DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS-ENGLISH

SEMESTER –I

18TH CENTURY STUDIES-II

ELECTIVE-104

BLOCK-2

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

18TH CENTURY STUDIES

BLOCK 1

BLOCK 2

BLOCK-1 18 TH CENTURY STUDIES

Introduction To Block

This Block helps to understand the various plays as a part of the literary work of Samuel Johnson, Alexandra Pope and William Congreve. This Block comprises of seven units which comprises of the literary work of Samuel Johnson, Alexandra Pope and William Congreve like Preface to Shakespeare, Essay on Man, Essay on Criticism, The Way of the World.

Unit 8 introduce to the life of Samuel Johnson. It gives the insight of the early days of him along with personal life. It also gives the interpretation and analysis of literary career of Samuel Johnson. It shows how his various works carried out. It represents various phases of his literary art.

Unit 9 helps to interpret the "Preface to Shakespeare". It gives the critical insight into the "Preface to Shakespeare". It helps to understand and interpret in critical aspect.

Unit 10 introduce to the life of Alexandra Pope. It gives the insight of the early days of him along with personal life. It also gives the interpretation and analysis of literary career of Alexandra Pope.

Unit 11 discuss analysis and interpretation of the "Essay on Man". It also provides the critical analysis of the same.

Unit 12 moreover gives the interpretation and analysis of the "Essay on Criticism" and provides dimensions of the work of Pope in them.

Unit 13 introduce to the life of William Congreve. It gives the insight of the early days of him along with personal life. It also gives the interpretation and analysis of literary career of William Congreve. It shows how his various works carried out.

Unit 14 discuss analysis and interpretation of The Way of the World. It also provides the critical analysis of "The Way of the World".

UNIT - 8: SAMUEL JOHNSON, : LIFE AND WORK

STRUCTURE

8.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the life and career of Samual Johonsan.

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- **About the Poetry of Samual**
- **Early Life and Education**
- **His achievement**
- **His Literary work**

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Samuel Johnson (18 September 1709 [OS 7 September] – 13 December 1784), often referred to as **Dr. Johnson**, was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. He was a devout Anglican. Politically, he was a committed Tory. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes Johnson as "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". He is the subject of James Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, described by Walter Jackson Bate as "the most famous single work of biographical art in the whole of literature".

Born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, Johnson attended Pembroke College, Oxford, for just over a year, but a lack of funds forced him to leave. After working as a teacher, he moved to London, where he began to write for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. His early works include the biography *Life of Mr Richard Savage*, the poems *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, and the play *Irene*.

After nine years of work, Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1755. It had a far-reaching effect on Modern English and has been acclaimed as "one of the greatest single achievements of scholarship".This work brought Johnson popularity and success. Until the completion of the *Oxford English Dictionary* 150 years later, Johnson's was the pre-eminent British dictionary.[5]His later works included essays, an influential annotated edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, and the widely read tale *The History of Rasselas, Prince of*

Abissinia. In 1763, he befriended James Boswell, with whom he later travelled to Scotland; Johnson described their travels in *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Towards the end of his life, he produced the massive and influential *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, a collection of biographies and evaluations of 17th- and 18th-century poets.

Johnson was a talland robust man. His odd gestures and tics were disconcerting to some on first meeting him. Boswell's *Life*, along with other biographies, documented Johnson's behaviour and mannerisms in such detail that they have informed the posthumous diagnosis of Tourette syndrome, a condition not defined or diagnosed in the 18th century. After a series of illnesses, he died on the evening of 13 December 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. In the years following his death, Johnson began to be recognised as having had a lasting effect on literary criticism, and he was claimed by some to be the only truly great critic of English literature.

8.2 EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

Samuel Johnson was born on 18 September 1709, to Sarah (née Ford) and Michael Johnson, a booksellerThe birth took place in the family homeabove his father's bookshop in Lichfield, Staffordshire. His mother was 40 when she gave birth to Johnson. This was considered an unusually late pregnancy, so precautions were taken, and a "man-midwife" and surgeon of "great reputation" named George Hector was brought in to assist. The infant Johnson did not cry, and there were concerns for his health. His aunt exclaimed that "she would not have

picked such a poor creature up in the street".The family feared that Johnson would not survive, and summoned the vicar of St Mary's to perform a baptism. Two godfathers were chosen, Samuel Swynfen, a physician and graduate of Pembroke College, Oxford, and Richard Wakefield, a lawyer, coroner, and Lichfield town clerk.

Johnson's health improved and he was put to wet-nurse with Joan Marklew. Some time later he contracted scrofula, known at the time as the "King's Evil" because it was thought royalty could cure it. Sir John Floyer, former physician to King Charles II, recommended that the young Johnson should receive the "royal touch",and he did so from Queen Anne on 30 March 1712. However, the ritual proved ineffective, and an operation was performed that left him with permanent scars across his face and body. With the birth of Johnson's brother, Nathaniel, a few months later, their father was unable to pay the debts he had accrued over the years, and the family was no longer able to maintain its standard of living.

When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went up stairs, leaving him to study it: But by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

Johnson displayed signs of great intelligence as a child, and his parents, to his later disgust, would show off his "newly acquired accomplishments". His education began at the age of three, and was

provided by his mother, who had him memorise and recite passages from the *Book of Common Prayer*. When Samuel turned four, he was sent to a nearby school, and, at the age of six he was sent to a retired shoemaker to continue his education. A year later Johnson went to Lichfield Grammar School, where he excelled in Latin. During this time, Johnson started to exhibit the tics that would influence how people viewed him in his later years, and which formed the basis for a posthumous diagnosis of Tourette syndrome. He excelled at his studies and was promoted to the upper school at the age of nine.[During this time, he befriended Edmund Hector, nephew of his "man-midwife" George Hector, and John Taylor, with whom he remained in contact for the rest of his life.

At the age of 16, Johnson stayed with his cousins, the Fords, at Pedmore, Worcestershire. There he became a close friend of Cornelius Ford, who employed his knowledge of the classics to tutor Johnson while he was not attending school. Ford was a successful, well-connected academic, and notorious alcoholic whose excesses contributed to his death six years later. After spending six months with his cousins, Johnson returned to Lichfield, but Mr Hunter, the headmaster, "angered by the impertinence of this long absence", refused to allow Johnson to continue at the school. Unable to return to Lichfield Grammar School, Johnson enrolled at the King Edward VI grammar school at Stourbridge. As the school was located near Pedmore, Johnson was able to spend more time with the Fords, and he began to write poems and verse translations. However, he spent only six months at Stourbridge before returning once again to his parents' home in Lichfield.

During this time, Johnson's future remained uncertain because his father was deeply in debt. To earn money, Johnson began to stitch books for his

father, and it is likely that Johnson spent much time in his father's bookshop reading and building his literary knowledge. The family remained in poverty until his mother's cousin Elizabeth Harriotts died in February 1728 and left enough money to send Johnson to university. On 31 October 1728, a few weeks after he turned 19, Johnson entered Pembroke College, Oxford. The inheritance did not cover all of his expenses at Pembroke, and Andrew Corbet, a friend and fellow student at the College, offered to make up the deficit.

Johnson made friends at Pembroke and read much. In later life, he told stories of his idleness. His tutor asked him to produce a Latin translation of Alexander Pope's *Messiah* as a Christmas exercise. Johnson completed half of the translation in one afternoon and the rest the following morning. Although the poem brought him praise, it did not bring the material benefit he had hoped for. The poem later appeared in *Miscellany of Poems*(1731), edited by John Husbands, a Pembroke tutor, and is the earliest surviving publication of any of Johnson's writings. Johnson spent the rest of his time studying, even during the Christmas holiday. He drafted a "plan of study" called "Adversaria", which he left unfinished, and used his time to learn French while working on his Greek.

After thirteen months, a lack of funds forced Johnson to leave Oxford without a degree, and he returned to Lichfield. Towards the end of Johnson's stay at Oxford, his tutor, Jorden, left Pembroke and was replaced by William Adams. Johnson enjoyed Adams' tutoring, but by December, Johnson was already a quarter behind in his student fees, and was forced to return home. He left behind many books that he had borrowed from his father because he could not afford to transport them, and also because he hoped to return to Oxford.

He eventually did receive a degree. Just before the publication of his *Dictionary* in 1755, the University of Oxford awarded Johnson the degree of Master of Arts. He was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1765 by Trinity College Dublin and in 1775 by the University of Oxford. In 1776 he returned to Pembroke with Boswell and toured the college with his former tutor Adams, who by then was the Master of the college. During that visit he recalled his time at the college and his early career, and expressed his later fondness for Jorden.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I :

Q1.Give brief about young age of samual Johnson

Answer……

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Q2. Discuss the education of Samual Jhonsan

Answer……

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8.3 EARLY CAREER OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

Little is known about Johnson's life between the end of 1729 and 1731. It is likely that he lived with his parents. He experienced bouts of mental anguish and physical pain during years of illness; his tics and gesticulations associated with Tourette syndrome became more noticeable and were often commented upon. By 1731 Johnson's father was deeply in debt and had lost much of his standing in Lichfield. Johnson hoped to get an usher's position, which became available at Stourbridge Grammar School, but since he did not have a degree, his application was passed over on 6 September 1731At about this time, Johnson's father became ill and developed an "inflammatory fever" which led to his death in December 1731. Johnson eventually found employment as undermaster at a school in Market Bosworth, run by Sir Wolstan Dixie, who allowed Johnson to teach without a degree. Although Johnson was treated as a servant, he found pleasure in teaching even though he considered it boring. After an argument with Dixie he left the school, and by June 1732 he had returned home.

Johnson continued to look for a position at a Lichfield school. After being turned down for a job at Ashbourne, he spent time with his friend Edmund Hector, who was living in the home of the publisher Thomas Warren. At the time, Warren was starting his *Birmingham Journal*, and he enlisted Johnson's help. This connection with Warren grew, and Johnson proposed a translation of Jerónimo Lobo's account of the Abyssinians. Johnson read Abbé Joachim Le Grand's French translations, and thought that a shorter version might be "useful and profitable". Instead of writing the work himself, he dictated to Hector, who then took the copy to the printer and made any corrections. Johnson's *A Voyage to Abyssinia* was published a year later. He returned

to Lichfield in February 1734, and began an annotated edition of Poliziano's Latin poems, along with a history of Latin poetry from Petrarch to Poliziano; a *Proposal* was soon printed, but a lack of funds halted the project.

Johnson remained with his close friend Harry Porter during a terminal illness, which ended in Porter's death on 3 September 1734. Porter's wife Elizabeth (née Jervis) (otherwise known as "Tetty") was now a widow at the age of 45, with three children. Some months later, Johnson began to court her. The Reverend William Shaw claims that "the first advances probably proceeded from her, as her attachment to Johnson was in opposition to the advice and desire of all her relations," Johnson was inexperienced in such relationships, but the well-to-do widow encouraged him and promised to provide for him with her substantial savings. They married on 9 July 1735, at St Werburgh's Church in Derby. The Porter family did not approve of the match, partly because of the difference in their ages, Johnson was 25 and Elizabeth was 46. Elizabeth's marriage to Johnson so disgusted her son Jervis that he severed all relations with her. However, her daughter Lucy accepted Johnson from the start, and her other son, Joseph, later came to accept the marriage.

In June 1735, while working as a tutor for the children of Thomas Whitby, a local Staffordshire gentleman, Johnson had applied for the position of headmaster at Solihull School. Although Johnson's friend Gilbert Walmisley gave his support, Johnson was passed over because the school's directors thought he was "a very haughty, ill-natured gent, and that he has such a way of distorting his face (which though he can't help) the gents think it may affect some lads".[59] With Walmisley's

encouragement, Johnson decided that he could be a successful teacher if he ran his own school. In the autumn of 1735, Johnson opened Edial Hall School as a private academy at Edial, near Lichfield. He had only three pupils: Lawrence Offley, George Garrick, and the 18-year-old David Garrick, who later became one of the most famous actors of his day. The venture was unsuccessful and cost Tetty a substantial portion of her fortune. Instead of trying to keep the failing school going, Johnson began to write his first major work, the historical tragedy *Irene*. Biographer Robert DeMaria believed that Tourette syndrome likely made public occupations like schoolmaster or tutor almost impossible for Johnson. This may have led Johnson to "the invisible occupation of authorship".

Johnson left for London with his former pupil David Garrick on 2 March 1737, the day Johnson's brother died. He was penniless and pessimistic about their travel, but fortunately for them, Garrick had connections in London, and the two were able to stay with his distant relative, Richard Norris. Johnson soon moved to Greenwich near the Golden Hart Tavern to finish *Irene*. On 12 July 1737 he wrote to Edward Cave with a proposal for a translation of Paolo Sarpi's *The History of the Council of Trent* (1619), which Cave did not accept until months later. In October 1737 Johnson brought his wife to London, and he found employment with Cave as a writer for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. His assignments for the magazine and other publishers during this time were "almost unparalleled in range and variety," and "so numerous, so varied and scattered" that "Johnson himself could not make a complete list".The name *Columbia*, a poetic name for America coined by Johnson, first appears in a 1738 weekly publication of the debates of the British Parliament in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

In May 1738 his first major work, the poem *London*, was published anonymously. Based on Juvenal's Satire III, it describes the character Thales leaving for Wales to escape the problems of London, which is portrayed as a place of crime, corruption, and poverty. Johnson could not bring himself to regard the poem as earning him any merit as a poet. Alexander Pope said that the author "will soon be déterré" (unearthed, dug up), but this would not happen until 15 years later.

In August, Johnson's lack of an MA degree from Oxford or Cambridge led to his being denied a position as master of the Appleby Grammar School. In an effort to end such rejections, Pope asked Lord Gower to use his influence to have a degree awarded to Johnson. Gower petitioned Oxford for an honorary degree to be awarded to Johnson, but was told that it was "too much to be asked".Gower then asked a friend of Jonathan Swift to plead with Swift to use his influence at the University of Dublin to have a master's degree awarded to Johnson, in the hope that this could then be used to justify an MA from Oxford, but Swift refused to act on Johnson's behalf.

Between 1737 and 1739, Johnson befriended poet Richard Savage. Feeling guilty about living on Tetty's money, Johnson stopped living with her and spent his time with Savage. They were poor and would stay in taverns or sleep in "night-cellars". Some nights they would roam the streets until dawn because they had no money. Savage's friends tried to help him by attempting to persuade him to move to Wales, but Savage ended up in Bristol and again fell into debt. He was committed to debtors' prison and died in 1743. A year later, Johnson wrote *Life of Mr Richard Savage* (1744), a "moving" work which, in the words of the

biographer and critic Walter Jackson Bate, "remains one of the innovative works in the history of biography".

8.4 LATER CAREER OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

On 16 March 1756, Johnson was arrested for an outstanding debt of £5 18s. Unable to contact anyone else, he wrote to the writer and publisher Samuel Richardson. Richardson, who had previously lent Johnson money, sent him six guineas to show his good will, and the two became friends. Soon after, Johnson met and befriended the painter Joshua Reynolds, who so impressed Johnson that he declared him "almost the only man whom I call a friend".Reynolds' younger sister Frances observed during their time together "that men, women and children gathered around him [Johnson]", laughing at his gestures and gesticulations. In addition to Reynolds, Johnson was close to Bennet Langton and Arthur Murphy. Langton was a scholar and an admirer of Johnson who persuaded his way into a meeting with Johnson which led to a long friendship. Johnson met Murphy during the summer of 1754 after Murphy came to Johnson about the accidental republishing of the *Rambler* No. 190, and the two became friends. Around this time, Anna Williams began boarding with Johnson. She was a minor poet who was poor and becoming blind, two conditions that Johnson attempted to change by providing room for her and paying for a failed cataract surgery. Williams, in turn, became Johnson's housekeeper.

To occupy himself, Johnson began to work on *The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review*, the first issue of which was printed on 19 March 1756. Philosophical disagreements erupted over the purpose of the publication

when the Seven Years' War began and Johnson started to write polemical essays attacking the war. After the war began, the *Magazine* included many reviews, at least 34 of which were written by Johnson. When not working on the *Magazine*, Johnson wrote a series of prefaces for other writers, such as Giuseppe Baretti, William Payne and Charlotte Lennox.[109] Johnson's relationship with Lennox and her works was particularly close during these years, and she in turn relied so heavily upon Johnson that he was "the most important single fact in Mrs Lennox's literary life".He later attempted to produce a new edition of her works, but even with his support they were unable to find enough interest to follow through with its publication. To help with domestic duties while Johnson was busy with his various projects, Richard Bathurst, a physician and a member of Johnson's Club, pressured him to take on a freed slave, Francis Barber, as his servant.

Johnson's work on *The Plays of William Shakespeare* took up most of his time. On 8 June 1756, Johnson published his *Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, the Dramatick Works of William Shakespeare*, which argued that previous editions of Shakespeare were edited incorrectly and needed to be corrected. Johnson's progress on the work slowed as the months passed, and he told music historian Charles Burney in December 1757 that it would take him until the following March to complete it. Before that could happen, he was arrested again, for a debt of £40, in February 1758. The debt was soon repaid by Jacob Tonson, who had contracted Johnson to publish *Shakespeare*, and this encouraged Johnson to finish his edition to repay the favour. Although it took him another seven years to finish, Johnson completed a few volumes of his *Shakespeare* to prove his commitment to the project.

In 1758, Johnson began to write a weekly series, *The Idler*, which ran from 15 April 1758 to 5 April 1760, as a way to avoid finishing his *Shakespeare*. This series was shorter and lacked many features of *The Rambler*. Unlike his independent publication of *The Rambler*, *The Idler* was published in a weekly news journal *The Universal Chronicle*, a publication supported by John Payne, John Newbery, Robert Stevens and William Faden.

Since *The Idler* did not occupy all Johnson's time, he was able to publish his philosophical novella *Rasselas* on 19 April 1759. The "little story book", as Johnson described it, describes the life of Prince Rasselas and Nekayah, his sister, who are kept in a place called the Happy Valley in the land of Abyssinia. The Valley is a place free of problems, where any desire is quickly satisfied. The constant pleasure does not, however, lead to satisfaction; and, with the help of a philosopher named Imlac, Rasselas escapes and explores the world to witness how all aspects of society and life in the outside world are filled with suffering. They return to Abyssinia, but do not wish to return to the state of constantly fulfilled pleasures found in the Happy Valley. *Rasselas* was written in one week to pay for his mother's funeral and settle her debts; it became so popular that there was a new English edition of the work almost every year. References to it appear in many later works of fiction, including *Jane Eyre*, *Cranford* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. Its fame was not limited to English-speaking nations: *Rasselas* was immediately translated into five languages (French, Dutch, German, Russian and Italian), and later into nine others.

By 1762, however, Johnson had gained notoriety for his dilatoriness in writing; the contemporary poet Churchill teased Johnson for the delay in

producing his long-promised edition of Shakespeare: "He for subscribers baits his hook / and takes your cash, but where's the book?" The comments soon motivated Johnson to finish his *Shakespeare*, and, after receiving the first payment from a government pension on 20 July 1762, he was able to dedicate most of his time towards this goal. Earlier that July, the 24-year-old King George III granted Johnson an annual pension of £300 in appreciation for the *Dictionary*. While the pension did not make Johnson wealthy, it did allow him a modest yet comfortable independence for the remaining 22 years of his life. The award came largely through the efforts of Sheridan and the Earl of Bute. When Johnson questioned if the pension would force him to promote a political agenda or support various officials, he was told by Bute that the pension "is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done".

