" (1987, p.91). Aldous Huxley who met her in the twenties thought of her as "a woman who combines in the most remarkable way great intellectual power with charm; sweetness and earnestness with humour" (1987, p.91). Jawaharlal Nehru considered her as a humanist full of compassion. He called her an interpreter of India, "an ideal ambassador and the ideal link between the East and West" (1987, p.91).

Delivering the commemorative speech in the Constituent Assembly of India on 3rd March 1949, after the death of Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru said that she was a person of great brilliance, vital and vivid. She had been a poet, political agitator and administrator. There is no better way to sum up the deeply human, volatile and nobler aspects of Sarojini Naidu than what Nehru said in his impassioned speech:

"So we think of her as a brightness, as a certain vitality and vividness, as poetry infused into life and activity, as something tremendously important and rich and yet something which in terms of the material world is rather insubstantial, difficult to grasp and difficult to describe, as something which you can only feel, as you can feel beauty as you can feel the other higher things in life" (1987, p.92).

In 1935, Sri Aurobindo observed that Sarojini's poetry was among the lasting things in English Literature and that she would take her place among the immortals. The prophecy has come true.

Today Sarojini is among the immortals not only because of her great services to the country as a soldier of freedom and a builder of modern India but also because of her enchanting poetry that has thrilled several generations.

Several admirers of her work were encouraging her in all her walks of life. One day she met Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He asked her to use her poetry and her beautiful words to rejuvenate the spirit of Independence in the hearts of villagers. He asked her to use her talent to free Mother India. Then, she totally directed her energy to the fight for freedom. She was roaming around the country like a general of army along with Mahatma Gandhi pouring enthusiasm among the hearts of the Indians. The independence of India became the heart and soul of her work.

Sarojini was responsible for awakening the women of India. She brought them out of the kitchen. She travelled from state to state, city to city and asked for the rights of the women. She re-established self-esteem within the whole of India. In 1925, she chaired the summit of Congress in Kanpur. In 1928, she came to USA with the message of the non-violence movement from Gandhi. When in 1930, Gandhi was arrested for a protest, she took the helms of his movement. In 1931, she participated in the Round Table Summit, along with Gandhi and Pundit Malaviya. In 1942, she was arrested during the "Quit India" protest and stayed in jail for 21 months with Gandhi. After the independence she became the Governor of Utter Pradesh. She was the first woman Governor.

She lives ever enshrined in the Oxford Book of Mystic Verse. Most of her volumes are sprinkled frequently with a deep philosophy of life and other worldly vision that carry her into the very heart of the great English mystic poets. Sarojini's language is crystal clear because she never strove to be obscure like the Georgian School of Poets. Her lyrics are sombre yet sonorous. As a young woman, Sarojini Naidu defied the bonds of caste by her marriage. Small and vivid with luminous eyes of liquid brown, she was a feminist, lyric poet, singer of songs and above all, a mother (of four). She was also a scholar, mystic and philosopher, whose "turbulence of heart and turmoil of the senses were translated into music". In this respect she resembled the two most bellowed of the English poets, Shelley and Keats. Like Keats, she suffered poor health. Unlike her fellow poet Rabindranath Tagore, she sang directly in English. The English language, she said, was more naturally her mothertongue than Hindustani.

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Sarojini Naidu had participated freely in social and political activities and delivers lectures frequently in various places. Some were thrilled to hear that this had led her to comparative sterility of poetic accomplishment for many years past and disapprove of her seeking fresh fields and pastures new. But, her contributions towards the evolution of a higher social and political life in India are valuable in themselves though they have certainly had the result. Her public utterances on various platforms are all characterised by an intense patriotism and a desire for national upheaval.

Sarojini was a very good orator. In her closing address to the 40th Indian National Congress, she said, "as long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the cause of freedom… I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman, I give to you the weapons of faith and courage and the shield of fortitude. And as a poet, I fling out the banner of song and sound, the bugle call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery…" (1982, p.20). On Sarojini's The Sceptred Flute, Joseph Auslander wrote, "… it

Notes **Sarojini Naidu**, also known by the sobriquet **The Nightingale of India**, was a child prodigy, Indian independence activist and poet. Naidu was one of the framers of the Indian Constitution. Naidu is the second Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the Governor of Uttar Pradesh state. Her birthday is celebrated as Women's Day in India.

Early Life

She was born in Hyderabad to Bengali Hindu Kulin Brahmin family to Agorenath Chattopadhyay and Barada Sundari Devi on 13th February 1879. Her father was a doctor of science from Edinburgh University, settled in Hyderabad state, where he founded and administered the Hyderabad College, which later became the Nizam's College in Hyderabad. Her mother was a poetess and used to write poetry in Bengali. Sarojini Naidu was the eldest among the eight siblings. One of her brothers Birendranath was a revolutionary and her other brother, Harindranath was a poet, dramatist, and actor.

Did u know? She was known as Nightingale of India.

Career

Indian Freedom Fighter

Sarojini Naidu joined the Indian national movement in the wake of partition of Bengal in 1905. She came into contact with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

During 1915-1918, she travelled to different regions in India delivering lectures on social welfare, women empowerment and nationalism. She awakened the women of India and brought them out of the kitchen. She also helped to establish the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917. She was sent to London along with Annie Besant, President of WIA, to present the case for the women's vote to the Joint Select Committee.

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President of the Congress

In 1925, Sarojini Naidu presided over the annual session of Indian National Congress at Kanpur. In 1929, she presided over East African Indian Congress in South Africa. She was awarded the *Hind a Kesari* medal by the British government for her work during the plague epidemic in India. In 1931, she participated in the Round Table Conference with Gandhiji and Madan Mohan Malaviya. Sarojini Naidu played a leading role during the Civil Disobedience Movement and was jailed along with Gandhiji and other leaders. In 1942, Sarojini Naidu was arrested during the "Quit India" movement and was jailed for 21 months with Gandhiji. She shared a very warm relationship with Gandhiji and used to call him "Mickey Mouse".

Literary career

Sarojini Naidu began writing at the age of 12. Her play, Maher Muneer, impressed the Nawab of Hyderabad. In 1905, her collection of poems, named "The Broken Exes" was published. Her poems were admired by many prominent Indian politicians like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Jawaharlal Nehru .

Marriage

During her stay in England, Sarojini met Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu, a non-Brahmin and a doctor by profession, and fell in love with him. After finishing her studies at the age of 19, she got married to him during the time when inter-caste marriages were not allowed. Her father approved the marriage and her marriage was a very happy one.

The couple had five children. Jayasurya, Padmaja, Randheer, Nilawar and Leelamani. Her daughter Padmaja followed in to her footprints and became the Governor of West Bengal. In 1961, she published a collection of poems entitled The Feather of The Dawn.

12.2 Indian Weavers

WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,

Why do you weave a garment so gay?...

Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,

We weave the robes of a new-born child.

Weavers, weaving at fall of night,

Why do you weave a garment so bright?...

Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,

We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,

What do you weave in the moonlight chill?...

White as a feather and white as a cloud,

We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Stanza 1

Weavers, weaving at break of day ……. a new-born child.

Have you ever noticed the colours we choose for a new born baby's clothes? Why do you think we choose these colours? In the first stanza the poet, Sarojini Naidu describes weavers weaving cloth in the early morning. She asks the weavers why they are weaving a cloth of a

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particular colour. They say that the cloth that they are weaving is the colour of a halcyon's wings. It is beautiful and blue because it will be used for making the clothes of a newly born child.

Self Assessment-1

1. Complete the following sentences:

   The weavers are weaving the cloth for ..... .

   They are compared to ..... because of the similarity of colour i.e. blue.

2. 'Gay' in line 2 means 'bright'. Which mood of the weavers does it indicate?

   Tick the right answer:

   (*a*) of cheerfulness (*b*) of frustration

   (*c*) of sadness

3. What is the similarity between morning time of the day and the birth of a child?

Stanza II

Weavers, weaving at fall of night …….. veils of a queen.

In this stanza the poet asks the weavers why they are weaving a cloth late in the evening. She asks why it is so bright and colourful. The weavers tell her that the cloth is brightly and richly coloured like the feathers of a peacock because they are weaving it for a queen. The queen will use this cloth to make her marriage veil.

Stanza III

Weavers, weaving solemn and still …… man's funeral shroud.

You must have noticed people wearing white clothes to visit a friend who has lost a loved one. Why do we not wear bright clothes on such occasions? In the above stanza the poet asks the weavers what they are weaving late in the night. The weavers reply that they are weaving a thin white cloth to cover a dead body.

12.3 Appreciation

1. Do you know that a **Simile** is a literary device? It is used to show a comparison between two different things because of some similarity between them. This comparison is indicated by the words, 'as' or 'like'

   (*a*) Find the simile in stanza 2 and complete the statement:

   The ..... is compared to ..... both are bright and colourful.

   (*b*) Is there any similarity between the following pairs? Write complete phrases indicating similies.

   (*a*) life and sea (*b*) rain and music

   For example: After getting a good percentage in NIOS secondary exam, Aziza's aspirations soared like a bird in the sky.

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2. Write the objects of comparisons for the following:

   (*a*) as cold as .....

   (*b*) as hot at .....

   (*c*) as deep as .....

3. Rhythm in writing is like the beat in music. In poetry, rhythm implies that certain words are produced more forcefully than the others and may be held for a longer duration. Rhythm is also created by repeating words of phrases, sometimes by repeating whole lines and sentences.

   Ask a friend to read the poem aloud to you and enjoy its rhythm. Note down the words and phrases repeated.

4. The poem has strong imagery. In other words, when we listen to it or read it, we are able to create a clear picture in our minds like a picture of an infant wearing blue clothes.

Word-Building

Some of these are formed by adding **the** suffix '-er' or '-or' to verbs or nouns.

For example: weave (verb) + er = weaver

direct (verb) + or = director

photograph (noun) + er = photographer

Put the following words in two lists. Refer to a dictionary if you are not sure: teacher, grocer, preacher, carpenter, engineer, driver, tailor, manager, potter, painter, actor, doctor, author.

Words formed by adding suffix Root words

Words Expressing Happy and Sad Feelings

Given below are the words that express happy and sad feelings. Put the words expressing happy feelings in the happy face and the words expressing sad feelings in the sad face.

Refer to a dictionary, if you do not know the meaning of any of these words: sad, glad, delighted, depressed, excited, gloomy, dejected, joyous, downcast, cheerful, annoyed, miserable, jubilant, thrilled.

HAPPY

SAD

Did u know? **Sarojini Naidu** (February 13, 1879 – March 2, 1949) was a child prodigy, a freedom fighter, and a poet. Naidu was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress, the first woman to become the Governor. She was famously known as Bharatiya Kokila (The Nightingale of India).

She was very active in the Indian Independence Movement and encouraged women to participate in political life.

Her poetry, originally published, in three volumes -*The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and the Spring* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1915)*: Songs of Love, Death and the Spring*. Two other volumes—*The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India* and *The Feather of the Dawn*—were published after her death.

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Did u know? **All of us experience happy and sad moments in life. When we are happy, we share our happiness with everyone. What can we do when we are sad or depressed? How do we cope with our negative emotions? Here are some suggestions given by researchers. These suggestions include some self-help techniques. Be positive. Avoid being critical of yourself. Take interest in others. Involve yourself in some physical activity like walking, running, cycling, dancing etc. Listen to your favourite music or watch your favourite TV programme. Pursue a hobby like painting, gardening, stitching etc. Involve yourself in some constructive activity.**

Weaving is a central activity in the poem. Is it because life is a weave of events? Weaving was an important activity in the poet's time. Gandhiji also advocated the use of Charakha in every household.

Do you know why? What was the Charakha a symbol of?

Try to find the answer and write five lines about what the charakha is a symbol of. Why did Gandhiji advocate it?

In this poem, you read about the different stages of life that bring joys and sorrows. You also learnt ways of sharing happiness and excitement and ways with negative feelings and emotions.

Self Assessment-2

1. In this poem, the poet is describing the three stages of life. She relates them to dresses and their colours. She also compares the changes in life to the changes in a day.

   Complete the blanks on the basis of your understanding of the poem.

   (*a*) Daybreak

   Stage of life ..... Colour of cloth .....

   (*b*) Colour of cloth—purple and green

   Time of day ..... Stage of life .....

   (*c*) Midnight

   Stage of life ..... Colour of cloth .....

2. The words/phrases that suggest different moods in the poem:

   funeral, marriage veil, shroud, break of day, purple and green, white, garment gay, dead man, solemn and still, bright, plumes of a peacock

   Put these expressions in two columns:

   (*a*) Words/expressions conveying joy

   (*b*) Words/expressions conveying sorrow

3. The poem has strong imagery. In other words, when we listen to it or read it, we are able to create a clear picture in our mind like an image of infant wearing blue clothes. Listen to the poem again and write down the images created in your mind.

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4. Complete the following sentences using the words given below. Do you recognise the similies used?

   whistle, lightning, rain

   (*a*) The chirping of the birds sounded as shrill as a ..... .

   (*b*) The drumming of the ..... drops on the roof tops was like music.

5. (*a*) Similies in lines-

   'Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green

   we weave the marriage veils of a queen.'

   The marriage veil of a queen, the plumes of peacock

   (*b*) (*a*) chirping of a bird as shrill/musical as a whistle.