On 16 May 1763, Johnson first met 22-year-old James Boswell—who would later become Johnson's first major biographer—in the bookshop of Johnson's friend, Tom Davies. They quickly became friends, although Boswell would return to his home in Scotland or travel abroad for months at a time. Around the spring of 1763, Johnson formed "The Club", a social group that included his friends Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Goldsmith and others (the membership later expanded to include Adam Smith and Edward Gibbon). They decided to meet every Monday at 7:00 pm at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, Soho, and these meetings continued until long after the deaths of the original members.

During the whole of the interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the

levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr Barnard, 'Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.

On 9 January 1765, Murphy introduced Johnson to Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer and MP, and his wife Hester. They struck up an instant friendship; Johnson was treated as a member of the family, and was once more motivated to continue working on his *Shakespeare*. Afterwards, Johnson stayed with the Thrales for 17 years until Henry's death in 1781, sometimes staying in rooms at Thrale's Anchor Brewery in Southwark. Hester Thrale's documentation of Johnson's life during this time, in her correspondence and her diary (*Thraliana*), became an important source of biographical information on Johnson after his death.

Johnson's edition of *Shakespeare* was finally published on 10 October 1765 as *The Plays of William Shakespeare, in Eight Volumes ... To which are added Notes by Sam. Johnson* in a printing of one thousand copies. The first edition quickly sold out, and a second was soon printed. The plays themselves were in a version that Johnson felt was closest to the original, based on his analysis of the manuscript editions. Johnson's revolutionary innovation was to create a set of corresponding notes that allowed readers to clarify the meaning behind many of Shakespeare's more complicated passages, and to examine those which had been transcribed incorrectly in previous editions. Included within the notes are occasional attacks upon rival editors of Shakespeare's works. Years later, Edmond Malone, an important Shakespearean scholar and friend of Johnson's, stated that Johnson's "vigorous and comprehensive

understanding threw more light on his authour than all his predecessors had done".

In February 1767, Johnson was granted a special audience with King George III. This took place at the library of the Queen's house, and it was organised by Barnard, the King's librarian. The King, upon hearing that Johnson would visit the library, commanded that Barnard introduce him to Johnson. After a short meeting, Johnson was impressed both with the King himself and with their conversation

8.5 FINAL YEARS OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, "Doubtless, in Westminster Abbey," seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a Poet.

Many visitors came to see Johnson as he lay sick in bed, but he preferred only Langton's company. Burney waited for word of Johnson's condition, along with Windham, Strahan, Hoole, Cruikshank, Des Moulins and Barber.[On 13 December 1784, Johnson met with two others: a young woman, Miss Morris, whom Johnson blessed, and Francesco Sastres, an Italian teacher, who was given some of Johnson's final words: "*Iam Morituru*s" ("I who am about to die"). Shortly afterwards he fell into a coma, and died at 7:00 p.m

Langton waited until 11:00 p.m. to tell the others, which led to John Hawkins' becoming pale and overcome with "an agony of mind", along with Seward and Hoole describing Johnson's death as "the most awful sight". Boswell remarked, "My feeling was just one large expanse of Stupor ... I could not believe it. My imagination was not convinced."

William Gerard Hamiltonjoined in and stated, "He has made a chasm, which not only nothing can fill up, but which *nothing has a tendency to fill up*. –Johnson is dead.– Let us go to the next best: There is nobody; – *no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson*."

He was buried on 20 December 1784 at Westminster Abbey with an inscription that reads:

Samuel Johnson, LL.D.

Johnson's works, especially his *Lives of the Poets* series, describe various features of excellent writing. He believed that the best poetry relied on contemporary language, and he disliked the use of decorative or purposefully archaic language. He was suspicious of the poetic language used by Milton, whose blank verse he believed would inspire many bad imitations. Also, Johnson opposed the poetic language of his contemporary Thomas Gray. His greatest complaint was that obscure allusions found in works like Milton's *Lycidas* were overused; he preferred poetry that could be easily read and understoodIn addition to his views on language, Johnson believed that a good poem incorporated new and unique imagery.

In his smaller poetic works, Johnson relied on short lines and filled his work with a feeling of empathy, which possibly influenced Housman's poetic style. In *London*, his first imitation of Juvenal, Johnson uses the poetic form to express his political opinion and, as befits a young writer, approaches the topic in a playful and almost joyous manner. However, his second imitation, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, is completely different; the language remains simple, but the poem is more complicated and difficult to read because Johnson is trying to describe

complex Christian ethics. These Christian values are not unique to the poem, but contain views expressed in most of Johnson's works. In particular, Johnson emphasises God's infinite love and shows that happiness can be attained through virtuous action.

A caricature of Johnson by James Gillray mocking him for his literary criticism; he is shown doing penance for Apollo and the Muses with Mount Parnassus in the background.

When it came to biography, Johnson disagreed with Plutarch's use of biography to praise and to teach morality. Instead, Johnson believed in portraying the biographical subjects accurately and including any negative aspects of their lives. Because his insistence on accuracy in biography was little short of revolutionary, Johnson had to struggle against a society that was unwilling to accept biographical details that could be viewed as tarnishing a reputation; this became the subject of *Rambler* 60. Furthermore, Johnson believed that biography should not be limited to the most famous and that the lives of lesser individuals, too, were significant; thus in his *Lives of the Poets* he chose both great and lesser poets. In all his biographies he insisted on including what others would have considered trivial details to fully describe the lives of his subjects. Johnson considered the genre of autobiography and diaries, including his own, as one having the most significance; in *Idler* 84 he explains how a writer of an autobiography would be the least likely to distort his own life.

Johnson's thoughts on biography and on poetry coalesced in his understanding of what would make a good critic. His works were dominated with his intent to use them for literary criticism. This was especially true of his *Dictionary* of which he wrote: "I lately published a

Dictionary like those compiled by the academies of Italy and France, *for the use of such as aspire to exactness of criticism, or elegance of style*".Although a smaller edition of his *Dictionary* became the standard household dictionary, Johnson's original *Dictionary* was an academic tool that examined how words were used, especially in literary works. To achieve this purpose, Johnson included quotations from Bacon, Hooker, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, and many others from what he considered to be the most important literary fields: natural science, philosophy, poetry, and theology. These quotations and usages were all compared and carefully studied in the *Dictionary* so that a reader could understand what words in literary works meant in context.

Johnson did not attempt to create schools of theories to analyse the aesthetics of literature. Instead, he used his criticism for the practical purpose of helping others to better read and understand literature. When it came to Shakespeare's plays, Johnson emphasised the role of the reader in understanding language: "If Shakespeare has difficulties above other writers, it is to be imputed to the nature of his work, which required the use of common colloquial language, and consequently admitted many phrases allusive, elliptical, and proverbial, such as we speak and hear every hour without observing them".

His works on Shakespeare were devoted not merely to Shakespeare, but to understanding literature as a whole; in his *Preface* to Shakespeare, Johnson rejects the previous dogma of the classical unities and argues that drama should be faithful to life.however, Johnson did not only defend Shakespeare; he discussed Shakespeare's faults, including his lack of morality, his vulgarity, his carelessness in crafting plots, and his occasional inattentiveness when choosing words or word order. As well

as direct literary criticism, Johnson emphasised the need to establish a text that accurately reflects what an author wrote. Shakespeare's plays, in particular, had multiple editions, each of which contained errors caused by the printing process. This problem was compounded by careless editors who deemed difficult words incorrect, and changed them in later editions. Johnson believed that an editor should not alter the text in such a way.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II :

Q1.Give brief about early career of samual Johnson

Answer……

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Q2. Discuss the major works of Samual Jhonsan

Answer……

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8.6 LET'S SUM UP

Although he had recovered his health by August, he experienced emotional trauma when he was given word that Hester Thrale would sell the residence that Johnson shared with the family. What hurt Johnson most was the possibility that he would be left without her constant

company. Months later, on 6 October 1782, Johnson attended church for the final time in his life, to say goodbye to his former residence and life. The walk to the church strained him, but he managed the journey unaccompanied. While there, he wrote a prayer for the Thrale family:

To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Hester Thrale did not completely abandon Johnson, and asked him to accompany the family on a trip to Brighton. He agreed, and was with them from 7 October to 20 November 1782. On his return, his health began to fail, and he was left alone after Boswell's visit on 29 May 1783

On 17 June 1783, Johnson's poor circulation resulted in a stroke and he wrote to his neighbour, Edmund Allen, that he had lost the ability to speak. Two doctors were brought in to aid Johnson; he regained his ability to speak two days later. Johnson feared that he was dying, and wrote:

The black dog I hope always to resist, and in time to drive, though I am deprived of almost all those that used to help me. The neighbourhood is impoverished. I had once Richardson and Lawrence in my reach. Mrs. Allen is dead. My house has lost Levet, a man who took interest in everything, and therefore ready at conversation. Mrs. Williams is so weak that she can be a companion no longer. When I rise my breakfast is solitary, the black dog waits to share it, from breakfast to dinner he continues barking, except that Dr. Brocklesby for a little keeps him at a distance. Dinner with a sick woman you may venture to suppose not much better than solitary. After dinner, what remains but to count the

clock, and hope for that sleep which I can scarce expect. Night comes at last, and some hours of restlessness and confusion bring me again to a day of solitude. What shall exclude the black dog from an habitation like this?[

8.7 KEYWORDS

1. BACKFRIEND

The Oxford English Dictionary calls a backfriend "a pretended or false friend," but Johnson was more straightforward and defined the word as "a friend backwards"—or in other words, "an enemy in secret."

2. EXCISE

No one likes paying tax—and Johnson knew it. Excise was defined as "a hateful tax levied upon commodities and adjudged not by the common judges of property but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid."

3. FINESSE

Johnson didn't much care for French loanwords, and omitted a great deal of francophone words—including such familiar examples as champagne and bourgeois—from his dictionary. Many of those that he did include, meanwhile, had some serious shade thrown at them: Finesse is dismissed as "an unnecessary word that is creeping into the language"; monsieur was described as "a term of reproach

for a Frenchman"; and ruse was labeled "a French word neither elegant nor necessary."

4. GYNOCRACY

A gynocracy is a governing body of women, or women seen as a ruling class. In Johnson's pithier words, however, a "gynecocrasay" was defined as a "petticoat government."

8.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Q1 Describe Samuel Johnson's background.

Q2 How did Samuel Johnson influence the world today with his writings?

Q3How did Samuel Johnson (and the genre he wrote in) influence or interact with the world in his own time and throughout history? Does he influence the present day?

Q4What are interesting topics to talk about in a term paper including Johnson's major works?

Q5 In "Rambler No. 4," what are some good suggestions for a thesis statement based on Johnsons's writing?

Q6 How does Johnson defend Shakespeare's mixing of tragic and comic elements?

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8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK IN PROGRESS

Check In Progress I

Answer 1. Check 8.2

Answer 2 Check 8.3

Check In Progress II

Answer 1. Check 8.4

Answer 2 Check 8.6

UNIT - 9: SAMUEL JOHNSON'S: PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

STRUCTURE

9.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the Preface of Shakespeare according to Johnson.

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- Johnson's points to remember in Preface to Shakespeare
- Johnson's defense of Shakespeare's use of unities
- Faults of Shakespeare

- Strengths of Shakespeare's Plays According to Johnson
- Weakness of Shakespeare's Plays According to Johnson

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth-century writer Samuel Johnson ((1709-1784) is one of the most significant figures in English literature. His fame is due in part to a widely read biography of him, written by his friend James Boswell and published in 1791. Although probably best known for compiling his celebrated dictionary, Johnson was an extremely prolific writer who worked in a variety of fields and forms.

That praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity, is a complaint likely to be always continued by those, who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox; or those, who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy, will be at last bestowed by time.

Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice of mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason, but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes co-operated with chance; all perhaps are more willing to honour past than present excellence; and the mind contemplates genius through the shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity. The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns, and the beauties of the

ancients. While an authour is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

To works, however, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientifick, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed they have often examined and compared, and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. As among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers; so in the productions of genius, nothing can be stiled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind. Demonstration immediately displays its power, and has nothing to hope or fear from the flux of years; but works tentative and experimental must be estimated by their proportion to the general and collective ability of man, as it is discovered in a long succession of endeavours. Of the first building that was raised, it might be with certainty determined that it was round or square, but whether it was spacious or lofty must have been referred to time. The Pythagorean scale of numbers was at once discovered to be perfect; but the poems of Homer we yet know not to transcend the common limits of human intelligence, but by remarking, that nation after nation, and century after century, has been able to do little more than transpose his incidents, new name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments.

The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises therefore not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of

past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood.

9.2 DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON'S PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

9.2.1 Chief Critical Approaches of Dr. Johnson are:

Johnson tried teaching and later organized a school in Lichfield. His educational ventures were not successful, however, although one of his students, David Garrick, later famous as an actor, became a lifelong friend.

Johnson, having given up teaching, went to London to try the literary life. Thus began a long period of hack writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

He founded his own periodical, *The Rambler,* in which he published, between 1750 and 1752, a considerable number of eloquent, insightful essays on literature, criticism, and moral

Beginning in 1747, while busy with other kinds of writing and always burdened with poverty, Johnson was also at work on a major project—compiling a dictionary commissioned by a group of booksellers. After more than eight years in preparation, the *Dictionary of the English Language*appeared in 1755. This remarkable work contains about 40,000

entries elucidated by vivid, idiosyncratic, still-quoted definitions and by an extraordinary range of illustrative examples.

Johnson published another periodical, *The Idler*, between 1758 and 1760.

In 1764 he and the eminent English portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds founded the Literary Club; its membership included such luminaries as Garrick, the statesman Edmund Burke, the playwrights Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and a young Scottish lawyer, James Boswell.

Johnson's last major work, The Lives of the English Poets, was begun in 1778, when he was nearly 70 years old, and completed—in ten volumes—in 1781. The work is a distinctive blend of biography and literary criticism.

9.3 JOHNSON'S POINTS TO REMEMBER IN PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's characters are a just representation of human nature as they deal with passions and principles which are common to humanity. They are also true to the age, sex, profession to which they belong and hence the speech of one cannot be put in the mouth of another. His characters are not exaggerated. Even when the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life.

Shakespeare's plays are a storehouse of practical wisdom and from them can be formulated a philosophy of life. Moreover, his plays represent the different passions and not love alone. In this, his plays mirror life.

Shakespeare's use of tragic comedy*:* Shakespeare has been much criticized for mixing tragedy and comedy, but Johnson defends him in this. Johnson says that in mixing tragedy and comedy, Shakespeare has been true to nature, because even in real life there is a mingling of good and evil, joy and sorrow, tears and smiles etc. this may be against the classical rules, but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. Moreover, tragic-comedy being nearer to life combines within itself the pleasure and instruction of both tragedy and comedy.

Shakespeare's use of tragicomedy does not weaken the effect of a tragedy because it does not interrupt the progress of passions. In fact, Shakespeare knew that pleasure consisted in variety. Continued melancholy or grief is often not pleasing. Shakespeare had the power to move, whether to tears or laughter.

Shakespeare's comic genius: Johnson says that comedy came natural to Shakespeare. He seems to produce his comic scenes without much labour, and these scenes are durable and hence their popularity has not suffered with the passing of time. The language of his comic scenes is the language of real life which is neither gross nor over refined, and hence it has not grown obsolete.

Shakespeare writes tragedies with great appearance of toil and study, but there is always something wanting in his tragic scenes. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy instinct.

Check In Progress

Q1. Discuss in short Dr. Samuel Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare

Answer……
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Q2. Write a brief on Shakespeare's use of tragic comedy

Answer……
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9.4 JOHNSON'S DEFENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF UNITIES:

Shakespeare's histories are neither tragedy nor comedy and hence he is not required to follow classical rules of unities. The only unity he needs to maintain in his histories is the consistency and naturalness in his characters and this he does so faithfully. In his other works, he has well maintained the unity of action. His plots have the variety and complexity of nature, but have a beginning, middle and an end, and one event is logically connected with another, and the plot makes gradual advancement towards the denouement.

Shakespeare shows no regard for the unities of Time and place**,** and according to Johnson, these have troubled the poet more than it has pleased his audience. The observance of these unities is considered necessary to provide credibility to the drama. But, any fiction can never be real, and the audience knows this. If a spectator can imagine the stage

to be Alexandria and the actors to be Antony and Cleopatra, he can surely imagine much more. Drama is a delusion, and delusion has no limits. Therefore, there is no absurdity in showing different actions in different places.

As regards the unity of Time, Shakespeare says that a drama imitates successive actions, and just as they may be represented at successive places, so also they may be represented at different period, separated by several days. The only condition is that the events must be connected with each other.

Johnson further says that drama moves us not because we think it is real, but because it makes us feel that the evils represented may happen to ourselves. Imitations produce pleasure or pain, not because they are mistaken for reality, but because they bring realities to mind.Therefore, unity of Action alone is sufficient, and the other two unities arise from false assumptions. Hence it is good that Shakespeare violates them.

9.5 FAULTS OF SHAKESPEARE:

Shakespeare writes without moral purpose and is more careful to please than to instruct. There is no poetic justice in his plays. This fault cannot be excused by the barbarity of his age for justice is a virtue independent of time and place.

Next, his plots are loosely formed, and only a little attention would have improved them. He neglects opportunities of instruction that his plots

offer, in fact, he very often neglects the later parts of his plays and so his catastrophes often seem forced and improbable.

There are many faults of chronology and many anachronisms in his play.

His jokes are often gross and licentious. In his narration, there is much pomp of diction and circumlocution. Narration in his dramas is often tedious. His set speeches are cold and weak. They are often verbose and too large for thought. Trivial ideas are clothed in sonorous epithets. He is too fond of puns and quibbles which engulf him in mire. For a pun, he sacrifices reason, propriety and truth.He often fails at moments of great excellence. Some contemptible conceit spoils the effect of his pathetic and tragic scenes.

9.6 STRENGTHS OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS ACCORDING TO JOHNSON

1. Shakespeare was an established authority by the time of Johnson. According to Johnson, "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature". By nature, Johnson means the observation of reality. Johnson says that Shakespeare had the ability to provide a 'just representation of general nature'. Here, Johnson presents the idea of universality. David Daiches reports that Dr. Johnson appreciates Shakespeare because he, according to Dryden's requirement of a just and lively image of human nature, fulfills it. He further explains that Shakespeare as a dramatist is praised because he does what is expected from a dramatist. Shakespeare's writings have a main theme of good and evil, these are universal problems, and everyone agrees to these problems. All

humanity faces good as well as evil so the author who uses these problems relates to people's lives.

2. According to Johnson, art should be exact representation (imitation) of general nature as Plato says that art is the imitation of nature. Also, dealing with the theme of universality, Johnson seems to believe in modern thoughts that truth has to be universal, accepted by all and common for all. Nature is represented by classicists so copying them also means copying nature. Hamlet says, "Hold up a mirror to nature", which means imitation of nature according to Platonic theory. Shakespeare is also categorized by Johnson as poet of nature.
3. Johnson, further describes about Shakespeare's characters as, "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated..". Shakespeare's characters are individuals but represent universality. Johnson elaborates about Shakespeare's characters, "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied by men". It means that Shakespeare's characters are of general kind and are not restricted by customs and conventions of any one society. David Daiches describes that by having no heroes does not mean that his characters are not heroic or impressive but that they are not supernatural beings but "men, whom we recognize as fellow human beings" acting according to the general laws of nature. Also, if Shakespeare uses ghosts, he gives them humanly characteristics as they speak like human beings such as Hamlet's father's ghost.
4. Johnson describes language of Shakespeare as comprehensible. He also describes that Shakespeare's characters differ from one another because of the usage of language.