   (*b*) life as deep as sea

   (*c*) rain as rhythmic as music

6. Any innovative comparison that shows similarity

   A few possible comparisons:

   (*a*) As cold as ice/cucumber

   (*b*) As hot as chillies/a desert

   (*c*) As deep as an ocean

7. Words/phrases repeated

   Weavers, weaving.....

   Why do you weave .....

   We weave .....

8. Weavers weaving at their looms

   — a bird with blue feathers

   — a peacock dancing/spreading its plumes

   — a queen with her face covered with a veil

   — a dead body covered with a white cloth

12.4 Themes and Symbols

Saorjini Naidu has talked about 3 important stages in a human's life-birth, marriage and death. She has related them with different times in a day-morning, evening and night. She has highlighted the importance of the weavers, their work as well as what are their thoughts when they are at work.

''Indian Weavers" presents the picture of weavers, who weave handloom cloth in variegated colours and patterns. The poem indicates Sarojini's faculty for observation. The rhythm, the voice, the sense, the time and the context - everything is Indian. The sensibility of the poet is at the core of the poem, which depicts the different stages of human life: Childhood, Youth, and Old age. The poet says that the Weavers start their work, early in the morning and they make bright garments in blue, like the wings of the Kingfisher, suggesting childhood. At the fall of night, the Weavers are weaving attractive garments in purple and green like the plumes of a peacock which is a marriage veil of a Queen. This suggests youth, energetic, enjoyable

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and attractive. In the moonlit night, the Weaver's attitudes change, they become serious and the garment is white, like a feather or a cloud. They are weaving a funeral shroud, indicating old age. The white colour of the feather and the cloud carry the statement of the end of life; the feather has come out from the wing and has no use and the moving cloud disappears.

Use of Symbols— The symbols used in this poem are not decorative but functional in the artistic sense. The bird halcyon with its blue wing at dawn is suggestive of the phenomenon of the de livery of a child. It is symbolic of the beginning of creation. The sea stands for chaos which the halcyon churns into cosmos for the purposes of breeding. The gay robes embodying the gaiety of nature's heart at a newly-born life, the Peacock with its green and purple plumes and the night –fall, all go well with the queen's marriage veils, suggesting life's colour and splendor. The white feather and the chilly moon light and the weavers weaving in solemnity the funeral shroud, suggest destruction and death. The Harmony of three different times-day break, night-fall and moonlight with the work woven in each, makes the symbols strikingly apt and suggestive.

12.5 Summary

- The poem describes the different stages of Human life, i.e. Birth, Marriage and Death. In another way it tells about the life-cycle of a human being which includes Childhood, Youth, and Old age. The poetess asks three questions to Weavers and their answers are related to life.
- The poetess says that Weavers started their work in early morning and they make bright garments in blue colour like the wings of the Kingfisher. When the poetess asks the question, Weavers tell that they are weaving the garment of a new born Child. It relates to the childhood of a person. The childhood is more attractive like blue colour.
- The night time the Weavers are weaving attractive garments in purple and green colour like the plumes of a peacock. When the poetess asks the question, they tell that it's a marriage veil of a Queen. This suggests the youth of a human being. Youth is the golden time of a life, energetic, enjoyable and attractive. So that's why here the expression 'The plumes of a peacock, purple and green' is used.
- In the moonlit night the Weaver's attitudes change, they become serious and calm. The garment is white colour like feather and cloud. They are weaving the cloths of a Dead man's funeral shroud. It clearly indicates the old age of a person. The white colour feather and cloud carry to the statement that at the end of life, feather has come out from the wing now it has no use and the cloud is moving, after few minutes we can't see the cloud in the actual place.

12.6 Important Explanations

(i) WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,
Why do you weave a garment so gay?
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,
We weave the robes of a new-born child.

Explanations: The Poetess minutely observes some weavers weaving a bright beautiful cloth on the handlooms at break of day, and asks them why they are weaving such a colourful cloth. The weavers reply that they are weaving it for the dress of a newly born child. The blue colour of the cloth looks like the blur wing of a kingfisher.

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The Expression break of day refers to the time of dawn. It stands for the beginning of life, the birth of a new life.. The word blue is symbolic of the depth and colour of the sea. The emergence of the white swan and white lotus symbolizes the ocean of eternity which marks the birth of the soul.

(ii) Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
What do you weave in the moonlight chill? . . .
White as a feather and white as a cloud,
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Explanations: In the cold midnight, the poetess observes the weavers still seriously involved in the process of weaving. There is a pin –drop silence prevailing in the work-place. Presently, they are weaving a white cloth which is as white as a bird's feather or a cloud. They inform the poetess that they are weaving it for the funeral shroud of a dead man.

The final stanza shows the concluding stage of man's life on earth. The mood is one of mourning which precedes man exit from the mundane world.

The earth–like atmosphere is symbolically presented in the closing phase of the poem. The expression moonlight chill is the symbol of death and white shroud is also suggestively correlated with the occasion of death . The colour white stands for purity, of unity and the possibility of regeneration.

12.7 Keywords

Glad	:	Happy and pleased about something.
Delighted	:	Very happy, especially because something good has happened.
Excited	:	Very happy and enthusiastic because something good is going to happen, especially when this makes you unable to relax.
Joyous	:	Causing happy feelings
Cheerful	:	Behaving in a happy friendly way.
Jubilant	:	Extremely happy because something good has happened
Thrilled	:	Very pleased and excited
Sad feeling	:	Unhappy, especially because something bad has happened.
Depressed	:	If you are depressed, you feel very unhappy because of a difficult or unpleasant situation that you feel you cannot change.
Gloomy	:	Feeling sad and without hope.
Dejected	:	Someone who is dejected has lost all his hope or enthusiasm, especially because he has failed at something.
Downcast	:	Sad or upset
		Miserable extremely unhappy or uncomfortable
		Annoyed, feeling slightly angry or impatient.

Answers: Self Assessment-1

1. a newly born child; halcyon's wings
2. (*a*) 3. Both signify the start of something new

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Self Assessment-2

1. (*a*) one, blue (*b*) late evening late middle age

3. (*c*) last stage white 4. (*a*) whistle (*b*) rain

12.8 Review Questions

1. What are the weavers weaving?

2. What time of the day is it?

3. We wear colours that reflect our mood. Give two examples.

4. What time is indicated through the phrase 'moonlight chill'?

5. What is the similarity between death and cold night?

6. 'Chill' here means 'unpleasant cold'. Which mood of the weavers does it indicate?

Tick the right answer:

(*a*) of disappointment

(*b*) of frustration

(*c*) of sadness

12.9 Further Readings

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Unit 13: Ode to the West Wind by PB Shelley: Introduction

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss about Percy Bysshe Shelley, the son of Sir Timothy Shelley;
- Introduce the poem *Ode to the West Wind.*

Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley, the son of Sir Timothy Shelley, the M.P. for New Shoreham, was born at Field Place near Horsham, in 1792. Sir Timothy Shelley sat for a seat under the control of the Duke of Norfolk and supported his patron's policies of electoral reform and Catholic Emancipation.

Shelley was educated at Eton and Oxford University and it was assumed that when he was twenty-one he would inherit his father's seat in Parliament. As a young man he was taken to the House of Commons where he met Sir Francis Burdett, the Radical M.P. for Westminster. Shelley, who had developed a strong hatred of tyranny while at Eton, was impressed by Burdett, and in 1810 dedicated one of his first poems to him. At university Shelley began reading books by radical political writers such as Tom Paine and William Godwin.

At university Shelley wrote articles defending Daniel Isaac Eaton, a bookseller charged with selling books by Tom Paine and the much persecuted Radical publisher, Richard Carlile. He also wrote The Necessity of Atheism, a pamphlet that attacked the idea of compulsory Christianity. Oxford University was shocked when they discovered what Shelley had written and on 25th March, 1811 he was expelled.

Shelley eloped to Scotland with Harriet Westbrook, a sixteen-year-old daughter of a coffee-house keeper. This created a terrible scandal and Shelley's father never forgave him for what he had done. Shelley moved to Ireland where he made revolutionary speeches on religion and

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politics. He also wrote a political pamphlet A Declaration of Rights, on the subject of the French Revolution, but it was considered to be too radical for distribution in Britain.

Percy Bysshe Shelley returned to England where he became involved in radical politics. He met William Godwin the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Shelley also renewed his friendship with Leigh Hunt, the young editor of *The Examiner*. Shelley helped to support Leigh Hunt financially when he was imprisoned for an article he published on the Prince Regent.

Leigh Hunt published Queen Mab, a long poem by Shelley celebrating the merits of republicanism, atheism, vegetarianism and free love. Shelley also wrote articles for *The Examiner* on polical subjects including an attack on the way the government had used the agent provocateur William Oliver to obtain convictions against Jeremiah Brandreth.

In 1814 Shelley fell in love and eloped with Mary, the sixteen-year-old daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. For the next few years the couple travelled in Europe. Shelley continued to be involved in politics and in 1817 wrote the pamphlet *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the United Kingdom*. In the pamphlet Shelley suggested a national referendum on electoral reform and improvements in working class education.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was in Italy when he heard the news of the Peterloo Massacre. He immediately responded by writing *The Mask of Anarchy*, a poem that blamed Lord Castlereagh, Lord Sidmouth and Lord Eldon for the deaths at St. Peter's Fields. In *The Call to Freedom* Shelley ended his argument for non-violent mass political protest with the words:

Rise like Lions after slumber

In unvanquishable number -

Shake your chains to earth like dew

Which in sleep had fallen on you -

Ye are many—they are few.

In 1822 Shelley, moved to Italy with Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron where they published the journal The Liberal. By publishing it in Italy the three men remained free from prosecution by the British authorities. The first edition of *The Liberal* sold 4,000 copies. Soon after its publication, Percy Bysshe Shelley was lost at sea on 8th July, 1822 while sailing to meet Leigh Hunt.

13.1 Ode to the West Wind

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being—

Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead

Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,

Pestilence-stricken multitudes!—O thou

Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,

Each like a corpse within its grave, until

Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill

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(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill—
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere—
Destroyer and Preserver—hear, O hear!
Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning! they are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Mænad, ev'n from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height—
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst:—O hear!
Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear
And tremble and despoil themselves:—O hear!
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable!—if even

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I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision,—I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.
Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is wellknown to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.

13.2 Form

Each of the seven parts of "Ode to the West Wind" contains five stanzas—four three-line stanzas and a two-line couplet, all metered in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme in each part follows a pattern known as *terza rima,* the three-line rhyme scheme employed by Dante in his *Divine Comedy.* In the three-line *terza rima* stanza, the first and third lines rhyme, and the middle line does not; then the end sound of that middle line is employed as the rhyme for the first and third lines in the next stanza. The final couplet rhymes with the middle line of

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the last three-line stanza. Thus each of the seven parts of "Ode to the West Wind" follows this scheme: ABA BCB CDC DED EE.

13.3 Analysis

The wispy, fluid *terza rima* of "Ode to the West Wind" finds Shelley taking a long thematic leap beyond the scope of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and incorporating his own art into his meditation on beauty and the natural world. Shelley invokes the wind magically, describing its power and its role as both "destroyer and preserver," and asks the wind to sweep him out of his torpor "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" In the fifth section, the poet then takes a remarkable turn, transforming the wind into a metaphor for his own art, the expressive capacity that drives "dead thoughts" like "withered leaves" over the universe, to "quicken a new birth"—that is, to quicken the coming of the spring. Here the spring season is a metaphor for a "spring" of human consciousness, imagination, liberty, or morality—all the things Shelley hoped his art could help to bring about in the human mind. Shelley asks the wind to be his spirit, and in the same movement he makes it his metaphorical spirit, his poetic faculty, which will play him like a musical instrument, the way the wind strums the leaves of the trees. The thematic implication is significant: whereas the older generation of Romantic poets viewed nature as a source of truth and authentic experience, the younger generation largely viewed nature as a source of beauty and aesthetic experience. In this poem, Shelley explicitly links nature with art by finding powerful natural metaphors with which to express his ideas about the power, import, quality, and ultimate effect of aesthetic expression.

Self Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. "Ode to the West Wind" follows this scheme:
   (*a*) ABA BCB CDC DED EE. (*b*) BAC ABC CDE ADE ED
   (*c*) BAB BCB CDC DEC DD (*d*) None of these
2. Shelley eloped to ……with Harriet Westbrook.
   (*a*) Durban (*b*) Scotland
   (*c*) Sydney (*d*) None of these
3. The speaker asks the …….to "make me thy lyre,"
   (*a*) Wind (*b*) Rain
   (*c*) Cloud (*d*) None Of these.
4. Drive my dead thoughts over the ……..
   (*a*) Universe (*b*) World
   (*c*) Country (*d*) None of these

13.4 Summary

- The speaker invokes the "Wild West Wind" of autumn, which scatters the dead leaves and spreads seeds so that they may be nurtured by the spring, and asks that the wind, a "destroyer and preserver," hear him. The speaker calls the wind the "dirge/Of the

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dying year," and describes how it stirs up violent storms, and again implores it to hear him. The speaker says that the wind stirs the Mediterranean from "his summer dreams," and cleaves the Atlantic into choppy chasms, making the "sapless foliage" of the ocean tremble, and asks for a third time that it hear him.