5. Johnson praises Shakespeare and comments, “His drama is the mirror of life”. According to Johnson, his plays are so realistic that we get practical knowledge from them. He further says, “Shakespeare’s plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind..”. According to Johnson, divisions of Shakespeare’s plays into tragedies and comedies is wrong. Eliot shares Johnson’s idea of incorrect labeling of Shakespeare’s dramas as tragic, comic and historic.
6. Johnson judges Shakespeare’s tragedy as “a skill” and his comedy as an ‘instinct’. He thinks that the natural medium for Shakespeare is comedy not tragedy. According to him, Shakespeare had to struggle for his tragedies but still they did not reach perfection.
7. He presents a mingled drama – a tragicomedy, which provides instructions in both the ways, as a tragedy as well as a comedy. He reinforces if tragedy and comedy are mingled, the effect one wants to create on the audience is impaired. Mingling of tragedy and comedy means to represent the reality of the world as it is.

9.7 WEAKNESSES IN SHAKESPEARE’S PLAYS ACCORDING TO JOHNSON

1. Johnson identifies, “The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing”. Dr. Johnson, like utilitarian, seems to believe in the usefulness of art. He is one of them who want to prove that art is profitable for society. He also agrees to Sidney’s idea of poet as a moral teacher. According to Johnson, poetry should make us better and it should be didactic. David Daiches criticizes Johnson for his two contradictory

remarks—just representation of human nature and poetry as a medium of moral instruction. David Daiches emphasizes that human nature not only deals with good side of life but also the evil aspects are there. However, for instructing morally, evil should be omitted, which means that the writer is not depicting true human nature. Humanity contains moral as well as immoral aspects so poetry cannot be a moral teacher and true human nature representation both.

2. Johnson comments on Shakespeare's style, "He sacrifices virtue to convenience..". Johnson's argument is prejudice of the age. According to his opinion, rational thinking leads to moral thinking. Anthony House depicts, "Johnson exhibits emphatic distaste for Shakespeare's lack of moral purpose". Johnson reinforces on a writer's duty "to make the world better", which means, he emphasizes on moral role of literature, which is again contradictory to neo-classical ideas.
3. Another defect highlighted by Johnson is that Shakespeare does not give much consideration to plot construction. Initially, in the preface, Johnson praises Shakespeare for his universality, his not belonging to any one age, place or time but then, he contradicts with himself as he identifies it a flaw of Shakespeare's style.
4. For Johnson, clarity and diction are important. Johnson criticizes Shakespeare's use of language. According to him, Shakespeare is not of civilized kind and is also over-punning. Sometimes, it seems that Shakespeare is involved in providing mere dialogues not related to the plot.

5. Johnson vigorously defends Shakespeare against charges of failing to adhere to the classical doctrine of the dramatic unities of time, place and action. According to Aristotle, these unities are necessary for the praiseworthy work. As far as, unity of action is concerned, Shakespeare is good at it but the other two unities of time and place are subservient to the mind: since the audience does not confound stage action with reality, it has no trouble with a shift of scene from Rome to Alexandria. Anthony House claims, "By reversing the entire paradigm through which the unities are used, Johnson changes Shakespeare's fault into a praiseworthy asset". According to Johnson, the idea of unity of place and time is contradictory in terms of reason and rationality. Johnson also elaborates, "Such violations of rules mere positive become the comprehensive genius of Shakespeare".
6. Anthony House depicts the importance of Johnson's work in terms of Shakespeare's study. By his preface, Johnson tries to highlight certain views about Shakespeare's genius. Whatever Johnson has contributed, it is precious.

9.8 OBSERVATIONS

These observations are to be considered not as unexceptionably constant, but as containing general and predominant truth. Shakespeare's familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty; as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation: His characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their actions

improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protuberances and cavities.

Shakespeare with his excellencies has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall shew them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independant on time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed, that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued, that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are more easy.

It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and, in view of his reward, he shortened the labour, to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expence not only of likelihood, but of possibility. These faults Pope has endeavoured, with more zeal than judgment, to transfer to his imagined in interpolators. We need not wonder to find Hector quoting Aristotle, when we see the loves of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies. Shakespeare, indeed, was not the only violator of chronology, for in the same age Sidney, who wanted not the advantages of learning, has, in his "Arcadia", confounded the pastoral with the feudal times, the days of innocence, quiet and security, with those of turbulence, violence and adventure.

In his comick scenes he is seldom very successful, when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contest of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his time is not easy to determine; the reign of Elizabeth is commonly supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality and reserve, yet perhaps the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant. There must, however, have been always some modes of gayety preferable to others, and a writer ought to chuse the best.

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labour is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetick; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatick poetry is, naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendour.

His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavoured, like other tragick writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle, or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of words to

things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have never less reason to indulge their hopes of supreme excellence, than when he seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection, and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. He is not long soft and pathetick without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move, than he counteracts himself; and terrour and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

It will be thought strange, that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities; his violation of those

laws which have been instituted and established by the joint authority of poets and of criticks.

For his other deviations from the art of writing, I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favour, than that which must be indulged to all human excellence; that his virtues be rated with his failings: But, from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled; he does not endeavour to hide his design only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakespeare is the poet of nature: But his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. There are perhaps some incidents that might be spared, as in other poets there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the end of expectation.

To the unities of time and place he has shewn no regard, and perhaps a nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish

their value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of Corneille, they have very generally received by discovering that they have given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the auditor.

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The criticks hold it impossible, that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his mistress, shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Medea could, in so short a time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place; and he knows that place cannot change itself; that what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.

Such is the triumphant language with which a critick exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him, by the authority of Shakespeare, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position, which, while his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatick fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited.

The objection arising from the impossibility of passing the first hour at Alexandria, and the next at Rome, supposes, that when the play opens the spectator really imagines himself at Alexandria, and believes that his walk to the theatre has been a voyage to Egypt, and that he lives in the days of Antony and Cleopatra. Surely he that imagines this, may imagine more. He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation; if the spectator can be once persuaded, that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Caesar, that a room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the bank of Granicus, he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason, or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry, may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in extasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that compleat a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?

By supposition, as place is introduced, time may be extended; the time required by the fable elapses for the most part between the acts; for, of so

much of the action as is represented, the real and poetical duration is the same. If, in the first act, preparations for war against Mithridates are represented to be made in Rome, the event of the war may, without absurdity, be represented, in the catastrophe, as happening in Pontus; we know that there is neither war, nor preparation for war; we know that we are neither in Rome nor Pontus; that neither Mithridates nor Lucullus are before us. The drama exhibits successive imitations of successive actions, and why may not the second imitation represent an action that happened years after the first; if it be so connected with it, that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene? Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

It will be asked, how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players, but that we fancy ourselves unhappy for a moment; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe, when she remembers that death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.

Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of "Henry the Fifth", yet no man takes his book for the field of Agencourt. A dramatick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that encrease or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of Petruchio may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato.

A play read, affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident, that the action is not supposed to be real, and it follows that between the acts a longer or shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama, than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero, or the revolutions of an empire.

Whether Shakespeare knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to inquire. We may reasonably suppose, that, when he rose to notice, he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and criticks, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice, which he might have begun by chance. As nothing is essential to the fable, but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot think it much to be lamented, that

they were not known by him, or not observed: Nor, if such another poet could arise, should I very vehemently reproach him, that his first act passed at Venice, and his next in Cyprus.

Check Your Progress

1. Write the short note on strengths on Shakespeare play.
   Answer……
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2. Write the short note on strengths on Shakespeare play.
   Answer……
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9.9 LET'S SUM UP

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestick wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept and it may be said of Shakespeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and oeconomical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenour of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in

Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much Shakespeare excells in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authours. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation, that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakespeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topicks which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this authour is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation, and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady and a rival into the fable; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harrass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other; to make them meet in rapture and part in agony; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered, is the business of a modern dramatist. For this probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions, and as it has no great influence upon the sum

of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew, that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find, any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents: so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would be probably such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn human nature as it acts in real exigences, but as it would be found in trials, to

which it cannot be exposed. This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirrour of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of criticks, who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis and Rhymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended, that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish Usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to shew an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable, he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

9.10 KEYWORDS

Adieu (n.): farewell

Example: "Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me." (*Hamlet* 1.5)

The ghost of Hamlet's father's spirit is saying goodbye to Hamlet after a monologue warning him of his uncle's motives.

- **Anon** (adv): soon, shortly, presently

Example: "I come, anon." (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.2)

The Nurse calls for Juliet as she says goodbye to Romeo in the famous balcony scene. Juliet continues to tell the Nurse she will be with her shortly.

- **Aye** (adv): always, forever or eternity; yes

Example: The word Aye or Ay can be seen throughout Shakespeare's works. From agreeing to a task, or vowing, this word, albeit simple, reinforces an opinion or thought.

9.11QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- What are some of the problems with editing Shakespeare's writing?
- According to Samuel Johnson, why is comedy is valued over tragedy in "Preface to Shakespeare"?
- Please analyze *Preface to Shakespeare* by Samuel Johnson.
- Who are the characters in *Preface to Shakespeare* by Samuel Johnson?
- Dr. Johnson is a biased critic of Shakespeare. Do you agree? Please give a reference from Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare."

- Why is Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare" a landmark in Shakespearian criticism?
- What is the importance of Samuel Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*?

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9.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK IN PROGRESS

Check In Progress I

Answer 1. Check 9.3

Answer 2 Check 9.4

Check In Progress II

Answer 1. Check 9.7

Answer 2 Check 9.8

UNIT - 10: ALEXANDER POPE: LIFE AND WORK

STRUCTURE

10.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the life and works of Alexander Pope.Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- Early Life Of Alexander Pope
- Poetry Alexander Pope
- Later Life and works Alexander Pope

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Alexander Pope (21 May 1688 – 30 May 1744) is regarded as one of the greatest English poets, and the foremost poet of the early eighteenth century. He is best known for his satirical and discursive poetry—

including The Rape of the Lock, The Dunciad, and An Essay on Criticism—as well as for his translation of Homer. After Shakespeare, Pope is the second-most quoted writer in the English language, as per The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations,[1] some of his verses having even become popular idioms in common parlance (e.g., Damning with faint praise). He is considered a master of the heroic couplet.

Pope's poetic career testifies to his indomitable spirit in the face of disadvantages, of health and of circumstance. The poet and his family were Catholics and thus fell subject to the Test Acts, prohibitive measures which severely hampered the prosperity of their co-religionists after the abdication of James II; one of these banned them from living within ten miles of London, and another from attending public school or university. For this reason, except for a few spurious Catholic schools, Pope was largely self-educated. He was taught to read by his aunt and became a lover of books. He learned French, Italian, Latin, and Greek by himself, and discovered Homer at the age of six. As a child Pope survived being once trampled by a cow, but when he was 12 began struggling with tuberculosis of the spine (Pott disease), along with fits of crippling headaches which troubled him throughout his life.

In the year 1709, Pope showcased his precocious metrical skill with the publication of Pastorals, his first major poems. They earned him instant fame. By the time he was 23 he had written An Essay on Criticism, released in 1711. A kind of poetic manifesto in the vein of Horace's Ars Poetica, the essay was met with enthusiastic attention and won Pope a wider circle of prominent friends, most notably Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, who had recently started collaborating on

the influential The Spectator. The critic John Dennis, having located an ironic and veiled portrait of himself, was outraged by what he considered the impudence of the younger author. Dennis hated Pope for the rest of his life, and, save for a temporary reconciliation, dedicated his efforts to insulting him in print, to which Pope retaliated in kind, making Dennis the butt of much satire.

The Rape of the Lock, perhaps the poet's most famous poem, appeared first in 1712, followed by a revised and enlarged version in 1714. When Lord Petre forcibly snipped off a lock from Miss Arabella Fermor's head (the "Belinda" of the poem), the incident gave rise to a high-society quarrel between the families. With the idea of allaying this, Pope treated the subject in a playful and witty mock-heroic epic. The narrative poem brings into focus the onset of acquisitive individualism and conspicuous consumption, where purchased goods assume dominance over moral agency.

A folio comprising a collection of his poems appeared in 1717, together with two new ones written about the passion of love. These were Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady and the famous proto-romantic poem Eloisa to Abelard. Though Pope never married, about this time he became strongly attached to Lady M. Montagu, whom he indirectly referenced in the popular poem Eloisa to Abelard, and to Martha Blount, with whom his friendship continued throughout his life.

In his career as a satirist, Pope made his share of enemies as the critics, politicians, and certain other prominent figures felt the sting of his sharpwitted satires. Some were so virulent, that Pope even carried pistols at one point while walking his dog. After 1738, Pope composed

relatively little. He toyed with the idea of writing a patriotic epic called Brutus. He mainly revised and expanded his masterpiece The Dunciad. Book Four appeared in 1742, and a complete revision of the whole poem in the following year. In this version, he replaced Lewis Theobald with the Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber, as "king of dunces". However, his real target in the poem is the Whig politician Robert Walpole. By now Pope's health was failing, and when told by his physician, on the morning of his death, that he was better, Pope replied: "Here am I, dying of a hundred good symptoms".

10.2 EARLY LIFE OF ALEXANDER POPE

Alexander Pope was born in London on 21 May 1688—the year of the Glorious Revolution. His father (also Alexander, 1646–1717) was a successful linen merchant in the Strand. The poet's mother, Edith (1643–1733), was the daughter of William Turner, Esquire, of York. Both parents were Catholics. Edith's sister Christiana was the wife of famous miniature painter Samuel Cooper. Pope's education was affected by the recently enacted Test Acts, which upheld the status of the established Church of England and banned Catholics from teaching, attending a university, voting, and holding public office on penalty of perpetual imprisonment. Pope was taught to read by his aunt and went to Twyford School in about 1698/99. He then went on to two Roman Catholic schools in London. Such schools, while illegal, were tolerated in some areas.

In 1700, his family moved to a small estate at Popeswood in Binfield, Berkshire, close to the royal Windsor ForestThis was due to strong anti-

Catholic sentiment and a statute preventing Papists from living within 10 miles (16 km) of London or WestminsterPope would later describe the countryside around the house in his poem *Windsor Forest*. Pope's formal education ended at this time, and from then on he mostly educated himself by reading the works of classical writers such as the satirists Horace and Juvenal, the epic poets Homer and Virgil, as well as English authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and John Dryden. He studied many languages and read works by English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. After five years of study, Pope came into contact with figures from London literary society such as William Congreve, Samuel Garth and William Trumbull.

At Binfield he made many important friends. One of them, John Caryll (the future dedicatee of *The Rape of the Lock*), was twenty years older than the poet and had made many acquaintances in the London literary world. He introduced the young Pope to the aging playwright William Wycherley and to William Walsh, a minor poet, who helped Pope revise his first major work, *The Pastorals*. He also met the Blount sisters, Teresa and Martha, both of whom remained lifelong friends.

From the age of 12 he suffered numerous health problems, including Pott disease (a form of tuberculosis that affects the spine), which deformed his body and stunted his growth, leaving him with a severe hunchback. His tuberculosis infection caused other health problems including respiratory difficulties, high fevers, inflamed eyes, and abdominal pain. He grew to a height of only 1.37 m (4 ft 6 in). Pope was already removed from society because he was Catholic, and his poor health

alienated him further. Although he never married, he had many female friends to whom he wrote witty letters, including Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. It has been alleged that his lifelong friend Martha Blount was his lover. His friend William Cheselden said, according to Joseph Spence, "I could give a more particular account of Mr. Pope's health than perhaps any man. Cibber's slander (of carnosity) is false. He had been gay, but left that way of life upon his acquaintance with Mrs. B."

- His first ever work titled, ‘Pastorals’ was published in 1709 in the sixth part of Tonson’s Poetical Miscellanies. The work was widely appreciated and guaranteed him much fame and publicity.
- It was after the positive reception of his work ‘Pastorals’ that he was inspired to writer further. In 1711, he came up with ‘An Essay on Criticism’. Much like its predecessor, this work too was much appreciated and liked.
- Written in a heroic couplet style, which was a developing genre of poetry then, the work was written as a response to whether poetry should written in a style that is natural or follow the predetermined rules of the classical works.
- Same year, he made friends with Tory writers John Gay, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Parnell and John Arbuthnot. Together with them, he formed the satirical Scriblerus Club. The main aim of the club was to bring upon works with satirical take on ignorance and pedantry through the creation of a fictional character of Martinus Scriblerus.

- Year 1712 witnessed the release of two of his poetry works, 'Messiah' and 'The Rape of the Lock'. While the former delves into the theme of merging the prophecy of Isaiah about the birth of Messaih, the latter is a satirical take on the attitude of high society people. It depicts the fierce quarrel between Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre who snipped a lock of hair from the former's head without her permission.

- The following year, he came up with the poetry, 'Windsor Forest'. The work was much acclaimed and received positive reviews. Post the publication of 'Windsor Forest', he assisted Joseph Addison in the latter's plays 'Cato'. Furthermore, he even wrote articles in the publications, 'The Guardian' and 'The Spectator'.

- From 1715 to 1720, he indulged in translating the works of Illiad. In the meanwhile, the political situation worsened with the death of Queen Anne and the rise of the conflict between Hanoverians and the Jacobites.

- In 1717, he came up with three works, 'Eloisa to Aberland', 'Three Hours After Marriage' and 'Elegy to the Memory of the Unfortunate Lady'. From 1723 to 1725, he penned 'The Works of Shakespeare' in six volumes.

- From 1725 to 1726, he came up with the work, 'Translations of the Odyssey'. It was the success of his earlier 'Translations of the Illiad' that inspired him to come up with this work. In 1727, he

came up with the work, ‘Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry’.

- Year 1728 witnessed the release of his work, ‘The Dunciad’. Landmarked by literary satire, he first published the first version, ‘three book’ Dunciad in 1728. Subsequently, the following year, he released the second version and the Dunciad Variorum.

- From 1733 to 1734, he worked on ‘Essay on Man’, which was a philosophical poem written in heroic couplet style. Though he originally intended the work to be a centrepiece of the proposed system of ethics, he did live long to expand it or complete it.

- In 1735, he came up with his work, ‘The Prologue to the Satires’. From 1733 to 1738, he came up with ‘Imitations of Horace’. Post 1738, he limited his work. He worked towards coming up with a patriotic epic in blank verse, titled Brutus, he could not succeed further than the opening lines.

- He dedicated much of his later life revising and expanding his masterpiece 'The Dunciad'. He came up with the fourth book, which was a sequel to the first three books, titled, ‘The New Dunciad’.

- He then came up with ‘The Dunciad in Four Books’ which was a revised version of the original three books and a slightly revised version of the fourth book published in 1743. Unlike the predecessor, he changed the protagonist of the work from Tibbald to Bays.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Discuss in short the early life of Alexander Pope.

Answer

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Q2. Share your views in short about the birth of Alexandra Pope.

Answer

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10.3 POETRY OF ALEXANDER POPE

An Essay on Criticism was first published anonymously on 15 May 1711. Pope began writing the poem early in his career and took about three years to finish it.

At the time the poem was published, the heroic couplet style in which it was written was a moderately new poetic form, and Pope's work was an ambitious attempt to identify and refine his own positions as a poet and critic. The poem was said to be a response to an ongoing debate on the question of whether poetry should be natural, or written according to predetermined artificial rules inherited from the classical past.

The 'essay' begins with a discussion of the standard rules that govern poetry by which a critic passes judgment. Pope comments on the classical authors who dealt with such standards and the authority that he believed should be accredited to them. He discusses the laws to which a critic should adhere while critiquing poetry, and points out that critics serve an important function in aiding poets with their works, as opposed to the practice of attacking them. The final section of *An Essay on Criticism* discusses the moral qualities and virtues inherent in the ideal critic, who, Pope claims, is also the ideal man.