- The speaker says that if he were a dead leaf that the wind could bear, or a cloud it could carry, or a wave it could push, or even if he were, as a boy, "the comrade" of the wind's "wandering over heaven," then he would never have needed to pray to the wind and invoke its powers. He pleads with the wind to lift him "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!"—for though he is like the wind at heart, untamable and proud—he is now chained and bowed with the weight of his hours upon the earth.
- The speaker asks the wind to "make me thy lyre," to be his own Spirit, and to drive his thoughts across the universe, "like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth." He asks the wind, by the incantation of this verse, to scatter his words among mankind, to be the "trumpet of a prophecy." Speaking both in regard to the season and in regard to the effect upon mankind that he hopes his words to have, the speaker asks: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"
- The speaker of the poem appeals to the West Wind to infuse him with a new spirit and a new power to spread his ideas. In order to invoke the West Wind, he lists a series of things the wind has done that illustrate its power: driving away the autumn leaves, placing seeds in the earth, bringing thunderstorms and the cyclical "death" of the natural world, and stirring up the seas and oceans.
- The speaker wishes that the wind could affect him the way it affects leaves and clouds and waves. Because it can't, he asks the wind to play him like an instrument, bringing out his sadness in its own musical lament. Maybe the wind can even help him to send his ideas all over the world; even if they're not powerful in their own right, his ideas might inspire others. The sad music that the wind will play on him will become a prophecy. The West Wind of autumn brings on a cold, barren period of winter, but isn't winter always followed by a spring?

13.5 Keywords

Incantation : A series of words said as a magic spell or charm

Chasms : A deep fissure in the earth, rock, or another surface

Prophecy : A prediction of what will happen in the future.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*a*) 2. (*b*) 3. (*a*) 4. (*a*)

13.6 Review Questions

1. What are some of the things the West Wind could represent?

2. Is the speaker in "Ode to the West Wind" a representative of all mankind, or he is unique or special in some way?

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13. 7 Further Readings

Books Shelley, Mary, ed. The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. London: Edward Moxon, 1839

Coleman, Elliott, editor: Poems of Byron, Keats, and Shelley. New York: International Collectors Library, 1967.

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Unit 14: Ode to the West Wind by PB Shelley: Detailed Study

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Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the themes of the poem *Ode to the West Wind*;
- Explain each line of the poem *Ode to the West Wind*.

Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote "Ode to the West Wind" in 1819 while living in Florence, Italy. To be exact, when he published the poem with his unperformable play *Prometheus Unbound* in 1820, he claimed in a footnote to have written "Ode to the West Wind" while sitting in the woods near the Arno River on a windy day in October. Lucky man, we say, but although he loved Italy, he was feeling depressed about being detached from the political and social scene back in his native England. Many critics have suggested that this poem relates to that sense of powerlessness.

As a political, religious, and literary radical, Shelley was heavily invested in his own ability to influence society. Some poets need solitude and privacy and a retreat in the woods to do their best work, but Shelley needed stimulating arguments and social action. "Ode to the West Wind" is one of the poems in which he considers the role and power of the poet or philosopher to spread new ideas and effect change. It's also, though you might find this difficult to believe, one of Shelley's more accessible poems. Its brevity, smooth tone, and straightforward use of natural imagery present his abstract ideas about philosophy and poetry in a compact way. Think of it as Shelley's own summary of himself—or at least one aspect of himself.

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Why Should I Care?

Shmoop cannot tell a lie: caring about Percy Bysshe Shelley can be hard. He's probably the most difficult of the Romantic poets to fall in love with. Luckily, he's not the most difficult poet. He's hard to love, but not *too* hard to understand.

What are we talking about? Well, you may have heard from someone, like an English teacher, that good poetry has certain characteristics: it's concrete instead of abstract; it's detailed instead of general; it's visceral instead of spiritual. Basically, what we think of as a "good poem" these days just isn't one of the abstract flights of fancy that you tend to get from the neo-Platonic, head-in-the-clouds Percy Bysshe Shelley.

It's not that Shelley doesn't use detailed imagery or powerful language, because he does. If you write, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" in a poem today, though, and send it off to a prestigious magazine like *The New Yorker*, its poetry editors would laugh so hard they'd spray double-shot cappuccino out their noses. That's if they don't recognise it as Shelley, which we hope they will. Anyway, the point is that it's not hard to get what Shelley means with this "thorns of life" stuff. Life's tough, and it's getting to him, and the speaker of his poem is exclaiming about it. But it's hard to understand, well, why we should care about a poet who can be so melodramatic.

Here's the thing about Shelley's "melodrama," though: it happens because he's brutally honest all the time. If he feels like his life is fading away and his ideas stink, he'll tell you. If he worries that his poetic philosophy isn't having the effect he hopes for, he'll admit it. And if he feels like being alive is akin to being pricked all over with tiny sharp things and having your lifeblood slowly oozing out all over, well, he'll tell you that, too. His passions are right on the surface. He sees no point in beating around the bush. He's not going to pretend. More than any other poet, Shelley will throw you right into his emotional depths and let you sink or swim. We have a special respect for that kind of honesty and intensity.

Unfortunately, Shelley's frankness about his feelings just isn't where it's at for us today in our über-ironic world. Sometimes Shelley seems like he has no sense of humour. It's hard for us even to say, "I fall upon the thorns of life!" with a straight face. Luckily, Shelley doesn't *just* tell us how he feels. He connects his feelings to larger philosophical and social problems and tries to understand them in a global context. Sure, this might be a little egocentric—literally–but it's way more interesting than being emo-centric. Shelley balances his emotional intensity with attention to the grand sweep of nature, philosophy, and everything else. He's the only poet we know who does it so well, so sit back and enjoy as you start figuring out how it works.

14.1 Detailed Explanations—Ode to the West Wind

Lines 1-5

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn s being,

Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead

Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,

Pestilence-stricken multitudes:

- The speaker appeals to the West Wind four times in this first canto, or section, of the poem. (We don't find out what he's actually asking the wind to do for him until the end of the canto.)

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- Lines 1-5 are the first appeal, in which the speaker describes the West Wind as the breath of Autumn.
- Like a magician banishing ghosts or evil spirits, the West Wind sweeps away the dead leaves. These dead leaves are multicoloured, but not beautiful in the way we usually think of autumn leaves – their colours are weird and ominous and seem almost diseased (like "pestilence-stricken multitudes").

Lines 5-8

O Thou,

Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,

Each like a corpse within its grave, until

- The speaker appeals to the West Wind a second time.
- This time, the West Wind is described as carrying seeds to their grave-like places in the ground, where they'll stay until the spring wind comes and revives them. The wind burying seeds in the ground is like a charioteer driving corpses to their graves.