The Rape of the Lock

Pope's most famous poem is *The Rape of the Lock*, first published in 1712, with a revised version published in 1714. A mock-epic, it satirises a high-society quarrel between Arabella Fermor (the "Belinda" of the poem) and Lord Petre, who had snipped a lock of hair from her head without her permission. The satirical style is tempered, however, by a genuine and almost voyeuristic interest in the "beau-monde" (fashionable world) of 18th-century English society. The revised and extended version of the poem brought more clearly into focus its true subject – the onset of acquisitive individualism and a society of conspicuous consumers. In the world of the poem, purchased artefacts displace human agency, and 'trivial things' assume dominance.

The Dunciad and *Moral Essays*

Alexander Pope, painting attributed to English painter Jonathan Richardson, c. 1736, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Though *The Dunciad* was first published anonymously in Dublin, its authorship was not in doubt. Pope pilloried a host of other "hacks", "scribblers" and "dunces" in addition to Theobald, and Maynard Mack has accordingly called its publication "in many ways the greatest act of folly in Pope's life." Though a masterpiece which would become "one of the most challenging and distinctive works in the history of English poetry", writes Mack, "it bore bitter fruit. It brought the poet in his own time the hostility of its victims and their sympathizers, who pursued him implacably from then on with a few damaging truths and a host of slanders and lies."

According to his half-sister Magdalen Rackett, some of Pope's targets were so enraged by *The Dunciad* that they threatened him. "My brother does not seem to know what fear is," she told Joseph Spence, explaining that Pope loved to walk alone, so went accompanied by his Great Dane, Bounce, and for some time carried pistols in his pocket. Together with John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, this first *Dunciad* was part of a concerted propaganda assault against Robert Walpole's Whig ministry and the financial revolution it stabilised. Although he was a keen participant in the stock and money markets, Pope never missed an opportunity to satirise the personal, social and political effects of the new scheme of things. From *The Rape of the Lock* onwards, these satirical themes are a constant in his work.

In 1731, Pope published his "Epistle to Burlington," on the subject of architecture, the first of four poems which would later be grouped under the title *Moral Essays* (1731–35). In the epistle, Pope ridiculed the bad taste of the aristocrat "Timon." Pope's enemies claimed he was attacking

the Duke of Chandos and his estate, Cannons. Though the charge was untrue, it did Pope a great deal of damage.

An Essay on Man is a philosophical poem, written in heroic couplets and published between 1732 and 1734. Pope intended this poem to be the centrepiece of a proposed system of ethics that was to be put forth in poetic form. It was a piece of work that Pope intended to make into a larger work; however, he did not live to complete it.[

The poem is an attempt to "vindicate the ways of God to Man", a variation on Milton's attempt in *Paradise Lost* to "justify the ways of God to Man" (1.26). It challenges as prideful an anthropocentric world-view. The poem is not solely Christian, however; it makes an assumption that man has fallen and must seek his own salvation.

It consists of four epistles that are addressed to Lord Bolingbroke. Pope presents an idea on his view of the Universe; he says that no matter how imperfect, complex, inscrutable and disturbing the Universe appears to be, it functions in a rational fashion according to the natural laws. The natural laws consider the Universe as a whole a perfect work of God. To humans, it appears to be evil and imperfect in many ways. Pope points out that this is due to our limited mindset and limited intellectual capacity. Pope gets the message across that humans must accept their position in the "Great Chain of Being" which is at a middle stage between the angels and the beasts of the world. If we are able to accomplish this then we potentially could lead happy and virtuous lives.

The poem is an affirmative poem of faith: life seems to be chaotic and confusing to man when he is in the center of it, but according to Pope it

is really divinely ordered. In Pope's world, God exists and is what he centers the Universe around in order to have an ordered structure. The limited intelligence of man can only take in tiny portions of this order and can experience only partial truths, hence man must rely on hope which then leads into faith. Man must be aware of his existence in the Universe and what he brings to it, in terms of riches, power, and fame. It is man's duty to strive to be good regardless of other situations: this is the message Pope is trying to get across to the reader.

The four epistles of the *Essay on Man* (1733) were also intimately connected with passing controversies. They belong to the same intellectual movement with Butler's *Analogy* — the effort of the 18th century to put religion on a rational basis. But Pope was not a thinker like Butler. The subject was suggested to him by Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, who had returned from exile in 1723, and was a fellow-member of the Scriblerus Club. Bolingbroke is said — and the statement is supported by the contents of his posthumous works — to have furnished most of the arguments. Pope's contribution to the controversy consisted in brilliant epigram and illustration. In this didactic work, as in his *Essay on Criticism*, he put together on a sufficiently simple plan a series of happy sayings, separately elaborated, picking up the thoughts as he found them in miscellaneous reading and conversation, and trying only to fit them with perfect expression. His readers were too dazzled by the verse to be severely critical of the sense. Pope himself had not comprehended the drift of the arguments he had adopted from Bolingbroke, and was alarmed when he found that his poem was generally interpreted as an apology for the free-thinkers. Warburton is

said to have qualified its doctrines as "rank atheism," and asserted that it was put together from the "worst passages of the worst authors." The essay was soon translated into the chief European languages, and in 1737 its orthodoxy was assailed by a Swiss professor, Jean Pierre de Crousaz, in *an Examen de l'essay de M. Pope sur l'homme*. Warburton now saw fit to revise his opinion of Pope's abilities and principles — for what reason does not appear. In any case he now became as enthusiastic in his praise of Pope's orthodoxy and his genius as he had before been scornful, and proceeded to employ his unrivalled powers of sophistry in a defence of the orthodoxy of the conflicting and inconsequent positions adopted in the *Essay on Man*. Pope was wise enough to accept with all gratitude an ally who was so useful a friend and so dangerous an enemy, and from that time onward Warburton was the authorized commentator of his works.

10.4 LATER LIFE AND WORKS OF ALEXANDER POPE

The death of Alexander Pope from *Museus*, a threnody by William Mason. Diana holds the dying Pope, and John Milton, Edmund Spenser, and Geoffrey Chaucer prepare to welcome him to heaven.

The *Imitations of Horace* followed (1733–38). These were written in the popular Augustan form of the "imitation" of a classical poet, not so much a translation of his works as an updating with contemporary references. Pope used the model of Horace to satirise life under George II, especially what he regarded as the widespread corruption tainting the country under Walpole's influence and the poor quality of the court's artistic taste.

Pope also added a wholly original poem, *Epistle to Doctor Arbuthnot*, as an introduction to the "Imitations". It reviews his own literary career and includes the famous portraits of Lord Hervey ("Sporus") and Addison ("Atticus"). In 1738 he wrote the *Universal Prayer*.

After 1738, Pope wrote little. He toyed with the idea of composing a patriotic epic in blank verse called *Brutus*, but only the opening lines survive. His major work in these years was revising and expanding his masterpiece *The Dunciad*. Book Four appeared in 1742, and a complete revision of the whole poem in the following year. In this version, Pope replaced the "hero" Lewis Theobald with the Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber, as "king of dunces". However, the real focus of the revised poem is Walpole and all his works. By now Pope's health, which had never been good, was failing. When told by his physician, on the morning of his death, that he was better, Pope replied: "Here am I, dying of a hundred good symptoms." He died in his villa surrounded by friends on 30 May 1744, about eleven o'clock at night. On the previous day, 29 May 1744, Pope had called for a priest and received the Last Rites of the Roman Catholic Church. He was buried in the nave of St Mary's Church, Twickenham.

Translations and editions

Translation of the *Iliad*

Pope had been fascinated by Homer since childhood. In 1713, he announced his plans to publish a translation of the *Iliad*. The work would be available by subscription, with one volume appearing every year over the course of six years. Pope secured a revolutionary deal with the publisher Bernard Lintot, which earned him two hundred guineas (£210) a volume, equivalent to about £30,700 in 2019, a vast sum at the time.

His translation of the *Iliad* appeared between 1715 and 1720. It was acclaimed by Samuel Johnson as "a performance which no age or nation could hope to equal" (although the classical scholar Richard

Bentley wrote: "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer.").

Translation of the *Odyssey*

Encouraged by the success of the *Iliad*, Pope published a translation of the *Odyssey* in 1726 with the help of William Broome and Elijah Fenton. Broome translated eight books (2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, 18, 23), Fenton four (1, 4, 19, 20) and Pope the remaining 12; Broome provided the annotations. Pope attempted to conceal the extent of the collaborationbut the secret leaked out. It did some damage to Pope's reputation for a time, but not to his profits. Leslie Stephen considered Pope's portion of the *Odyssey* inferior to his version of the *Iliad*, given that Pope had put more effort into the earlier work—to which, in any case, his style was better suited

Translations of Homer

Pope also engaged in poetic imitations and translations. His *Messiah* (1712) was an imitation of Virgil (70–19 B.C.E.). He also did a version of Geoffrey Chaucer's (1342–1400) poetry in the English of Pope's day. But it was Pope's versions of Homer (c. 700 B.C.E.) that were his greatest achievement as a translator.

Pope undertook the translation of Homer's *Iliad* because he needed money. The interest earned from his father's annuities (money from investments) had dropped sharply. The translation occupied him until 1720. It was a great financial success, making Pope independent of the customary forms of literary patronage (support from wealthy people), and it was highly praised by critics.

From the time parts of *Iliad* began to appear, Pope became the victim of numerous pamphlet attacks on his person, politics, and religion. In 1716 an increased land tax on Roman Catholics forced the Popes to sell their place at Binfield and to settle at Chiswick. The next year Pope's father died, and in 1719 the poet's increased wealth enabled him to move with his mother to Twickenham.

From 1725 to 1726 Pope was engaged in a version of *Odyssey*. He worked with two other translators, William Broome and Elijah Fenton. They completed half of the translation between them. It was Pope's name, however, that sold the work, and he naturally received the lion's share (biggest part) of the profits.

In this period, Pope was employed by publisher Jacob Tonson to produce an opulent new edition of Shakespeare. When it appeared in 1725, this edition silently "regularised" Shakespeare's metre and rewrote his verse in a number of places. Pope also demoted about 1,560 lines of Shakespearean material to footnotes, arguing that they were so "excessively bad" that Shakespeare could never have written them. (Other lines were excluded from the edition altogether.) In 1726, lawyer, poet and pantomime deviser Lewis Theobald published a scathing pamphlet called *Shakespeare Restored*, which catalogued the errors in Pope's work and suggested a number of revisions to the text.

The second edition of Pope's *Shakespeare* appeared in 1728. Aside from making some minor revisions to the preface, it seems that Pope had little to do with it. Most later 18th-century editors of Shakespeare dismissed Pope's creatively motivated approach to textual criticism. Pope's preface continued to be highly rated. It was suggested that Shakespeare's texts

were thoroughly contaminated by actors' interpolations and they would influence editors for most of the 18th century.

By the mid-eighteenth century, new fashions in poetry emerged. A decade after Pope's death, Joseph Warton claimed that Pope's style of poetry was not the most excellent form of the art. The Romantic movement that rose to prominence in early 19th-century England was more ambivalent towards his work. Though Lord Byron identified Pope as one of his chief influences (believing his scathing satire of contemporary English literature *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* to be a continuance of Pope's tradition), William Wordsworth found Pope's style fundamentally too decadent to be a representation of the human condition. George Gilfillan in his study of 1856 described Pope's talent as "a rose peering into the summer air, fine, rather than powerful".

In the 20th century, Pope's reputation was revived. Pope's work was, of course, full of references to the people and places of his time, and these aided people's understanding of the past. The postwar period stressed the power of Pope's poetry, recognising that Pope's immersion in Christian and Biblical culture lent depth to his poetry. For example, Maynard Mack, a Pope scholar of the mid-to-late 20th century, argued that Pope's moral vision demanded as much respect as his technical excellence. Between 1953 and 1967 the definitive Twickenham edition of Pope's poems was published in ten volumes, including an index volume.

The translation of Homer had established Pope's reputation with his contemporaries, and has endangered it ever since it was challenged. Opinions have varied on the purely literary merits of the poem, but with

regard to it as a translation few have differed from Bentley's criticism, "A fine poem, Mr Pope, but you must not call it Homer." His collaboration with Broome and Fenton [4] involved him in a series of recriminations. Broome was weak enough to sign a note at the end of the work understating the extent of Fenton's assistance as well as his own, and ascribing the merit of their translation, reduced to less than half its real proportions, to a regular revision and correction — mostly imaginary — at Pope's hands. These falsehoods were deemed necessary by Pope to protect himself against possible protests from the subscribers. In 1722 he edited the poems of Thomas Parnell, and in 1725 made a considerable sum by an unsatisfactory edition of Shakespeare, in which he had the assistance of Fenton and Gay.

In 1717 his father died, and he appears to have turned to the Blounts for sympathy in what was to him a very serious bereavement. He had early made the acquaintance of Martha and Teresa Blount, both of them intimately connected with his domestic history. Their home was at Mapledurham, near Reading, but Pope probably first met them at the house of his neighbour, Mr Englefield of Whiteknights, who was their grandfather. He begun to correspond with Martha Blount in 1712, and after 1717 the letters are much more serious in tone. He quarrelled with Teresa, who had apparently injured or prevented his suit to her sister; and although, after her father's death in 1718, he paid her an annuity, he seems to have regarded her as one of his most dangerous enemies. His friendship with Martha lasted all his life. So long as his mother lived he was unwearying in his attendance on her, but after her death in 1733 his association with Martha Blount was more constant. In defiance of the

scandal-mongers, they paid visits together at the houses of common friends, and at Twickenham she spent part of each day with him. His earlier attachment to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was apparently a more or less literary passion, which perished under Lady Mary's ridicule.

The year 1725 may be taken as the beginning of the third period of Pope's career, when he made his fame as a moralist and a satirist. It may be doubted whether Pope had the staying power necessary for the composition of a great imaginative work, whether his crazy constitution would have held together through the strain. He toyed with the idea of writing a grand epic. He told Spence that he had it all in his head, and gave him a vague (and it must be admitted not very promising) sketch of the subject and plan of it. But he never put any of it on paper. He shrank as with instinctive repulsion from the stress and strain of complicated designs. Even his prolonged task of translating weighed heavily on his spirits, and this was a much less formidable effort than creating an epic. He turned rather to designs that could be accomplished in detail, works of which the parts could be separately laboured at and put together with patient care, into which happy thoughts could be fitted that had been struck out at odd moments and in ordinary levels of feeling. Edward Young's satire, *The Universal Passion*, had just appeared, and been received with more enthusiasm than any thing published since Pope's own early successes. This alone would have been powerful inducement to Pope's emulous temper. Swift was finishing *Gulliver's Travels*, and came over to England in 1726. The survivors of the Scriblerus Club — Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, and Gay — resumed their old amusement of parodying and otherwise ridiculing bad writers, especially

bad writers in the Whig interest. Two volumes of their *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* were published in 1727. A third volume appeared in 1728, and a fourth was added in 1732. According to Pope's own history of the *Dunciad, an Heroic Poem in Three Books*, which first appeared on the 28th of May 1728, the idea of it grew out of this. Among the *Miscellanies* was a "Treatise of the Bathos or the Art of Sinking in Poetry," in which poets were classified, with illustrations, according to their eminence in the various arts of debasing instead of elevating their subject. No names were mentioned, but the specimens of bathos were assigned to various letters of the alphabet, which, the authors boldly asserted, were taken at random. But no sooner was the treatise published than the scribblers proceeded to take the letters to themselves, and in revenge to fill the newspapers with the most abusive falsehoods and scurrilities they could devise. This gave Pope the opportunity he had hoped for, and provided him with an excuse for the personalities of the *Dunciad*, which had been in his mind as early as 1720. Among the most prominent objects of his satire were Lewis Theobald, Colley Cibber, John Dennis, Richard Bentley, Aaron Hill and Bernard Lintot, who, in spite of his former relations with Pope, was now classed with the piratical Edmund Curll.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Discuss in short the Later life of Alexandra Pope.

Answer

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Q2. Analyze the kind of Poetry created by Alexandra Pope.

Answer

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10.6 LET'S SUM UP

He died on the 30th of May 1744, and he was buried in the parish church of Twickenham. He left the income from his property to Martha Blount till her death, after which it was to go to his half-sister Magdalen Rackett and her children. His unpublished MSS. were left at the discretion of Lord Bolingbroke, and his copyrights to Warburton.

If we are to judge Pope, whether as a man or as a poet, with human fairness, and not merely by comparison with standards of abstract perfection, there are two features of his times that must be kept steadily in view — the character of political strife in those days and the political relations of men of letters. As long as the succession to the Crown was doubtful, and political failure might mean loss of property, banishment or death, politicians, playing for higher stakes, played more fiercely and unscrupulously than in modern days, and there was no controlling force of public opinion to keep them within the bounds of common honesty. Hence the age of Queen Anne is preeminently an age of intrigue. The government was almost as unsettled as in the early days of personal

monarchy, and there was this difference — that it was policy rather than force upon which men depended for keeping their position. Secondly, men of letters were admitted to the inner circles of intrigue as they had never been before and as they have never been since. A generation later Walpole defied them, and paid the rougher instruments that he considered sufficient for his purpose in solid coin of the realm; but Queen Anne's statesmen, whether from difference of tastes or difference of policy, paid their principal literary champions with social privileges and honourable public appointments. Hence men of letters were directly infected by the low political morality of the unsettled time. And the character of their poetry also suffered. The most prominent defects of the age — the lack of high and sustained imagination, the genteel liking for "nature to advantage dressed," the incessant striving after wit — were fostered, if not generated, by the social atmosphere.

Pope's own ruling passion was the love of fame, and he had no scruples where this was concerned. His vanity and his childish love of intrigue are seen at their worst in his petty manoeuvres to secure the publication of his letters during his lifetime. These intricate proceedings were unravelled with great patience and ingenuity by Charles Wentworth Dilke, when the false picture of his relations with his contemporaries, which Pope had imposed on the public, had been practically accepted for a century. Elizabeth Thomas, the mistress of Henry Cromwell, had sold Pope's early letters to Henry Cromwell to the bookseller Curll for ten guineas. These were published in Curll's *Miscellanea* in 1726 (dated 1727), and had considerable success. This surreptitious publication seems to have suggested to Pope the desirability of publishing his own

correspondence, which he immediately began to collect from various friends on the plea of preventing a similar clandestine transaction. The publication by Wycherley's executors of a posthumous volume of the dramatist's prose and verse furnished Pope with an excuse for the appearance of his own correspondence with Wycherley, which was accompanied by a series of unnecessary deceptions. After manipulating his correspondence so as to place his own character in the best light, he deposited a copy in the library of Edward, second earl of Oxford, and then he had it printed.

10.6 KEYWORDS

- **Chide** (v): scorn, rebuke, reprove

Example: "Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?" (*King Lear* 1.3)

Goneril, one of Lear's daughters, asks her servant if her father hit him for chiding, or scorning, his fool. One that is familiar with Shakespeare will notice this word in several of his plays. The word most nearly means to criticize someone harshly.

- **Doth**: does/**Dost**: did

Example: "For nought so vile that on the earth doth live But to the earth some special good doth give." (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.3)

Doth clearly translates to the word does, and in the lines above, the word is used to express what plants, herbs, and stones give to the world.

- **Heavy** (adj.): depressed; weighed down with sadness

Example: "Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast," (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.1)

Romeo is telling his cousin Benvolio that his sadness, his depression, is weighing him down. This word used in serious situations and emotional moments.

- **Hie** (v.): go

Example: "Hie you to horse." (*Macbeth* 3.1)

In this scene, Macbeth tells Banquo to go to his horse.

10.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Discuss how you define Alexandra pope as beautiful poet.
- Give the detail history about the literary work of Alexandra pope
- Discuss the Poetry dialects of the Alexandra Pope
- What was the important point of discussions of early age of Alexandra Pope.