Lines 8-12

Each like a corpse within its grave, until

Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o er the dreaming earth, and fill

(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)

With living hues and odours plain and hill:

- Once the West Wind has carried the seeds into the ground, they lie there all winter, and then are woken by the spring wind.
- Shelley thinks of the spring wind as blue (or, to be specific, "azure").
- The spring wind seems to be the cause of all the regeneration and flowering that takes place in that season. It blows a "clarion" (a kind of trumpet) and causes all the seeds to bloom. It fills both "plain and hill" with "living hues and odours." It also opens buds into flowers the way a shepherd drives sheep.

Lines 13-14

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;

Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

- The speaker appeals to the West Wind twice more, describing it as a "Wild Spirit" that's everywhere at once.
- The West Wind is both "Destroyer and Preserver"; it brings the death of winter, but also makes possible the regeneration of spring.
- Now we find out (sort of) what the speaker wants the wind to do: "hear, oh, hear!" For the moment, that's all he's asking – just to be listened to. By the wind.

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Lines 15-18

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky s commotion,

Loose clouds like Earth s decaying leaves are shed,

Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread

- The speaker continues to describe the West Wind.
- This time, he describes the wind as having clouds spread through it the way dead leaves float in a stream. Leaves fall from the branches of trees, and these clouds fall from the "branches" of the sky and the sea, which work together like "angels of rain and lightning" to create clouds and weather systems.
- Yep, there's a storm coming!

Lines 18-23

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread

On the blue surface of thine airy surge,

Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce M¥nad, even from the dim verge

Of the horizon to the zenith s height,

The locks of the approaching storm.

- The speaker creates a complex simile describing the storm that the West Wind is bringing. The "locks of the approaching storm" – *i.e*, the thunderclouds–are spread through the airy "blue surface" of the West Wind in the same way that the wild locks of hair on a Mænad wave around in the air. Got that?
- Let's put it in SAT analogy form: thunderclouds are to the West Wind as a Mænad's locks of hair are to the air.
- A Mænad is one of the wild, savage women who hang out with the god Dionysus in Greek mythology. The point here about Mænads is that, being wild and crazy, they don't brush their hair much.
- Oh, and the poet reminds us that these Mænad-hair-like clouds go vertically all the way through the sky, from the horizon to the centre.

Lines 23-28

Thou Dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night

Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,

Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere

Black rain and fire and hail will burst: O hear!

- The speaker develops a morbid metaphor to describe the power of the West Wind. The wind is described as a "dirge," or funeral song, to mark the death of the old year. The

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night that's falling as the storm comes is going to be like a dark-domed tomb constructed of thunderclouds, lightning, and rain.

- The poet ends by asking the West Wind once again to "hear" him, but we don't know yet what exactly he wants it to listen to.

Lines 29-32

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams

The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,

Lulled by the coil of his chrystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Bai¥ s bay,

- The speaker tells us more about the West Wind's wacky exploits: the Mediterranean Sea has lain calm and still during the summer, almost as though on vacation "beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay," a holiday spot for the ancient Romans. But the West Wind has woken the Mediterranean, presumably by stirring him up and making the sea choppy and storm-tossed.
- The Mediterranean is personified here as male.

Lines 33-36

And saw in sleep old palaces and towers

Quivering within the wave s intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers

So sweet, the sense faints picturing them!

- During his summertime drowsiness, the Mediterranean has seen in his dreams the "old palaces and towers" along Baiæ's bay, places that are now overgrown with plants so that they have become heartbreakingly picturesque.

Lines 36-38

Thou

For whose path the Atlantic s level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below

- The speaker claims that the "level" Atlantic Ocean breaks itself into "chasms" for the West Wind.
- This is a poetic way of saying the wind disturbs the water, making waves, but it also suggests that the ocean is subservient to the West Wind's amazing powers.

Lines 38-42

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below

The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear

The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,

And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

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- In the depths of the Atlantic Ocean, the different kinds of marine plants hear the West Wind high above and "suddenly grow gray with fear" and thrash around, harming themselves in the process.
- Once again, the speaker ends all these descriptions of the West Wind by asking it to "hear" him.

Lines 43-47

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;

If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;

A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free

Than thou, O Uncontrollable!

- The speaker begins to describe his own desires more clearly. He wishes he were a "dead leaf" or a "swift cloud" that the West Wind could carry, or a wave that would feel its "power" and "strength."
- He imagines this would make him almost as free as the "uncontrollable" West Wind itself.

Lines 47-51

If even

I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,

As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed

Scarce seemed a vision;

- The speaker is willing to compromise: even if he can't be a leaf or a cloud, he wishes he could at least have the same relationship to the wind that he had when he was young, when the two were "comrade[s]."
- When he was young, the speaker felt like it was possible for him to be faster and more powerful than the West Wind.

Lines 51-53

I would ne er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.

Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!

- The speaker claims that, if he could have been a leaf or cloud on the West Wind, or felt young and powerful again, he wouldn't be appealing to the West Wind now for its help.
- He begs the wind to treat him the way it does natural objects like waves, leaves and clouds.

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Lines 54-56

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed

One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

- The speaker exclaims, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"
- He explains that the passage of time has weighed him down and bowed (but not yet broken) his spirit, which started out "tameless, and swift, and proud," just like the West Wind itself.

Lines 57-58

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own!

- Finally, the speaker asks the West Wind for something: he wants the wind to turn him into its lyre.
- This image is related to the æolian harp, a common metaphor in Romantic poetry. The æolian harp is sort of like a stringed version of a wind chime; it's an instrument that you only have to put out in the breeze and nature will play its own tunes.
- Here Shelley's speaker describes himself as the harp, or "lyre," that the wind will play. He'll be the instrument, and the West Wind will play its own music on him, just as it does in the branches of trees in the forest. That way, it won't matter that he's metaphorically losing his leaves.

Lines 59-61

The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,

Sweet though in sadness.

- The speaker and the trees of the forest are both decaying – the trees are losing their leaves, and he's been bowed down by life.
- But that doesn't matter; if the wind plays both of them as instruments, they'll make sweet, melancholy, autumn-ish music.

Lines 61-62

Be thou, Spirit fierce,

My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

- Now the speaker changes tactics; instead of asking the wind to play him like an instrument, he asks the wind to become him. He wants the wind's "fierce" spirit to unite with him entirely, or maybe even replace his own spirit.

Lines 63-64

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,

Like wither d leaves, to quicken a new birth!

Notes

- The speaker compares his thoughts to the dead leaves; perhaps the West Wind can drive his thoughts all over the world in the same way it moves the leaves, and they'll become like a rich compost or mulch from which new growth can come in the spring. That way, even if his thoughts are garbage, at least that garbage can fertilize something better.

Lines 65-67

And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth

Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

- The speaker comes up with another metaphor to describe what he wants the wind to do to his thoughts, and this one isn't about fertilizer. He describes his own words – perhaps the words of this very poem – as sparks and ashes that the wind will blow out into the world.
- The speaker himself is the "unextinguished hearth" from which the sparks fly; he's a fire that hasn't gone out yet, but is definitely waning.

Lines 68-69

Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy!

- The speaker returns to the metaphor of the wind playing him as an instrument, but this time he describes his mouth as a trumpet through which the wind will blow its own prophecy.

Lines 69-70

O Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

- The speaker ends by asking the wind a question that seems very simple: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"
- The symbolic weight that he's attached to the seasons, however, makes us realize that this is more than a question about the wheel of the year. He's asking whether or not the death and decay that come at the end of something always mean that a rebirth is around the corner.
- He's hoping that's true, because he can feel himself decaying.

14.2 Examples of Figures of Speech and Rhetorical Devices

Stanza 1

Alliteration: ***W**ild **W**est **W**ind* (line 1).

Apostrophe, Personification: Throughout the poem, the poet addresses the west wind as if it were a person.

Metaphor: Comparison of the west wind to *breath of Autumn s being* (line 1).

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Metaphor: Comparison of autumn to a living, breathing creature (line 1).

Anastrophe: *leaves dead* (line 2).

Anastrophe is inversion of the normal word order, as in *a man forgotten* (instead of *a forgotten man*) or as in the opening lines of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn": *In Xanada did Kubla Kahn / A stately pleasure dome decree* (instead of *In Xanadu, Kubla Kahn decreed a stately pleasure dome*). Here is another example, made up to demonstrate the inverted word order of anastrophe:

In the garden green and dewy

A rose I plucked for Huey

Simile: Comparison of dead leaves to ghosts.

Anastrophe: *enchanter fleeing* (line 3).

Alliteration: Pe**s**tilence-**s**tricken multitudes (line 5).

Alliteration: Pes**t**ilence-s**t**ricken mul**ti**tudes (line 5).

Alliteration: chariotest to (line 6).

Alliteration: **Th**e **w**ingèd seeds, **w**here **th**ey (line 7).

Metaphor: Comparison of seeds to flying creatures (line 7).

Simile: Comparison of each seed to a corpse (lines 7-8).

Alliteration: **si**ster of the **S**pring (line 9).

Personification: Comparison of spring wind to a person (lines 9-10).

Metaphor, Personification: Comparison of earth to a dreamer (line 10).

Alliteration: **f**locks to **f**eed

Simile: Comparison of buds to flocks (line 11).

Anastrophe: *fill / . . . With living hues and odours plain and hill* (lines 10, 12).

Alliteration: **W**ild Spirit, **w**hich (line 13).

Paradox: Destroyer and preserver (line 14).

Alliteration: **h**ear, O **h**ear (line 14).

Stanza 8

Apostrophe, Personification: The poet addresses the west wind as if it were a person.

Metaphor: Comparison of the poet and the forest to a lyre, a stringed musical instrument (line 57).

Metaphor: Comparison of the poet to a forest (line 58).

Alliteration: **Th**e tu**m**ult of **th**y **m**ighty har**m**onies (line 59).

Alliteration: **S**weet **th**ough in **s**adne**ss**. Be **th**ou, **S**pirit fier**c**e, (line 61).

Metaphor: Comparison of the poet to the wind (line 62).

Alliteration: **D**rive my **d**ead thoughts over the universe (line 63).

Simile: Comparison of thoughts to withered leaves (lines 63-64).

Alliteration: **th**e incantation of **th**is (line 65).

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Simile: Comparison of words to ashes and sparks (66-67).

Alliteration: **m**y words a**m**ong **m**ankind (67).

Metaphor: Comparison of the poet's voice to the wind as a trumpet of a prophecy (lines 68-69).

Alliteration: **t**rum**pe**t of a **p**rophecy (lines 68-69).

Alliteration: O **W**ind, / If **W**inter **c**omes, **c**an Spring **b**e far **b**ehind?

14.3 Structure and Rhyme Scheme

.....The poem contains five stanzas of fourteen lines each. Each stanza has three tercets and a closing couplet. In poetry, a tercet is a unit of three lines that usually contain end rhyme; a couplet is a two-line unit that usually contains end rhyme. Shelley wrote the tercets in a verse form called *terza rima*, invented by Dante Alighieri. In this format, line 2 of one tercet rhymes with lines 1 and 3 of the next tercet. In regard to the latter, consider the first three tercets of the second stanza of "Ode to the West Wind." Notice that *shed* (second line, first tercet) rhymes with *spread* and *head* (first and third lines, second tercet) and that *surge* (second line, second tercet) rhymes with *verge* and *dirge* (first and third lines, third tercet).

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are **shed**,

Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning! there are **spread**

On the blue surface of thine airy **surge**,

Like the bright hair uplifted from the **head**

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim **verge**

Of the horizon to the zenith's height,

The locks of the approaching storm. Thou **dirge**

.....All of the couplets in the poem rhyme, but the last couplet (lines 69-70) is an imperfect rhyme called eye rhyme. Eye rhyme occurs when the pronunciation of the last syllable of one line is different from the pronunciation of the last syllable of another line even though both syllables are identical in spelling except for a preceding consonant. For example, the following end-of-line word pairs would constitute eye rhyme: c<u>ough</u>, r<u>ough</u>; c<u>ow</u>, m<u>ow</u>; d<u>aughter</u>, l<u>aughter</u>; rumm<u>aging</u>, r<u>aging</u>. In Shelley's poem, w<u>ind</u> and beh<u>ind</u> form eye rhyme.

.....Shelley unifies the content of the poem by focusing the first three stanzas on the powers of the wind and the last two stanzas on the poet's desire to use these powers to spread his words throughout the world.

14.4 Meter

..... Most of the lines in the poem are in iambic pentameter, although some of the pentameter lines have an extra syllable (catalexis). The following tercet from the first stanza demonstrates the iambic-pentameter format, with the stressed syllables in capitals:

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

The WING.|.èd SEEDS,.|.where THEY.|.lie COLD.|.and LOW,

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

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Each LIKE.|.a CORPSE.|.with IN.|.its GRAVE,.|.un TIL

.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Thine AZ.|.ure SIS.|.ter OF.|.the SPRING.|.shall BLOW Here is a line with catalexis:.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....