10.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Alexander Pope at the Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive (ECPA)
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10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 10.2

Answer 2 : Check Section 10.3

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 10.5

Answer 2 : Check Section 10.4

UNIT - 11: POPE- ESSAY ON MAN

STRUCTURE

11.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the An Essay of Man .

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- **Introduction of An Essay on Man**
- **Pope's Poems and Prose Summary and Analysis of An Essay on Man: Epistle I**

- **Pope's Poems and Prose Summary and Analysis of An Essay on Man: Epistle II**
- **Pope's Poems and Prose Summary and Analysis of An Essay on Man: Epistle III**

Pope's Poems and Prose Summary and Analysis of An Essay on Man: Epistle IV

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The Essay on Man is a philosophical poem, written, characteristically, in heroic couplets, and published between 1732 and 1734. Pope intended it as the centerpiece of a proposed system of ethics to be put forth in poetic form: it is in fact a fragment of a larger work which Pope planned but did not live to complete. It is an attempt to justify, as Milton had attempted to vindicate, the ways of God to Man, and a warning that man himself is not, as, in his pride, he seems to believe, the center of all things. Though not explicitly Christian, the *Essay* makes the implicit assumption that man is fallen and unregenerate, and that he must seek his own salvation.

The "Essay" consists of four epistles, addressed to Lord Bolingbroke, and derived, to some extent, from some of Bolingbroke's own fragmentary philosophical writings, as well as from ideas expressed by the deistic third Earl of Shaftesbury. Pope sets out to demonstrate that no matter how imperfect, complex, inscrutable, and disturbingly full of evil the Universe may appear to be, it does function in a rational fashion, according to natural laws; and is, in fact, considered as a whole, a perfect work of God. It appears imperfect to us only because our perceptions are limited by our feeble moral and intellectual capacity. His conclusion is

that we must learn to accept our position in the Great Chain of Being — a "middle state," below that of the angels but above that of the beasts — in which we can, at least potentially, lead happy and virtuous lives.

Epistle I concerns itself with the nature of man and with his place in the universe; Epistle II, with man as an individual; Epistle III, with man in relation to human society, to the political and social hierarchies; and Epistle IV, with man's pursuit of happiness in this world. An Essay on Man was a controversial work in Pope's day, praised by some and criticized by others, primarily because it appeared to contemporary critics that its emphasis, in spite of its themes, was primarily poetic and not, strictly speaking, philosophical in any really coherent sense: Dr. Johnson, never one to mince words, and possessed, in any case, of views upon the subject which differed materially from those which Pope had set forth, noted dryly (in what is surely one of the most back-handed literary compliments of all time) that "Never were penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised." It is a subtler work, however, than perhaps Johnson realized: G. Wilson Knight has made the perceptive comment that the poem is not a "static scheme" but a "living organism," (like Twickenham) and that it must be understood as such.

Considered as a whole, the *Essay on Man* is an affirmative poem of faith: life seems chaotic and patternless to man when he is in the midst of it, but is in fact a coherent portion of a divinely ordered plan. In Pope's world God exists, and he is benificent: his universe is an ordered place. The limited intellect of man can perceive only a tiny portion of this order, and can experience only partial truths, and hence must rely on hope, which leads to faith

11.2 PREFACE

An Essay on Man, philosophical essay written in heroic couplets of iambic pentameter by Alexander Pope, published in 1733–34. It was conceived as part of a larger work that Pope never completed.

The poem consists of four epistles. The first epistle surveys relations between humans and the universe; the second discusses humans as individuals. The third addresses the relationship between the individual and society, and the fourth questions the potential of the individual for happiness. *An Essay on Man* describes the order of the universe in terms of a hierarchy, or chain, of being. By virtue of their ability to reason, humans are placed above animals and plants in this hierarchy.

An Essay on Man is a poem published by Alexander Pope in 1733–1734.[1][2][3] It is an effort to rationalize or rather "vindicate the ways of God to man" (l.16), a variation of John Milton's claim in the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*, that he will "justify the ways of God to men" (1.26). It is concerned with the natural order God has decreed for man. Because man cannot know God's purposes, he cannot complain about his position in the Great Chain of Being (ll.33-34) and must accept that "Whatever IS, is RIGHT" (l.292), a theme that was satirized by Voltaire in *Candide* (1759).More than any other work, it popularized optimistic philosophy throughout England and the rest of Europe.

Pope's *Essay on Man* and *Moral Epistles* were designed to be the parts of a system of ethics which he wanted to express in poetry. *Moral*

Epistles has been known under various other names including *Ethic Epistles* and *Moral Essays*.

On its publication, *An Essay on Man* received great admiration throughout Europe. Voltaire called it "the most beautiful, the most useful, the most sublime didactic poem ever written in any language".In 1756 Rousseau wrote to Voltaire admiring the poem and saying that it "softens my ills and brings me patience". Kant was fond of the poem and would recite long passages from it to his students.[

Later however, Voltaire renounced his admiration for Pope's and Leibniz's optimism and even wrote a novel, *Candide*, as a satire on their philosophy of ethics. Rousseau also critiqued the work, questioning "Pope's uncritical assumption that there must be an unbroken chain of being all the way from inanimate matter up to God."

The essay, written in heroic couplets, comprises four epistles. Pope began work on it in 1729, and had finished the first three by 1731. They appeared in early 1733, with the fourth epistle published the following year. The poem was originally published anonymously; Pope did not admit authorship until 1735.

11.3 POPE'S POEMS AND PROSE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF AN ESSAY ON MAN: EPISTLE I

Summary

The subtitle of the first epistle is “Of the Nature and State of Man, with Respect to the Universe,” and this section deals with man’s place in the

cosmos. Pope argues that to justify God's ways to man must necessarily be to justify His ways in relation to all other things. God rules over the whole universe and has no special favorites, not man nor any other creature. By nature, the universe is an order of "strong connexions, nice dependencies, / Gradations just" (30-1). This order is, more specifically, a hierarchy of the "Vast chain of being" in which all of God's creations have a place (237). Man's place in the chain is below the angels but above birds and beasts. Any deviation from this order would result in cosmic destruction. Because the universe is so highly ordered, chance, as man understands it, does not exist. Chance is rather "direction, which thou canst not see" (290). Those things that man sees as disparate or unrelated are all "but parts of one stupendous whole, / Whose body nature is, and God the soul" (267-8). Thus every element of the universe has complete perfection according to God's purpose. Pope concludes the first epistle with the statement "Whatever is, is right," meaning that all is for the best and that everything happens according to God's plan, even though man may not be able to comprehend it (294).

Here is a section-by-section explanation of the first epistle:

Introduction (1-16): The introduction begins with an address to Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, a friend of the poet from whose fragmentary philosophical writings Pope likely drew inspiration for *An Essay on Man*. Pope urges his friend to "leave all meaner things" and rather embark with Pope on his quest to "vindicate the ways of God to man (1, 16).

Section I (17-34): Section I argues that man can only understand the universe with regard to human systems and constructions because he is ignorant of the greater relationships between God's creations.

Section II (35-76): Section II states that man is imperfect but perfectly suited to his place within the hierarchy of creation according to the general order of things.

Section III (77-112): Section III demonstrates that man's happiness depends on both his ignorance of future events and on his hope for the future.

Section IV (113-30): Section IV claims that man's sin of pride—the attempt to gain more knowledge and pretend to greater perfection—is the root of man's error and misery. By putting himself in the place of God, judging perfection and justice, man acts impiously.

Section V (131-72): Section V depicts the absurdity of man's belief that he is the sole cause of the creation as well as his ridiculous expectation of perfection in the moral world that does not exist in the natural world.

Section VI (173-206): Section VI decries the unreasonableness of man's complaints against Providence; God is good, giving and taking equally. If man had the omniscience of God, he would be miserable: "The bliss of man [...] / Is, not to act of think beyond mankind" (189-90).

Section VII (207-32): Section VII shows that throughout the visible world, a universal order and gradation can be observed. This is particularly apparent in the hierarchy of earthly creatures and their

subordination to man. Pope refers specifically to the gradations of sense, instinct, thought, reflection, and reason. Reason is superior to all.

Section VIII (233-58): Section VIII indicates that if God's rules of order and subordination are broken, the whole of creation must be destroyed.

Section IX (259-80): Section IX illustrates the madness of the desire to subvert God's order.

Section X (281-94): Section X calls on man to submit to God's power. Absolute submission to God will ensure that man remains "Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r" (287). After all, "Whatever is, is right" (294).

Analysis

Pope's first epistle seems to endorse a sort of fatalism, in which all things are fated. Everything happens for the best, and man should not presume to question God's greater design, which he necessarily cannot understand because he is a part of it. He further does not possess the intellectual capability to comprehend God's order outside of his own experience. These arguments certainly support a fatalistic world view. According to Pope's thesis, everything that exists plays a role in the divine plan. God thus has a specific intention for every element of His creation, which suggests that all things are fated. Pope, however, was always greatly distressed by charges of fatalism. As a proponent of the doctrine of free will, Pope's personal opinions seem at odds with his philosophical conclusions in the first epistle. Reconciling Pope's own views with his fatalistic description of the universe represents an impossible task.

The first epistle of *An Essay on Man* is its most ambitious. Pope states that his task is to describe man's place in the "universal system" and to "vindicate the ways of God to man" (16). In the poem's prefatory address, Pope more specifically describes his intention to consider "man in the abstract, his Nature and his State, since, to prove any moral duty, to enforce any moral precept, or to examine the perfection of imperfection of any creature whatsoever, it is necessary first to know what condition and relation it is placed in, and what is the proper end and purpose of its being." Pope's stated purpose of the poem further problematizes any critical reading of the first epistle. According to Pope's own conclusions, man's limited intellect can comprehend only a small portion of God's order and likewise can have knowledge of only half-truths. It therefore seems the height of hubris to presume to justify God's ways to man. His own philosophical conclusions make this impossible. As a mere component part of God's design and a member of the hierarchical middle state, Pope exists within God's design and therefore cannot perceive the greater logic of God's order. To do so would bring only misery: "The bliss of man [...] / Is, not to act of think beyond mankind" (189-90).

Though Pope's philosophical ambitions result in a rather incoherent epistle, the poem demonstrates a masterful use of the heroic couplet. Some of the most quoted lines from Pope's works actually appear in this poem. For example, the quotation "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: / Man never is, but always to be blest" appears in the problematic first epistle (95-6). Pope's skill with verse thus far outweighs his philosophical aspirations, and it is fortunate that he chose to write in

verse rather than prose. Indeed, eighteenth-century critics saw *An Essay on Man* as a primarily poetic work despite its philosophical themes.

An Essay on Man consists of four **epistles**, which is a term that is historically used to describe formal letters directed to a specific person. The first epistle looks at man's relation to the universe in order to present the concept of harmony that is referred to throughout the rest of the poem. Pope explains that human beings cannot come to fully understand their purpose in life by using only their mental faculties. Although humanity is at the top of the fixed hierarchy of the natural world, there are many things we cannot know, and so we must not attempt to become godlike. Rather, human beings must accept that their existence is the result of a perfect creator who created everything as perfectly as it can possibly be.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give Pope's Analysis of An Essay on Man: Epistle I .

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Q2. Analyze in your words the preface on The Essay on Man.

Answer

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11.4 POPE'S POEMS AND PROSE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF AN ESSAY ON MAN: EPISTLE II

SUMMARY

The subtitle of the second epistle is "Of the Nature and State of Man, with Respect to Himself as an Individual" and treats on the relationship between the individual and God's greater design.

Here is a section-by-section explanation of the second epistle:

Section I (1-52): Section I argues that man should not pry into God's affairs but rather study himself, especially his nature, powers, limits, and frailties.

Section II (53-92): Section II shows that the two principles of man are self-love and reason. Self-love is the stronger of the two, but their ultimate goal is the same.

Section III (93-202): Section III describes the modes of self-love (i.e., the passions) and their function. Pope then describes the ruling passion and its potency. The ruling passion works to provide man with direction and defines man's nature and virtue.

Section IV (203-16): Section IV indicates that virtue and vice are combined in man's nature and that the two, while distinct, often mix.

Section V (217-30): Section V illustrates the evils of vice and explains how easily man is drawn to it.

Section VI (231-294): Section VI asserts that man's passions and imperfections are simply designed to suit God's purposes. The passions and imperfections are distributed to all individuals of each order of men in all societies. They guide man in every state and at every age of life.

ANALYSIS

The second epistle adds to the interpretive challenges presented in the first epistle. At its outset, Pope commands man to "Know then thyself," an adage that misdescribes his argument (1). Although he actually intends for man to better understand his place in the universe, the classical meaning of "Know thyself" is that man should look inwards for truth rather than outwards. Having spent most of the first epistle describing man's relationship to God as well as his fellow creatures, Pope's true meaning of the phrase is clear. He then confuses the issue by endeavoring to convince man to avoid the presumptuousness of studying God's creation through natural science. Science has given man the tools to better understand God's creation, but its intoxicating power has caused man to imitate God. It seems that man must look outwards to gain any understanding of his divine purpose but avoid excessive analysis of what he sees. To do so would be to assume the role of God.

The second epistle abruptly turns to focus on the principles that guide human action. The rest of this section focuses largely on "self-love," an eighteenth-century term for self-maintenance and fulfillment. It was common during Pope's lifetime to view the passions as the force

determining human action. Typically instinctual, the immediate object of the passions was seen as pleasure. According to Pope's philosophy, each man has a "ruling passion" that subordinates the others. In contrast with the accepted eighteenth-century views of the passions, Pope's doctrine of the "ruling passion" is quite original. It seems clear that with this idea, Pope tries to explain why certain individual behave in distinct ways, seemingly governed by a particular desire. He does not, however, make this explicit in the poem.

Pope's discussion of the passions shows that "self-love" and "reason" are not opposing principles. Reason's role, it seems, is to regulate human behavior while self-love originates it. In another sense, self-love and the passions dictate the short term while reason shapes the long term.

11.5 POPE'S POEMS AND PROSE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF AN ESSAY ON MAN: EPISTLE III

Summary

The subtitle of the third epistle is "Of the Nature and State of Man, with Respect to Society," and this section discusses man's relation to family, government, and religion. Pope states that love connects the universe and that all creatures exchange services in a symbiotic relationship. Individual instances of human tyranny, however, offend nature. Instinct and reason are the guiding principles of man's behavior and have dictated man's trajectory since creation.

Here is a section-by-section explanation of the third epistle:

Introduction (1-6): The introduction simply reiterates the points Pope made in the first two epistles.

Section I (7-78): Section I suggests that the whole universe is one system of society. Nothing is made wholly for the benefit to itself, nor wholly for the benefit of others. Instead, everything is bound together in a neighboring embrace and all "parts relate to whole" (21). Those who fail to perform the role that nature has ordained will not be aided by society.

Section II (79-108): Section II states that all creatures are given either reason or instinct, whichever is best suited to the individual. Reason or instinct operates all society in both man and the animals.

Section III (109-46): Section III first demonstrates how far society can be carried by instinct, then shows how much farther society can be carried by reason. In society, creatures are instinctively united by mutual need. Reason extends that instinct into emotional connection.

Section IV (147-98): Section IV discusses the state of man at the time of creation, in particular the harmony between all elements of society. Initially bound by instinct, man looked to other creatures for instruction on how to act and develop their own forms of society, using reason to teach themselves.

Section V (199-214): Section V explains the development of political societies, especially the origins of monarchy and patriarchal government.

Section VI (215-318): Section VI examines the roles of religion and government in society. According to Pope's argument, the origin of both true religion and government is the principle of love: faith is the love of

God and government is the love of man. By contrast, superstition and tyranny both originate from the same principle of fear. Thus self-love, through just and unjust means, can either drive man's ambition or restrain him. Pope then describes man's efforts to restore true religion and government on their first principle. Both religion and government take many forms, but their ultimate ends are to govern the soul and to govern society.

Analysis

The third epistle treats on man's social contract with family, government, and religion, and Pope focuses on the bonds that unite man with others. While the second epistle shows that self-love governs man's actions, love governs the universe, binding its disparate elements. Modern readers might be inclined to interpret this to mean erotic or familial love, but Pope actually refers to a sort of contractual love, which forms a building-block of God's design and the chain of being. Atoms, for example, attract and are attracted to each other, which ensures that they remain in their proper place. Likewise, dirt sustains the growth of plants, and when a plant dies, it returns to dirt to nourish its fellow plants. Man's grass and flowers provide food for antelope while antelope also nourish man. All parts in the circle of life thus "relate to whole," and love "connects each being, greatest with the least / Made beast in aid of man, and man of best; / All serv'd, all serving: nothing stands alone" (21, 23-5). Love provides a convenient way for Pope to describe symbiosis in the relationship between God's creatures, indicative of God's greater design.

Pope goes on to discuss the effects that instinct and reason have on God's creation. All creatures are imbued with either instinct or reason, whichever is best suited to their nature. According to Pope's argument, instinct tends to characterize beasts while man serves reason. Those governed by instinct are largely complacent, needing no assistance from "pope or council" (84). By contrast, reason seems to result in more calculated behavior and these creatures must labor at happiness which instinct quickly secures. While these are hardly original observations, Pope implies that instinct is the work of God while reason is that of man. This conclusion accounts for the development of man. In man's infancy humans were governed by instinct. Man then learned various behaviors—ploughing from the mole, political arts from the bees, etc.—by copying animals, thus developing human reason.

Through observations of his fellow creatures, man began to build his own cities, demonstrating sociability through government and religion. Man's early societies were patriarchal, featuring mild and natural rulers. Everyone conducted themselves virtuously and celebrated God until patriarchs directed self-love towards personal ambition and priests perverted religious worship. It was not until man redirected self-love towards its natural sociability through restraint, namely "government and laws," that man formed a social contract, which established good government and laws by rational agreement for mutual security (272). Pope's conclusion, therefore, is that private good is best achieved by preventing a conflict with public good: "Thus God and nature link'd the general frame, / And bade self-love and social be the same" (317-8).

11.6 POPE'S POEMS AND PROSE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF AN ESSAY ON MAN: EPISTLE IV

Summary

The subtitle of the fourth epistle is "On the Nature and State of Man, with Respect to Happiness" and depicts man's various attempts to achieve true human happiness. Pope endeavors to prove that virtue alone can generate such happiness.

Here is a section-by-section explanation of the fourth epistle:

Introduction (1-18): The introduction identifies happiness as man's ultimate aim and establishes man's search for happiness as the theme of the fourth epistle.

Section I (19-28): Section I enumerates the popular and philosophical false notions of happiness.

Section II (29-92): Section II suggests that happiness is man's end and that it can be attained by all. Happiness is therefore equal which means that it must also be social since, as Pope establishes in the third epistle, man is governed by general, not specific laws. Because happiness is social, it is necessary for the order, peace, and welfare of society. It cannot, however, be located in external goods since these can be unequal. God balances the happiness of mankind by the two passions of hope and fear.

Section III (93-110): Section III shows that the happiness of individuals is in accordance with God's greater plan and is consistent with the

equality of man. Man, however, might question why a virtuous man dies while a sinful man lives.

Section IV (111-30): Section IV answers man's concerns in Section III. Pope chastises man's presumption to question the ways of God; it is absurd to expect God to alter his laws to favor particular individuals.

Section V (131-48): Section V demonstrates that man cannot judge the goodness and righteousness of other men. This is the purview of God alone. Whichever men are most good and righteous must be the happiest.

Section VI (149-308): Section VI elucidates the conflict between vice and virtue. Though sometimes vice seems to prevail, it is part of God's order; man should be content to be virtuous. External goods, for example, are not the proper rewards for virtue and are often inconsistent with or destructive of virtue. All the riches, honors, nobility, greatness, fame, and superior talents cannot make man happy without likewise having virtue.

Section VII (309-98): Section VII deals specifically with the relationship between virtue and happiness. Virtue can only provide a happiness which seeks to rise above the individual and embrace the universal. Happiness thus born will exist eternally. This perfection of virtue and happiness conforms to God's order and represents the ultimate purpose of mankind.

Analysis

Despite the significant interpretive problems of the first two epistles, the fourth epistle provides an appropriate conclusion to *An Essay on*

Man, knitting the poem's arguments together and ostensibly demonstrating man's relation to and purpose in the universe. According to Pope's argument, happiness is man's ultimate goal and can only be attained through virtuous behavior. Of course, as he indicates earlier in the poem, the lines between virtue and vice are often blurred. It is therefore important to assign an appropriate reward for virtue: "What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy, / The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy, / Is virtue's prize: a better would you fix? / Then give humility a coach and six" (167-70). Pope shows this reward to be a composed serenity free of earthly desires. Indeed, such serenity cannot derive from riches or fame, material goods or currencies which usually serve as an impediment to virtue anyway.

The "soul's calm sunshine" that Pope describes allows man to transcend his earthly prison and look "through nature up to nature's God," allowing man to pursue "that chain which links th'immense design, / Joins heav'n and earth, and mortal and divine" (332). Serenity the thus the natural end of judicious self-love: "God loves from whole to parts; but human soul / Must rise from individual to the whole. / Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake" (261-3). This is not, of course, the momentary pleasure that basic self-love and the passions provide but rather the happiness that derives from knowing one is part of a divine plan and accepting one's place and role in it. In other words, trust God and all will be well because "Whatever is, is right" (I.294).

Although the fourth epistle provides a successful conclusion to Pope's ambitious philosophical project, this section is not without its problems. Perhaps most distressing is Pope's argument in Section IV, which

dismisses man's concern that too often virtue appears to be punished while vice is rewarded. While this is addressed to an extent in Pope's discussion of material goods, Pope also asserts that God acts by general and not specific laws which apply to the whole, not individual parts. This suggests that all men are treated exactly equally by God. Experience obviously contradicts this assertion, but so does Pope himself. He declares that to satisfy God's hierarchical order as well as man's social order, there must be differences of wealth and rank. He claims that equality of wealth is opposed to God's ways because it would breed discontent among those who deserve greater wealth and status. Though Pope qualifies this by suggesting redress in Heaven, this disparity of wealth and rank—a part of reality—undermine Pope's thesis.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Discuss in brief on An Essay on Man: Epistle III

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Q2. Give short Summary on An Essay on Man: Epistle IV

Answer

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11.7 LET'S SUM UP

The work that more than any other popularized the optimistic philosophy, not only in England but throughout Europe, was Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-34), a rationalistic effort to justify the ways of God to man philosophically. As has been stated in the introduction, Voltaire had become well acquainted with the English poet during his stay of more than two years in England, and the two had corresponded with each other with a fair degree of regularity when Voltaire returned to the Continent.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast' (I.95) writes Alexander Pope in his famous poem *An Essay on Man.* There's a good chance you've heard this quote before, which illustrates just how influential this work is. In addition to its impressive breadth and innovative use of poetic forms, ***An Essay on Man*** is known for its insightful wisdom. In fact, Pope has become one of the most quoted English poets, not only because of the beauty of his work, but also because of the wise insight that pervades much of his poetry.

To understand the poem and the impulse behind it, it's important to look at the ideas that were popular when Pope was writing. Pope lived from 1688 to 1744 and was considered one of the most definitive and influential voices of the first half of the 18th century. His work was part of the **Neoclassical movement** that reflected the ideals of the Enlightenment era. **The Enlightenment** began in the middle of the 17th century and lasted until the end of the 18th century. The Enlightenment emphasized the glory of reason and science and reflected the ideal that man could understand the world around him. This hope for

understanding and outlining the human condition is at the heart of *An Essay on Man.*

In the poem, Pope attempts to 'vindicate' God's ways to man, a task that clearly echoes John Milton's famous claim in the epic poem ***Paradise Lost***, which was first published in 1667 and told the story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. However, unlike Milton's *Paradise Lost, An Essay on Man* is not specifically Christian and instead attempts to identify an ethical system that applies to humanity in a general sense. When Pope began the poem, he originally intended to make it much longer than the final version became, which further demonstrates just how idealistic he was. The poem was dedicated to **Lord Bolingbroke**, a political figure with whom Pope had many philosophical conversations and who likely helped Pope come to believe in many of the ideas he presents in *An Essay on Man.*

Voltaire could have been called a fervent admirer of Pope. He hailed the *Essay of Criticism* as superior to Horace, and he described the *Rape of the Lock* as better than *Lutrin.* When the *Essay on Man* was published, Voltaire sent a copy to the Norman abbot Du Resnol and may possibly have helped the abbot prepare the first French translation, which was so well received. The very title of his *Discours en vers sur l'homme* (1738) indicates the extent Voltaire was influenced by Pope. It has been pointed out that at times, he does little more than echo the same thoughts expressed by the English poet. Even as late as 1756, the year in which he published his poem on the destruction of Lisbon, he lauded the author of *Essay on Man.* In the edition of *Lettres philosophiques* published in that year, he wrote: "The *Essay on Man* appears to me to be the most

beautiful didactic poem, the most useful, the most sublime that has ever been composed in any language." Perhaps this is no more than another illustration of how Voltaire could vacillate in his attitude as he struggled with the problems posed by the optimistic philosophy in its relation to actual experience. For in the Lisbon poem and in *Candide*, he picked up Pope's recurring phrase "Whatever is, is right" and made mockery of it: *"Tout est bien"* in a world filled with misery!

Pope denied that he was indebted to Leibnitz for the ideas that inform his poem, and his word may be accepted. Those ideas were first set forth in England by Anthony Ashley Cowper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1731). They pervade all his works but especially the *Moralist.* Indeed, several lines in the *Essay on Man,* particularly in the first Epistle, are simply statements from the *Moralist* done in verse. Although the question is unsettled and probably will remain so, it is generally believed that Pope was indoctrinated by having read the letters that were prepared for him by Bolingbroke and that provided an exegesis of Shaftesbury's philosophy. The main tenet of this system of natural theology was that one God, all-wise and all-merciful, governed the world providentially for the best. Most important for Shaftesbury was the principle of Harmony and Balance, which he based not on reason but on the general ground of good taste. Believing that God's most characteristic attribute was benevolence, Shaftesbury provided an emphatic endorsement of providentialism.

Following are the major ideas in *Essay on Man:* (1) a God of infinite wisdom exists; (2) He created a world that is the best of all possible ones; (3) the plenum, or all-embracing whole of the universe, is real and

hierarchical; (4) authentic good is that of the whole, not of isolated parts; (5) self-love and social love both motivate humans' conduct; (6) virtue is attainable; (7) "One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT." Partial evil, according to Pope, contributes to the universal good. "God sends not ill, if rightly understood." According to this principle, vices, themselves to be deplored, may lead to virtues. For example, motivated by envy, a person may develop courage and wish to emulate the accomplishments of another; and the avaricious person may attain the virtue of prudence. One can easily understand why, from the beginning, many felt that Pope had depended on Leibnitz.

11.8 KEYWORDS

- **Hither** (adv.): here, to go toward

Example: "Fetch Desdemona hither" (*Othello* 1.3)

The Duke requests that the servants go get his daughter, Desdemona, and bring her to him at once.

- **Knave** (n): rascal, scoundrel, rogue

Example: "A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats." (*King Lear* 2.2)

Kent is in disguise yelling these terrible insults at Goneril's servant Oswald. By doing so he defends the King but causes more problems for himself.

- **Morrow** (n): morning

Example: This word is quite common throughout Shakespeare's work, typically used as "Good Morrow," signifying one saying good morning.

11.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- What are the neoclassical elements or aspects that Alexander Pope used in "An Essay on Man"?
- In "An Essay on Man," why did Pope say blindness to the people is kindly green?
- Give your views about the language of "An Essay on Man" by Alexander Pope.
- What does Alexander Pope mock in his poem *An Essay on Man*, and what techniques does he use?

11.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- ^ Candide, or Optimism. Review of the Burton Raffel translation by the Yale UP.
- ^ Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques*, amended 1756 edition, cited in the Appendix (p.147) of *Philosophical Letters (Letters Concerning the English Nation)*, Courier Dover

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- ^ Harry M Solomon: *The rape of the text: reading and misreading Pope's Essay on man*on Google Books
- ^ *Leo Damrosch (2005). Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius. HOughton Mifflin Company.*
- ^ In the first edition, this line reads "The only Science of Mankind is *Man*."
- *An Essay on Man* at the Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive (ECPA)
- Full text at Project Gutenberg
- An introduction to the poem from a Hartwicke College professor: [1]
- Pope- Essay on Man -complete text

11.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 1.2

Answer 2 : Check Section 1.3.2

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 1.8.1

Answer 2 : Check Section 1.11

UNIT - 12: POPE -ESSAY ON CRITICISM

STRUCTURE

12.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the An Essay on Criticism.

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- **Introduction of An Essay on Criticism.**
- **Summary of An Essay on Criticism.**
- **Analysis An Essay on Criticism.**

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Pope wrote "An Essay on Criticism" when he was 23; he was influenced by Quintillian, Aristotle, Horace's Ars Poetica, and Nicolas Boileau's L'Art Poëtique. Written in heroic couplets, the tone is straight-forward and conversational. It is a discussion of what good critics should do; however, in reading it one gleans much wisdom on the qualities poets

should strive for in their own work. In Part I of "An Essay on Criticism," Pope notes the lack of "true taste" in critics, stating: "'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none / Go just alike, yet each believes his own." Pope advocates knowing one's own artistic limits: "Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet, / And mark that point where sense and dullness meet." He stresses the order in nature and the value of the work of the "Ancients" of Greece, but also states that not all good work can be explained by rules: "Some beauties yet, no precepts can declare, / For there's a happiness as well as care."

In Part II, Pope lists the mistakes that critics make, as well as the defects in poems that some critics short-sightedly praise. He advocates looking at a whole piece of work, instead of being swayed by some of its showier or faulty parts: "As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit, / T' avoid great errors, must the less commit." He advises against too much ornamentation in writing, and against fancy style that communicates little of merit. In his description of versification, his lines enact the effects of clumsy writing: "And ten low words oft creep in one dull line," and "A needless Alexandrine ends the song, / That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along." In Part III, Pope discusses what critics should do, holding up the "Ancients" as models, including Aristotle (the "Stagirite") who was respected by the lawless poets: "Poets, a race long unconfin'd and free, / Still fond and proud of savage liberty, / Receiv'd his laws; and stood convinc'd 'twas fit, / Who conquer'd nature, should preside o'er wit."

12.2 PREFACE OF ESSAY ON CRITICISM

Pope's 'Essay on Criticism' is broken into three different parts. The first part opens by describing the ways literary critics can actually cause harm. Pope argues that critics must be both careful and humble when critiquing a piece of literature, for the writing of bad criticism actually hurts poetry more than the writing of bad poetry does. Pope points out that each critic has his or her own opinion, and, if applied incorrectly, a critic can actually censure a talented writer. However, Pope argues that if a critic is honest, doesn't fall prey to envy and listens to the seeds of understanding that are naturally a part of him or herself, one can become a wise critic. The Greeks came to understand poetry through following the rules of nature, argues Pope, and contemporary critics must do the same.

In the second part, Pope describes some of the ways that critics develop bad judgment, the chief of which is pride. The key to avoiding this is to know your own faults and limitations. Moreover, critics must study well and focus on conventions passed down from the masters of poetry. Pope warns, however, that critics must be careful of becoming slaves to the rules and convention that others have developed and to not let the popularity of an author misguide a critic's appreciation of an author's work. One of the products of adhering too closely to conventions is that critics become fascinated with extremes and forget the essential truth that beauty and good poetry are made up of the combination of all of their parts, rather than each part by itself.

In the third part of the poem, Pope offers some wisdom that critics should follow. Once again, Pope emphasizes the importance of humility

and studying deeply, particularly studying those poets and critics who truly understand poetry and follow nature. Pope then reflects on the ups and downs of literature and literary critics since Greek culture, explaining how the understanding produced by the Greeks and Romans was lost and is only beginning to be appreciated again.

The whole poem runs to 744 lines, but that shouldn't put you off! It's as readable as it was 300 years ago, and highly pertinent to many burning literary issues – writers' prizes and who judges them, for instance. Pope wrote it in 1709, the year his first work, four pastorals, appeared in print. He was barely 21. When it was published in 1711 it earned the young poet immediate acclaim.

Typically, Pope undertook the work in a competitive spirit. He was an ambitious, driven writer, largely self- and home-educated because of a painful spinal deformation, and because the repressive legislation against Catholics at the time denied him access to a university.

It was Nicholas Boileau's treatise, L'Art Poétique, which fired Pope to produce his own study of literary-critical principles. Like Boileau, he champions neoclassicism and its governing aesthetic of nature as the proper model for art. His pantheon of classical writers, the "happy few," as he calls them, includes Quintilian, Longinus and, most importantly, Horace.

Pope's ideals may be recycled, but there's no doubting his passionate belief in them. Deployed in his sparkling heroic couplets, the arguments and summaries are alive with wit, verbal agility and good sense. From his neoclassical scaffolding, he looks outwards to the literary marketplace of his own age. It was a noisy time, and sometimes the

reader seems to hear the buzz of the coffee house, the banter, gossip and argument of the writers and booksellers, the jangle of carts and carriages.

Pope's wit is famously caustic, so it's surprising how often the essayist advocates charity and humility. In the chosen section, he begins by advising restraint in criticising dull and incompetent poets. His tongue is in his cheek, as it turns out: "For who can rail as long as they can write?" Although he takes the view that bad critics are more culpable than bad poets, Pope enjoys a sustained dig at the poet-bores who go on and on and on. The metaphor of the spinning-top implies that a whipping will simply keep them going. Tops "sleep" when they move so fast their movement is invisible – hence the faded cliché "to sleep like a tops". The metaphor shifts to "jades" – old horses urged to recover after a stumble and run on, as these desperate poets "run on", their sounds and syllables like the jingling reigns, their words "dull droppings".

From the "shameless bards" in their frenzy of forced inspiration, Pope turns his attention to the critics, and, with nice comic effect, tars them with the same brush. "There are as mad, abandoned critics too." The "blockhead" he conjures reads everything and blindly attacks everything, "From Dryden's fables down to Durfey's tales." Durfey is placed pointedly at the bottom of the pile. He was generally considered an inferior poet, although Pope's friend Addison had time for him. Samuel Garth, on the other hand, was well-regarded, by Pope and many others, for a poem, The Dispensary, denouncing apothecaries and their cohort physicians. There was a rumour current that Garth was not its real author.

Sychophancy is one of the Essay's prime targets. Pope's rhetoric rises to a pitch as he castigates the hypocrisy of the "fops" who always praise the

latest play, and the loquacious ignorance of the preferment-seeking clergy. St Paul's Churchyard, the corrupt precinct of the booksellers, may be full of bores and fools, but there's no safer sanctuary at the cathedral's altar.

The Essay is rich in epigrams, still widely quoted. "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread" is among the best known and most borrowed (by Frank Sinatra, among others). Briefly allegorising, Pope goes on to contrast cautious "sense" and impetuous "nonsense", again evoking the rowdy traffic of 18th-century London with the onomatopoeic "rattling".

The flow has been angrily headlong: now, the pace becomes slower, the argument more rational. Antithesis implies balance, and the syntax itself enacts the critical virtues. Where, Pope asks, can you find the paradigm of wise judgement? It's not a rhetorical question. The poem goes on to provide the answer, enumerating the classical models, having a little chauvinistic nip at the rule-bound Boileau, and happily discovering two worthy inheritors of the critical Golden Age, Roscommon and Walsh.

Readers and writers today can't, of course, share Pope's certainties of taste. But we can apply some of his principles, the most important of which is, perhaps, that principles are necessary. And we might even take some tips from writers of the past.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give your understating in brief on Essay on Criticism

Answer

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Q2. Give brief Preface on Essay on Criticism

Answer

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12.3 SUMMARY

Context

Pope is one of those rare poets who was actually very successful thanks to his writing. This could be down to the fact that as a Catholic at the time he was unable to hold public office; he had a hunchback so wasn't very attractive to the other sex; and he had health problems that stunted his growth meaning he only ever reached 4″6. So with all that he had bugger all else to do, except become a kick ass poet.

He came from a middle class family and was educated only up until he was 12, but dragged himself up as an intellectual by binging on the classics of the Greek and Roman world as well as the big names of the time. From his early twenties his own work was being well received critically with his poetry and translations selling well.

This poem was completed in 1709 when Pope was 21 and published two years later. As this represents the beginning of his poetic career, the focus on telling critics to go a bit easy may have been based on his own personal hopes. It certainly acts as a challenge to the old, established

order and their rules by suggesting that they may have a negative impact on poetry.

Part 1. This section offers general principles of good criticism (and of poetry--since criticism for Pope means determining the *merit* of a work rather than its *meaning*, understanding the principles of good criticism means understanding the rules for good poetry and vice versa).

- The problem: "'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none/ Go just alike, yet each believes his own." Judgments are partial, and true taste is as rare as true genius (9-35). Some critics go astray through false learning, others through envy of wit (19-45). Self-awareness is therefore a crucial quality for a critic (46-67): "Be sure yourself and your own reach you know."
- First solution: "First follow Nature" (68-87). (*Nature* here means something like "the universe as God created it" or "that which is permanently true.")
- Second solution: learn the "rules of old," i.e. the precepts of poetry and criticism set down by the classical Greek and Roman authors or deducible from their literature (88-140). Take care, however, not to follow the rules slavishly, but rather "know well each ancient's proper character," especially Homer.
- One reason to be flexible in applying the rules: there are "beauties yet no precepts can declare." Great writers can break the rules successfully (141-180). Modern poets should take care, however, that if they break a rule they should "ne'er transgress its end" (161-169).

Part 2. This section identifies the main flaws a critic is prone to, and therefore the greatest obstacles to good criticism.

- The biggest pitfall, in criticism as in just about everything else: pride (201-214).
- Flaw #2: "little learning" (215-232). A little learning makes critics susceptible to pride, by making them think they know more than they do. (Pope is not praising ignorance here; the cure for the pride of little learning is more learning, which teaches the scholar how little he or she knows.)
- #3: "a love to parts"--i.e. emphasizing one aspect of a poem at the expense of all others (233-383). A critic SHOULD, instead, "read each work of wit/With the same spirit that its author writ"; "Survey the whole" and "regard the writer's end" (233-252).
    - an absurd example of "a love to parts": for Don Quixote, a poem is no good unless it has a combat in it (267-284).
    - part #1: conceit (elaborate, clever tropes) (289-304).
    - part #2: eloquence of language (305-337), as opposed to the ideas the language is supposed to express. One example: archaic language (324-336).
    - part #3: "numbers," i.e. meter (337-384). Included in the section is a dazzling display of metrical craft--note how the lines exemplify what they're talking about.
- #4: love of extremes (384-393)
- #5: liking only "one small sect," e.g. foreign writers, British author, ancients, or moderns, as opposed to approving of merit wherever it is found (394-407).

- #6:judging authors according to the opinions of others rather than the merit of the work (408-424). E.g.:
    - judging the name rather than the work (412-413).
    - worst case: judging the work on the basis of social rank (414-424).
- #7: conversely, prizing novelty above everything else (424-451).
- #8: valuing only those works which agree with one's own point of view, are written by member of one's own party, are written by friends, etc. (452-473). Envy plays a big part here, says Pope.
- arising from the above, some premises: "Be thou the first true merit to defend," even though we cannot expect modern writers to endure as the ancients did (474-493).; don't let yourself succumb to envy (494-525). Be generous: "To err is human, to forgive divine."
- But DO scourge "provoking crimes" such as obscenity and blasphemy (526-555). Here too, however, one must take care not to "mistake an author into vice" (556-559).