Of SOME.|.fierce MAE.|.nad, E.|.ven FROM.|.the DIM.|.**verge** And here is a line that does not follow the format. It is in iambic hexameter:.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6

Shook FROM.|.the TANG.|.gled BOUGHS.|.of HEA.|.ven AND.|.o CEAN

14.5 Theme and Historical Background

Irresistible Power

.....The poet desires the irresistible power of the wind to scatter the words he has written about his ideals and causes, one of which was opposition to Britain's monarchical government as a form of tyranny. Believing firmly in democracy and individual rights, he supported movements to reform government. In 1819, England nobility feared that working-class citizens besieged by economic problems, including high food prices would imitate the rebels of the French Revolution and attempt to overthrow the established order. On August 16, agitators attracted tens of thousands of people to a rally in St. Peteru Field, Manchester, to urge parliamentary reform and to protest laws designed to inflate the cost of corn and wheat. Nervous public officials mismanaged the unarmed crowd and ended up killing 11 protesters and injuring more than 500 others. In reaction to this incident, Shelley wrote *The Masque of Anarchy* in the fall of 1819 to urge further non-violent action against the government. This work was not published during his lifetime. However, "Ode to the West Wind," also written in the fall of 1819, was published a year later. The poem obliquely refers to his desire to spread his reformist ideas when it says, "Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!" Shelley believed that the poetry he wrote had the power to bring about political reform: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World," he wrote in another work, *A Defence of Poetry*.

Self Assessment

Choose the Correct Options:

1. Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote "Ode to the West Wind" while living in Florence in

   (*a*) 1810 (*b*) 1819

   (*c*) 1859 (*d*) None of these

2. The speaker compares his thoughts to the dead ..... ;

   (*a*) leaves (*b*) trees

   (*c*) animals (*d*) None of these

Complete the following lines

3. And saw in sleep old palaces and .....

   (*a*) palaces (*b*) towers

   (*c*) forts (*d*) None of these

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4. Quivering within the wave's intenser .....

(*a*) night (*b*) day

(*c*) noon (*d*) None of these

14.6 Summary

- Addressing the west wind as a human, the poet describes its activities: It drives dead leaves away as if they were ghosts fleeing a wizard. The leaves are yellow and black, pale and red, as if they had died of an infectious disease. The west wind carries seeds in its chariot and deposits them in the earth, where they lie until the spring wind awakens them by blowing on a trumpet (clarion). When they form buds, the spring wind spreads them over plains and on hills. In a paradox, the poet addresses the west wind as a destroyer and a preserver, then asks it to listen to what he says.
- The poet says the west wind drives clouds along just as it does dead leaves after it shakes the clouds free of the sky and the oceans. These clouds erupt with rain and lightning. Against the sky, the lightning appears as a bright shaft of hair from the head of a Mænad. The poet compares the west wind to a funeral song sung at the death of a year and says the night will become a dome erected over the year's tomb with all of the wind's gathered might. From that dome will come black rain, fire, and hail. Again the poet asks the west wind to continue to listen to what he has to say.
- At the beginning of autumn, the poet says, the west wind awakened the Mediterranean Sea lulled by the sound of the clear streams flowing into it from summer slumber near an island formed from pumice (hardened lava). The island is in a bay at Baiae, a city in western Italy about ten miles west of Naples. While sleeping at this locale, the Mediterranean saw old palaces and towers that had collapsed into the sea during an earthquake and became overgrown with moss and flowers. To create a path for the west wind, the powers of the mighty Atlantic Ocean divide (cleave) themselves and flow through chasms. Deep beneath the ocean surface, flowers and foliage, upon hearing the west wind, quake in fear and despoil themselves. (In autumn, ocean plants decay like land plants. See Shelley's note on this subject.) Once more, the poet asks the west wind to continue to listen to what he has to say.
- The phenomenon alluded to at the end of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds announce it.
- The poet says that if he were a dead leaf (like the ones in the first stanza) or a cloud (like the ones in the second stanza) or an ocean wave that rides the power of the Atlantic but is less free than the uncontrollable west wind or if even he were as strong and vigorous as he was when he was a boy and could accompany the wandering wind in the heavens and could only dream of traveling faster well, then, he would never have prayed to the west wind as he is doing now in his hour of need.
- .....Referring again to imagery in the first three stanzas, the poet asks the wind to lift him as it would a wave, a leaf, or a cloud; for here on earth he is experiencing troubles that prick him like thorns and cause him to bleed. He is now carrying a heavy burden

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that though he is proud and tameless and swift like the west wind has immobilized him in chains and bowed him down.

- The poet asks the west wind to turn him into a lyre (a stringed instrument) in the same way that the west wind's mighty currents turn the forest into a lyre. And if the poet's leaves blow in the wind like those from the forest trees, there will be heard a deep autumnal tone that is both sweet and sad. Be "my spirit," the poet implores the wind. "Be thou me" and drive my dead thoughts (like the dead leaves) across the universe in order to prepare the way for new birth in the spring. The poet asks the wind to scatter his words around the world, as if they were ashes from a burning fire. To the unawakened earth, they will become blasts from a trumpet of prophecy. In other words, the poet wants the wind to help him disseminate his views on politics, philosophy, literature, and so on. The poet is encouraged that, although winter will soon arrive, spring and rebirth will follow it.

14.7 Keywords

Clarion	:	Trumpet.
Skiey	:	is a neologism (coined word) whose two syllables maintain iambic pentameter. The s in skiey alliterates with the s in speed, ...scarce, seem'd, and striven.
Mænad	:	Wildly emotional woman who took part in the orgies of ....Dionysus, the Greek God of wine and revelry.
Dirge	:	Funeral song.
Congregated	:	Gathered, mustered.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. (*b*) 2. (*a*) 3. (*b*) 4. (*b*)

14.8 Review Questions

1. Write an essay that attempts to answer whether Shelley succeeded in his goal to "scatter . . . my words among mankind"? The essay will ....require you to read other works by him and to research sources evaluating the impact of these works.

2. Shelley's poem uses nature imagery to convey his theme. Write a poem of your own that uses nature imagery to convey a theme.

3. The poem itself ends with a question – "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" (70). Well, can it? What about in a metaphorical sense…can we assume that every kind of decay and death that we compare to the desolation of winter will always result in a rebirth?

4. Why is wildness so important here? The West Wind is wild, the clouds it blows around are like the hair of crazy Mænads, and the speaker wishes he were also "uncontrollable." What can be created through wildness that isn't possible with control? Why does a poem that emphasizes wildness have such a controlled form and meter?

5. Why does this poem praise the *West* Wind? (As opposed to the East Wind, the North Wind, or the Winter Wind...)

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14.9 Further Readings

Books Shelley, Mary, ed. *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Edward Moxon, 1839

Coleman, Elliott, editor: *Poems of Byron, Keats, and Shelley.* New York: International Collectors Library, 1967.

Online links www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/style/phrases_clauses.html