12.4 ANALYSIS OF ESSAY ON CRITICISM

An Essay on Criticism can be regarded as a handbook, or guide, to the critic's and poet's art. The works is written in the style of Horace's Ars Poetica. Moeover, Pope takes the some English works as models such as the Earl of Roscommon's translation of Horace, The Art Of Poetry, (1680), and John Sheffield's (the Duke of Buckingham's) Essay On

Poetry, (1682). He is familiar with these works in his early ages.

An Essay on Criticism

PART I

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But of the two less dangerous is the offense
To tire our patience than mislead our sense.

(Lines: 1-4)

In these opening lines of the poem, the speaker expresses his opinion about which one requires more skill being bad author or bad critic. Then, he says that being bad critic is more dangerous. The speaker in the poem is Alexander Pope.

In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share;
Both must alike from Heaven derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.

(Lines: 11-14)

There are not many good poets and good critics. Actually, both of them should have skill, genius in order to be good at their professions.

Most have the seeds of judgement in their mind:
Nature affords at least a glimmering light;
The lines, though touched but faintly, are drawn right.
But as the slighest sketch, if justly traced,
Is by ill coloring but the more disgraced,
So by false learning is good be sense defaced:
Some are bewildered in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs1 Nature meant but fools.
In search of wit these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defense:

(Lines :20-29)

Most of critics have ability judgement in their mind naturally. If they do not judge, criticize works, they can have problesm. On the other hand, natural ability, skill has little portion in being good critic. There is another important component to be a good critic. The component is education because education can have either positive or negative efffects on critics' judgement ability. Some of critics lose their judgement ability because of bad education. Some of them lose their direction in the mess of education, knowledge. Some of the educated critics pretends as they know everything, actually they do not. Since their ability is defeated by bad education, at this time they start to defence themselves rather than criticize works.

Some have at first for wits, then poets passed,
Turned critics next, and proved plain fools at last.
Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.
Those half-learn'd witlings, numerous in our isle,
As half-formed insects on the banks of Nile;2
Unfinished things, one knows now what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal:

(Lines: 36-43)

There are some people who can be identified neither as poet not as a critic because they are not successful in a profession. Since they do not have wit, they cannot be classified. The speaker gives an example on this event; the example is that mules are also identified neither as horse nor ass. The speaker says that this type of critics have a doubtful, uncertain meaning.

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit,
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.
As on the land while here ocean gains,
In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid power of understanding fail;

(Lines: 52-57)

People should be aware about their limits, because all of the things in the

nature are fixed according to their limits. People should not be proud. People can have well their souls, minds, but they can fail while expressing these opinions to other people. “So vast is art, so narrow human wit.” (Line: 61) When there is a comparison between art and human wit. The former is immense and the latter is limited.

> First follow Nature, and your judgement frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same,
> One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
> Life, force, and beauty must to all impart.

(Lines: 68-72)

Critics must follow nature as basic and their judgement abilities. They should make their criticism regarding life, force and beauty in other words, the all part of the life. Critics must be universal and criticize a work in the light of universalism. The speaker uses Nature as basic rule to follow by critics because the poet, Alexander Pope, is a Neo-Classic author. As we know that Neo-classic authors admire nature. They believe that everything is in the nature in its perfect shape. “For wit and judgement often are at strife, Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.” (Lines: 82-83) There is a struggle between wit and judgement, yet they always need each other. There is an example about this issue. The example is that husband and wife have also argument but they are also need each other for ever.

Those rules of old discovered, not devised;
Are Nature still, but Nature methodized;
Nature, like liberty, is still but restrained
By the same laws which first herself ordained.

(Lines: 88-91)

Rules of old critics, early Greek and Roman authors are discovered by new generation of critics. On the other hand, the new generation do not learn these deeply, but mechanically. They learn these rules only its surface meaning. Unless, the new generation learns these rules deeply, Nature, ability of judgement, does not have any meaning to be good critic.

So modern 'pothecartes, taught the art
By doctors bills° to play the doctor's part, prescriptions
Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fool.

(Lines: 108-111)

In these lines, apothecaries are used to give an example on critics, who take the rules of the old critics. These kinds of critics do not improve the rules but only apply to the work while they criticize a work. They do not have any function on the work's critic, as apothecaries do not have any effect on ill people. Both of them only apply the rules. “Some dryly

plain without invention's aid, Write dull receipts3 how poems may be made." (Lines: 114-115)

The speaker gives an example on the type of authors and critics, who take the rules and apply without any change.

Know well each ancient's proper character;
His fable,4 subject, scope° in every page; aim, purpose
Religion, country, genius of his age:
Without all these at once before your eyes,
Cavil you may, but never criticize.

(Lines: 119-123)

A person cannot be a good critic, unless he/she learns the ancient critics' rules very deeply. This type of critics can only argue on a literary work, but the argument cannot be regarded as critic without knowing old critics' rules deeply.

I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
Those freer beauties, even in them, seem faults5.
Some figures monstrous and misshaped appear,
Considered singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportioned in their light or place,
Due distance reconciles to form and grace.
A prudent chief not always must display
His powers in equal ranks and fair array,

But with the occasion and the place comply,
Conceal his force, nay seem sometimes to fly.
Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,
Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

(Lines: 169-180)

In these above lines, the speaker says that there are some critics, who have learned the ancients' rules in critic deeply. Moreover, these critics improve the ancient rules according to their times taste. There are many works that are criticized by this kind of critics. When the ancient critics are regarded, some of the works are criticized in a bad manner. On the other hand, some of the works are criticized so much good that any ancient critics even Homer cannot criticize in this manner.

PART II

Of all the causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring judgement, and misguide the mind,
What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
Is pride, the never-falling vice of fools.

(Lines: 201-204)

Pride causes people to think in a wrong direction. All of the mistakes and misguides are caused by pride. Weak person is ruled by pride. Pride is

the most dangerous sin in the seven deathly sins; therefore it has negative, bad effect on person's judgement.

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring6.
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

(Lines: 215-218)

Little learning is a dangerous thing for a person because he/she cannot overcome on a problem, or be successful in any profession. Therefore, people should learn as much as they can, or they should not learn. Actually, little knowledge cannot guide people to find the right direction. On the other hand, little knowledge causes confusion in minds. When a person has a deep knowledge on a subject, he/she becomes sure himself/herself and makes fewer mistakes maybe any mistake.

A perfect judge will read each work of with
With the same spirit that its author writ:
Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find
Where Nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;
Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight,
The generous pleasure to be charmed with wit.

(Lines: 233-238)

The speaker says that a perfect judgement on a literary work can be conducted when critic reads the whole work, with regarding the author's intention. The critic should regard the work as a whole and not focus on little mistakes. Otherwise, he cannot create a good judgement on a literary work.

In wit, as nature, what affects our hearts
Is not the exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.

(Lines: 243-246)

Wit affects our thoughts, perceptions and delights. Therefore, a critic should follow wit.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.
In every work regard the writer's end,
Since none can compass more than they intend;
And if the means be just, the conduct true,
Applause, in spite of of trivial faults, is due.

(Lines: 253-258)

If a critic takes a piece of literary work and criticizes according to the only one part rather than the whole work, he fails. A critic should regard

the whole work, and read at the end of the work with regarding author's intention. By this manner, he/she can be successful in the judgment. "Most critics, fond of some subservient art, Still make the whole depend upon a part:" (Lines: 263-264) Most of the critics make their judgement about the whole work according to only part of the work. "True wit is Nature to advantage dressed, What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed;" (Lines: 297-298) Ability is a vital characteristic of a good critic, but only ability is not enough to conduct good job. In other words, a critic cannot judge in a correct perspective only his ability.

Others for language all their care express,
And value books, as women men, for dress.
Their praise is still-the style is excellent;
The sense they humbly take upon content.° mere acquiescence
Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

(Lines: 305-310)

There are some critics, who are interested in only formal qualities, for example, language. They are so fond of language that they ignore the meaning of the work. Regarding only language is not enough criteria to judge in a correct manner. Meaning is also an important component in a literary work.

The face of Nature we no more survey,
All glares alike, without distinction gay.
But true expression, like the unchanging sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon;
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.

(Lines: 313-317)

In these lines of the poem, the poet makes a distinction between good and bad expressions. According to the poet, all of the expressions glares in the same manner. On the other hand, good expressions are always same, like the unchanging sun. ,Good expressions are described as sun. "Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such, Who still are pleased too little or too much." (Lines: 384-385) According to the poet, Alexander Pope, being balance in judgement is another important quality of good critic. In these two lines, being balance is emphasized for critics.

Some ne'er advance a judgement of their own,
But catch the spreading notion of the town;
They reason and conclude by precedent,
And own stale nonsense which they ne'er invent.
Some judge of authors' names, not works, and then
Nor praise nor blame the writings, but the men.

(Lines: 408-413)

These lines are about the critics, who do not have their own judgment. However, they follow only the former critics. These kinds of critics

regard the author's name whether he/she is famous or not. In their judgment, the work is seen in the second surface, but the author's name .is in the first layer. They make their judgements according to author's name rather than the work. "Some praise at morning what they blame at night, But always think the last opinion is right." (Lines: 430-431) Some critics are not sure about their judgements, so they change their ideas in a short period. Moreover, they think that their last opinion is the best. These critics do not have a certain direction in their judgements about a work, so they change the opinion easily.

Pride, Malice, Folly against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaux;
But sense survived, when merry jests were past;
For rising merit, will buoy up at last.

(Lines: 458-461)

In these lines, the speaker makes a list, which includes bad qualities for a critic. Some of these bad qualities are; Pride, Malice, Folly and Envy.

Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost who stays till all commend
Short is the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.

(Lines:474-477)

In contrast to former lines, these lines indicate the good qualities of a critic. According to good qualities, for example, a critic should be friendly in his judgements. “Good nature and good sense must ever join; To err is human, to forgive divine.” (Lines: 524-525) The basic qualities of a good critic are determined as good nature and good sense. In these lines, these qualities are emphasized and argued that each critic should have these qualities.

Discharge that rage on more provoking crimes,
Nor fear a dearth in these flatigious° times. scandalously wicked
No pardon vile obscenity should find,

(Lines: 528-530)

After advising good sense and good nature, the poet says that critics should be severe against some works. The poet determines these group of works, which deserved severe, as provocative works.

PART III

Learn then what morals critics ought to show,
For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.
'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candor° shine: kindness, impartiality

That not alone what to your sense is due
All may allow; but seek your friendship too.

(Lines: 560-565)

In these lines, the poet gives the basic characteristics of a good critic. A critic should have a good knowledge, taste, judgment and objectivity. Moreover, there is another characteristic, which is more important than others, of a good critic. The characteristic is being friendship. "Be silent always when you doubt your sense; And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:" (Lines: 566-567) If a critic is not sure about his/her opinion, he/she must not speak on a work. On the other hand, a critics should speak, argue with self confidence.

Fear most to tax an honourable fool,
Whose right it is, uncensured to be dull;
Such, without wit, are poets when they please,
As without learning they can take degrees.7
Leave dangerous truths to unsuccessful satrys°, satires

(Lines: 588-592)

The poet warns critics about the bad poets. Since these poets are bad, they always show off. Critics should be aware against such type of poets.

Your silence there is better than your spite,
For who can rail so long as they can write?

Still humming on, their drowsy course they keep,

And lashed so long, like tops, are lashed asleep.8

False steps but help them to renew the race,

As, after stumbling, jades° will mend their pace. worn-out horses

(Lines: 598-603)

The speaker of the poem says that a critic should not speak when he is not sure about his judgment. Because the wrong judgement causes more harm than being silence. Then, the speaker advises that a critic should show the right direction to poets.

Such shameless bards we have, and yet 'tis true,

There are as mad, abandoned critics too.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,

With loads of learned lumber° in his head, rubbish

With his own tongue still edifies his ears

And always listening to himself appears.

(Lines: 610-615)

There are some bad critics, who are arrogant and not listen to anybody. Actually, a good critic should be disappoint with these group of bad critics.

Towards the end of the poem, Alexander Pope give an useful historical survey about the criticism's development. He mentions many good critics and authors such as Aristotle, Horace, Homer, Erasmus and Longinus.

He emphasizes on the good qualities of these authors and critics.

In conclusion, An Essay on Criticism is written by Alexander Pope in the 18th Century. The work is written in rhyming couplets, which are used skilfully by the poet. As it can be understood easily from the title, the poem is about the criteria on good critics and criticism. The work includes three parts. The first part is about the qualities of being good critic. The second part is on bad qualities that prevent being good critic. The third part is a historical survey of criticism development. Actually, An Essay on Criticism has useful information for critics, not only in Pope's time but also in our modern time critics.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give the context of Essay on Criticism.

Answer

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……

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Q2. Analyze in your words in short the Essay on Criticism.

Answer

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……

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……

12.5 LET'S SUM UP

Alexander Pope's Essay on Criticism is an ambitious work of art written in heroic couplet. Published in 1711, this poetic essay was a venture to

identify and define his own role as a poet and a critic. He strongly puts his ideas on the ongoing question of if poetry should be natural or written as per the predetermined artificial rules set by the classical poets.

This essay by Pope is neoclassical in its premises; in the tradition of Horace and Boileau. Pope believes that the value of literary work depends not on its being ancient or modern, but on its being true to Nature. This truth to Nature is found in true wit. Nature is to be found both in the matter and in the manner of expression, the two being inseparable. When the poet is asked to follow Nature, he is actually asked to "stick to the usual, the ordinary, and the commonplace." He is to portray the world as he sees it. The truth of human nature is to be found in common humanity, not in any eccentricity. Pope argued that human nature is ever the same. The proper object of imitation is the fundamental form of reality for Pope and the basic rule of art is to "follow nature" – "nature methodized. He does not negate the possibility of transgressing the rules if the basic aim of poetry is achieved and this transgression brings hope closer to the idea of the sublime. Clearly, the poet must have a strong sense of literary tradition in order to make intelligent judgments as the critic must have it too. Pope notes Virgil's discovery that to imitate Homer is also to imitate nature. Pope says an artist imitates the nature. His nature is the combination of two elements society (human nature) and rules of classical artists-"nature is methodized". Classical artist already discovers the natural rules and laws. Now, it is not necessary to go to nature again because to follow the classical artist is to go to the nature. So, sources of art are society and ancient artists.

Pope's primary concern in this essay is his advice mainly for critics, and secondarily for artists or poets. Pope claims that artists possess genius whereas critics possess taste (classical taste developed by classical artist). By taking the ideas of classical artists, a critic has to judge the text. Artist can't go beyond his intention, he is limited within his desires. He should not be over ambitious and over imaginative but critics can go beyond their intention. Artist has to undergo practice, learning and experiences. Which are equally important to critics too. Pope says, "A little learning is a dangerous thing". So, critic must not be proud. A critic if has pride, can't take out the real essence from the text. To be good critic, one should have courage, modesty and honesty. Decorum, for Pope, is the proper balance between expression and sound of content and form and it comes under versification. Pope considers wit as the polished and decorated form of language. Style and thought should go together. Artist uses 'heroic couplet' (form) to express the heroic subject matter (content). Pope implies that if the artist needs to break rules and regulation, he should use poetic license.

12.6 KEYWORDS

- **Nought**: nothing

Example: "For nought I did in hate, but all in honour." (*Othello* 5.2)

In this scene, Othello kills his wife. He explains to her cousin in these lines that he has done nothing out of hate, but he killed her out of honor.

- **Oft** (adv): often

Example: "Her father loved me, oft invited me" (*Othello* 1.3)

Here, Othello is defending his character against the accusations that he has manipulated Desdemona in some way.

12.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- Which three Heroic Couplets from "An Essay on Criticism" by Pope achieve a satirical effect?
- What are the major neoclassicist themes in an *Essay on Criticism* by Alexander Pope?
- According to Pope, in *An Essay on Criticism*, how should one approach learning?
- Discuss the relationship between form and content in Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*.

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12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 12.2

Answer 2 : Check Section 12.3

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 12.4

Answer 2 : Check Section 12.5

UNIT - 13: WILLIAM CONGREVE: LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

13.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the **Life and Work of William Congreve**

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

Introduction

- **Early Life, Love Life , Death,Works**
- **Legacy**
- **Literary career**
- **Works In Biographical And Historical Context**
- **Literary and historical contemporaries**
- **Works In Critical Context**

13.1 INTRODUCTION

William Congreve (January 24, 1670 – January 19, 1729) was an English playwright and poet. He was born at Bardsey near Leeds and attended school through his elementary years in Ireland. His works include plays, opera, and other various works of literature. Two of his most popular and well-known plays are *Love for Love* in 1695, and *The Way of the World* in 1700, for which he is most famous. Congreve came at the end of the period of Restoration literature as the population appeared to rebel against the earlier strictures of the Puritan revolution. As tastes changed again, Congreve fell silent. For the majority of his life, he lived on his reputation and the royalties from his plays.

Congreve died on January 19, 1729, in a carriage accident and was buried in Westminster Abbey. A monument over the grave site was erected by the Duchess of Marlborough, with whom he was rumored to be romantically involved. His plays are still produced due to his mastery of pure comedy.

13.2 EARLY LIFE OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

William Congreve was born in Bardsey, West Yorkshire, England (near Leeds) to William Congreve (1637–1708) and his wife, Mary (*née*Browning; 1636?–1715). Although the inscription on his monument over his grave lists his date of birth as 1672, he was actually born and baptized in 1670. His sister, of whom, little is known, was born in 1672 shortly after his birth. His father was a Cavalier solider, had settled during the reign of Charles II, and was placed in command of the garrison at Youghal soon after William was born. Due to his father's tour of duty, William spent his childhood in Ireland, where he attended school at Kilkenny. He was then educated at Trinity College in Dublin, where he met Jonathan Swift, forming a lifelong friendship with him. Upon graduation, he moved to London where he matriculated in the Middle Temple as a student of law. However, he felt himself pulled toward literature, drama, and the fashionable life. His literary apprenticeship was served under the tutelage of John Dryden, the leading playwright of the day, from whom he learned a great deal.

He originally used the pseudonym of "Cleophil" in his works, especially in a novel whose existence is now remembered only through the unabashed avowal of the austere moralist, Dr. Johnson, who waggishly claimed that he "would rather praise it than read it." In 1693, Congreve's real career began with the brilliant appearance and instant success of his first comedy, *The Old Bachelor*. This success was under the generous auspices of Dryden, then as ever a living and immortal witness to the falsehood of the vulgar charges which taxes the greater among poets with

jealousy or envy, the natural badge and brand of the smallest that would claim a place among their kind. The dis-crowned laureate had never, he said, seen such a first play, and was in awe of Congreve and his work.

He went on to write three more plays, and lived a mundane routine in the latter part of his life, not publishing any major works. The one memorable incident of his later life was the visit of Voltaire. It is thought that Congreve astonished and repelled Voltaire with his rejection of proffered praise and the expression of his wish to be considered merely as any other gentleman of no literary fame. The great master of well-nigh every province in the empire of letters, except the only one in which his host reigned supreme, replied that in that sad case Congreve would not have received his visit.

Although Samuel Johnson disputed this, it has since been confirmed by a baptism entry for "William, sonne of Mr. William Congreve, of Bardsey grange, baptised 10 February 1669 [i.e. 1670 by the modern reckoning of the new year]" His parents were Colonel William Congreve (1637–1708) and Mary Browning (1636?–1715), who moved to London in 1672, then to the Irish port of Youghal.

Congreve was educated at Kilkenny College, where he met Jonathan Swift, and at Trinity College in Dublin. He moved to London to study law at the Middle Temple, but preferred literature, drama, and the fashionable life. Congreve used the pseudonym Cleophil, under which he published *Incognita: or, Love and Duty reconcil'd* in 1692. This early work, written when he was about 17 years of age, gained him recognition among men of letters and an entrance into the literary world. He became a disciple of John Dryden whom he met through gatherings of literary

circles held at Will's Coffeehouse in the Covent Garden district of London. Dryden supported him throughout his life, often composing complimentary introductions for his publications.

Congreve was distantly related to Lady Elizabeth Hastings, whose family owned Ledston and was part of the London intelligentsia. He wrote a number of articles about her in the Tatler magazine.

13.3 LOVE LIFE OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

Although Congreve never married, he was famous for his friendships and romances with prominent actresses and noblewomen in his own era and through subsequent generations. One of these women included Anne Bracegirdle, for whom he wrote major parts in all his plays. He also courted Henrietta Godolphin, 2nd Duchess of Marlborough, daughter of the famous general, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, whom he had probably met by 1703. Congreve and Henrietta had a love affair that produced his sole offspring, a daughter, Mary (1723–1764).

13.4 DEATH OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

His even course of good fortune under Whig and Tory governments alike was counterweighted by the physical infirmities of gout and failing sight. As early as 1710, he suffered both from gout and from cataracts on his eyes. Then, in late September 1728, Congreve suffered a carriage accident of an upsetting of his carriage, from which he never recovered. It is thought that from this accident, he received an internal injury, which

was from a journey to Bath. He died on January 19, 1729, in consequence of that injury and his internal wounds.

He was buried in Westminster Abbey, after lying in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, where a monument was erected in his honor. The patron and solicitor of the monument, Henrietta Godolphin, 2nd Duchess of Marlborough, with whom he was romantically involved during his later years. William bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to her, although there was controversy as to who received the final pay out from Congreve's fortune. That Henrietta should receive the money, rather than his family, which were reported to be going through a period of financial difficulty, upset many. Another surprise in his last will and testament was that Mrs. Bracegirdle, the actress, with whom he had lived longer on intimate terms than with any other mistress or friend, only inherited £200.

13.5 WORKS OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

Congreve's first play, *The Old Bachelor* (1693) was an enormous success when it was produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. John Dryden, Congreve's mentor, wrote that he had never read so brilliant a first play, and was impressed with the level of sophistication that Congreve displayed through the play. Congreve's next effort, however, was not so successful. *The Double-Dealer* (1693) revolved around a socialite who deceives everyone with the simple device of telling the plain truth. Although most modern critics consider *The Double-Dealer* an improvement over Congreve's first play, it was snubbed by critics and audiences alike. Congreve was irritated by what he perceived as the

obtuseness of the public in their reaction to the play, and took a two year absence before writing a play again.

In *Love for Love* (1695), Congreve temporarily returned to the public favor, and it still remains popular with audiences. His reputation improved still further with the production of his only tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, in 1697. However, the masterpiece of Congreve was by far *The Way of the World*, which was released in 1700.

Unfortunately, through his plays, Congreve's wit and his characters' sexual freedom and experimentation was at odds with the thinking of certain moralists of the day. In a critique by Jeremy Collier, *(A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage)* in 1698, Congreve was directly attacked, along with his predecessor, Dryden. Collier succeeded in garnering public support for his cause by beginning with the accepted neoclassical doctrine that the purpose of drama is to teach and please and then pointing out the disparity between theory and practice. Congreve responded to Collier's accusations in *Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations*that same year, defending his work and his honor. However, the conservative middle class, determined to make its tastes felt, sided with Collier and the Society for the Reformation of Manners. It became increasingly difficult to get a play produced during this time, unless it conformed to Collier's doctrine. Realizing that his protests were in vain, Congreve gave up playwriting altogether, resolving to "commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience," when he was only thirty years of age.

Although, he would write no more plays, Congreve did not retire entirely from the theater. He wrote the libretto for two operas and collaborated, in

1704, in translating Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* for Lincoln's Inn Fields. However, for the next twenty-nine years, he lived mostly on his reputation and the royalties from his plays, as he withdrew from the theater, living on residuals from his early work. His output from 1700 was restricted to the occasional poem and some translations.

The Way of the World

Although *The Way of the World* was coolly received when it was first acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields, it has since come to be considered one of the most intellectually accomplished of English comedies. The story revolves around a pair of lovers, Millamant and Mirabell, who establish a rather unconventional marriage arrangement based on their knowledge of the way of the world which, as they know, is inhabited primarily by intriguers, fops, and fools.

Plot Summary

The main character and libertine, Mirabell, is in love with Millamant, a niece of Lady Wishfort, who pretends to make love to the aunt to conceal his suit for the niece. His trick is revealed by Mrs. Marwood, who does so to seek revenge because Mirabell has rejected her advances. Lady Wishfort, who now hates Mirabell "more than a quaker hates a parrot," will deprive her niece of the half of the inheritance she controls if Millamant marries Mirabell. Mirabell has his servant Waitwell impersonate his uncle, Sir Rowland, and pretend to marry Lady Wishfort, but only after having secretly married him off to her maid, Foible. He hopes to use this humiliating deception to force Lady Wishfort to consent to his marriage to Millamant.

The plot is discovered by Mrs. Marwood, who also finds out that Mirabell has had a previous intrigue with Mrs. Fainall, daughter of Lady Wishfort, after which she married her off to Mr. Fainall, thinking that she was pregnant with his child. She conspires with Fainall, her lover, who pretends to be the friend of Mirabell, to reveal this information to Lady Wishfort, while Fainall threatens to divorce his wife and to discredit Lady Wishfort unless he is given full control of Mrs. Fainallís property and Millamant's portion is handed over to him. The scheme fails. Mrs. Fainall denies all and brings proof of Fainall's affair with Mrs. Marwood, while Mirabell produces a deed by which Mrs. Fainall, before her marriage, made him trustee of all her property. In the end, Lady Wishfort, grateful for her release from Fainall's threats, forgives Mirabell and consents to the marriage.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short note on love life of William Congreve

Answer

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Q2. Give insight of death of William Congreve.

Answer

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13.6 LEGACY OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

William Congreve wrote some of the most popular English plays of the Restoration period of the late seventeenth century. By the age of thirty, he had written four comedies, including *Love for Love* (premiered April 30, 1695) and *The Way of the World* (premiered 1700), as well as one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697). His popularity and fame during and after his lifetime came from all of his plays, especially his masterpiece, *The Way of the World*, in which, he was able to demonstrate his ability to write comedy in its highest and purest form. William Congreve has been compared to some great literary writers in and after his time period. Of Congreve's immediate predecessors, William Wycherley most often mirrored many of the techniques and situations that Congreve himself implored, but was not match for his wit and candor.

While Congreve cannot be equally compared to the likes of Moliere, he earned himself a place in literature due to his comedy throughout his plays. It is said that "only perhaps in a single part has Congreve half consciously touched a note of almost tragic depth and suggestion; there is something well-nigh akin to the grotesque and piteous figure of Arnolphe himself in the venerable old age of Lady Wishfort, set off and relieved as it is, with grace and art worthy of the supreme French master, against the only figure on any stage which need not shun comparison even with that of Célimène."

Unfortunately, Congreve's career ended almost as soon as it began. After writing five plays from his first in 1693 until 1700, he produced no more as public tastes turned against the sort of high-brow sexual comedy of manners in which he specialized.

13.7 LITERARY CAREER OF WILLIAM CONGREVE

Inspired as a writer by such extraordinary thinkers as Plato, Aesop, Miguel de Cervantes, and William Shakespeare, Congreve's career as an author of Restoration comedy was influenced by the satirical plays of Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, and Ben Jonson. In addition, the French playwright Moliére provided Restoration dramatists a model for comic relief through dialogue, along with ideas for many themes and plots. Perhaps what had the most impact on Congreve's writing life was Restoration society itself—that rigid, artificial, refined world of eighteenth-century England. For the most part, Congreve's work was well-received by his contemporaries, the condemnation from Jeremy Collier's notwithstanding.

Comedy of Manners A comedy of manners is a witty form of dramatic comedy that satirizes the manners and pretentiousness of society. In calling attention to ridiculous schemes and frivolous conversation, this literary form attacks the superficiality and materialism by which people judge others. By presenting the question of whether characters meet certain social standards—standards that are often morally inconsequential—the comedy of manners reveals the conflict between self-interested motives and refined behaviors. Aware of the shallowness of decorum, the protagonist manipulates situations to his own advantage.

Because aristocratic audiences were not interested in didactic lessons being aimed directly at them, the purpose of the comedy of manners was to entertain.

As do most all comedy of manners dramas, *The Way of the World* consists of comic material revolving around intimate relationships and farcical situations. For instance, marriage occurs for the sake of convenience, characters brazenly carry on affairs, jealousy is commonplace, gallantry is feigned, and women are falsely demure. In this play, Congreve's message is clear: The way of the world may be humorous, but it is not kind. Like all romantic comedies, *The Way of the World* has a happy ending; however, the avenue to a joyful resolution is one of cruelty, degradation, and treachery.

William Congreve shaped the English comedy of manners through his use of satire and well-written dialogue. Congreve achieved fame in 1693 when he wrote some of the most popular English plays of the Restoration period. This period was distinguished by the fact that female roles were beginning to be played predominantly by women, and was evident in Congreve's work. One of Congreve's favorite actresses was Mrs. Anne Bracegirdle, who performed many of the female lead roles in his plays.

His first play *The Old Bachelor*, written to amuse himself while convalescing, was produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1693.[5] It was recognized as a success, and ran for a two-week period when it opened. Congreve's mentor John Dryden gave the production rave reviews and proclaimed it to be a brilliant first piece. The second play to be produced was called *The Double-Dealer* which was not nearly

as successful as the first production. By the age of thirty, he had written four comedies, including *Love for Love* (premiered 30 April 1695) staged at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, which was nearly as well received as his first major success, and *The Way of the World* (premiered March 1700). This play was a failure at the time of production but is seen as one of his masterpieces today, and is still revived. He wrote one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697) which was extremely popular at the time of creation but is now one of his least regarded dramas. After the production of *Love for Love*, Congreve became one of the managers for the Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695. During that time, he wrote public occasional verse. As a result of his success and literary merit, he was awarded one of the five positions of commissioner for licensing hackney coaches.

Congreve's career as a playwright was successful but brief. He only wrote five plays, authored from 1693 to 1700, in total. This was partly in response to changes in taste, as the public turned away from the sort of high-brow sexual comedy of manners in which he specialized. Congreve may have been forced off the stage due to growing concerns about the morality of his theatrical comedies. He reportedly was particularly stung by a critique written by Jeremy Collier (*A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*), to the point that he wrote a long reply, "Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations." Although no longer on the stage, Congreve continued his literary art. He wrote the librettos for two operas that were being created at the time, and he translated the works of Molière.

As a member of the Whig Kit-Kat Club, Congreve's career shifted to the political sector, and even a political appointment in Jamaica in 1714 by George I. Congreve continued to write, although his style changed greatly. During his time in Jamaica, he wrote poetry instead of full length dramatic productions, and translated the works of Homer, Juvenal, Ovid, and Horace.

13.8 WORKS IN BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A Beginning Rich in Opportunities Congreve was born into an old family of wealth in Bardsey, West Yorkshire, England. After his father received a lieutenant's commission, the family moved to Ireland, where Congreve was educated, along with friend and future satirist Jonathan Swift, at Kilkenny School and Trinity College, Dublin, his curriculum focusing on theology as well as Greek and Latin classics. Congreve often visited Dublin theaters and was exposed to the most celebrated dramas of the time, including Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and Thomas Durfey's *The Boarding House*, before these of performances were banned during the reign of James II. A reader of dramatic theory, Congreve was most likely more familiar with the theater than most young men of his era by the time he moved to London around 1689.

The English Restoration and the Golden Age of Satire Congreve was born at a time when England had only recently recovered from a violent civil war, during which the ruling English monarchy was removed from power. In its place, a commonwealth led by Puritan military commander Oliver Cromwell was created. Under Cromwell's strict rule, theaters throughout England were closed down due to their alleged

debasement of moral values. When the monarchy was finally restored to power in 1660 under the rule of Charles II—hence the term "Restoration"—theaters were once again opened, and the exuberant feelings of the day made their way into the comedies that became popular during that time. Accordingly, the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century are often referred to as *The Golden Age of Satire*.

London Drama In 1691 Congreve entered the Middle Temple, London, to study law; however, the literary community in London proved to be more appealing to him. With the novel *Incognita; or, Love and Duty Reconcil'd*, he established himself as a gifted writer of pointed, intelligent wit and soon became John Dryden's friend, legal adviser, and literary protégé. While his legal expertise enabled him to negotiate agreements between Dryden and his publisher, Congreve's educational background helped him make a number of important contributions as a translator to Dryden's editions of classical authors. In addition to Congreve's gift for translation, Dryden recognized the younger writer's ear for the nuances of his own language and predicted that Congreve would be a great literary success.

Congreve's first real success came in 1693 with the drama *The Old Batchelour*. Like most of the plays produced during this period, *The Old Batchelour* was written with specific actors in mind. Most biographers believe that Congreve created the role of Araminta, the virtuous and witty ingénue, for actress Anne Bracegirdle, the object of his lifelong—and unrequited—affection.

Attempt at Tragedy Despite glowing endorsements from such notable writers as Dryden and Swift, 1693's *The Double-Dealer* was met with much less enthusiasm than its predecessor. However, the overwhelming success of Congreve's next drama, *Love for Love*, revived his popularity and earned him a full share in a new acting company under William III's protection. Traveling with dramatist Thomas Southerne the next year, Congreve visited Ireland, where he received a master of arts degree from Trinity College and was briefly reunited with his parents. The author of several successful tragedies, Southerne may have encouraged Congreve to try his hand at what most critics of the time considered a higher dramatic form. Ignoring jeers from friends and fellow writers who were certain his attempt would fail, Congreve wrote

The Mourning Bride (1697), a tragedy that received praise for both its morality and literary merit.

Public Feud Having received, for the most part, accolades for his work, Congreve was unprepared for clergyman Jeremy Collier's attack in *A Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the English Stage*(1698). Collier condemned Congreve's work as shamelessly immoral, prompting Congreve to refute those claims in *Amendments to Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations* (1698), which asserts that all well-crafted art is innately moral. While Congreve's rebuttal was witty and cogent, his emotionally charged approach against Collier's self-righteousness and social standing provoked further arguments. Tired of these exchanges, Congreve concentrated on writing his last comedy, *The Way of the World*, a drama that enjoyed moderate success.

Literary Output Hindered by Illness Afflicted with gout and advancing blindness early in the eighteenth century, Congreve composed a libretto, or the text for an opera—in this case, *The Judgment of Paris*. It was well-received despite opera's unpopularity during that time. He joined with dramatist John Vanbrugh to establish a new theater, the Haymarket, a project financed by members of the Kit-Kat Club, a literary-political society that included members of Whig nobility and renowned authors Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Although the Haymarket soon closed, Congreve's association with influential members of the Kit-Kat Club gained him two government posts and a lifelong appointment as secretary of Jamaica, both positions of financial security. By 1706, however, bad health limited Congreve's literary output. Living a quiet life in London entertaining family and friends but publishing little, Congreve died in 1729 after a carriage accident.

13.9 LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEMPORARIES

Congreve's famous contemporaries include:

William Wycherly *(1641–1715): Wycherly wrote plays of sharp social criticism, particularly of marriage and sexual morality.*

George Frideric Handel *(1685–1759): Famous for his operas and oratorios, this German-born composer lived in England most of his adult life.*

Joseph Addison *(1672–1719): Writer of the opera libretto Rosamond, Addison also founded the Spectator with Richard Steele in 1711 with the*

intent of presenting morally instructive stories of gallantry, foreign and domestic news, and poetry with satirical undertones.

Jonathan Swift *(1667–1745): After writing several poems, Swift turned to prose satire directed against philosophers, intellectuals, politicians, and aristocrats, culminating in his most famous work, Gulliver's Travels.*

Joseph I *(1678–1711): Son of Leopold I, Joseph I served as king of Hungary (1687), King of the Romans (1690), and Holy Roman Emperor (1705–1711).*

Alexander Pope *(1688–1744): Pope was well-known for his satirical poetry and his mastery of the heroic couplet, notably in The Rape of the Lock.*

Congreve's mastery of Restoration comedy influenced his contemporary playwrights and made a significant impact on the genre. In addition, Congreve's words resonated with audience members such that several phrases from Congreve's play *The Mourning Bride* (1697) have made their way into common parlance including “music has charms to soothe a savage breast”

and “heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.” Congreve's influence continues to be felt today and his plays are still performed.

13.10 WORKS IN CRITICAL CONTEXT

From the time of Jeremy Collier's attack to the twentieth century, Congreve's critical reception has been influenced by moral perception. Despite his controversial ideas of sexual morality, as well as his

shortcomings as a playwright, Congreve has maintained a reputation of being the master of the English comedy of manners. Although some critics judge Congreve's work to be impenetrable and his dialogue nothing more than babble, others, including Bonamy Dobrée, disagree. Dobrée states, "If you cannot translate the idiom of a past time—the idiom of behavior as well as of language—into that of your own, it may seem dull; if you can do so it appears highly relevant. Trivial? Only if you cannot see through the universality that underlies every phase of the social mask." Recent academic criticism transcends the brilliant dramatic language in favor of deconstructing the distinctive manner by which Congreve transforms the material of his plays into a body of coherent actions.

The Way of the World Despite its lukewarm reception by his contemporaries, *The Way of the World* has long been considered Congreve's masterpiece. It deviates not only from comedies of the period but also from comedic drama in general, giving some critics reason to deem the play's intricate plots and counterplots difficult to follow. Scholar Edmund Gosse emphasizes the fact that the plot is one of inaction, remarking that the audience "wishes that the actors and actresses would be doing something. In no play of Congreve's is the … human interest in movement and surprise so utterly neglected." Every revival of *The Way of the World* is met by theater reviewers who declare its plot incomprehensible, but they also praise the subtlety and sophistication of its dialogue. Even Gosse concedes, "*The Way of the World* is the best-written, the most dazzling, the most intellectually

accomplished of all English comedies, perhaps of all the comedies of the world."

The Way of the World depends on the conventional devices of misunderstanding and deception to impart Congreve's cynical view of love, relationships, and the institution of marriage, common themes in Restoration comedy. Still, the drama embraces the ideas of human principles and real love. Like the earlier *Love for Love*, *The Way of the World* demonstrates, according to Dobrée, "Congreve's insistence that the precious thing in life— affection in human relations—must be preserved at all costs." As a comedy of manners, *The Way of the World* has the purpose of exposing social behaviors—passion and foolishness—during Congreve's time to public scrutiny and laughter. Because of its success in doing so, *The Way of the World* is regarded as the classic example of the comedy of manners.

13.11 COMMON HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Congreve is renowned for his skill in producing witty and intricate conversations between characters. In fact, so essential is brilliant dialogue in his work that Congreve thought of a scene as a unit of dialogue affected by the arrival or departure of a character. Other works recognized for clever dialogue include:

Amphitryo (186 bce), a play by Plautus. The comedies of the Roman playwright are characterized by bright, amusing dialogue and humorous, boisterous incidents.

A Fine and Private Place (1960), fantasy fiction by Peter S. Beagle. Retelling fables in contemporary settings, Beagle is known for his clever dialogue and sophisticated character development.

Rameu's Nephew and First Satire (1761), satire by Denis Diderot. Through a fictional meeting between two friends in Paris, Diderot exposes the corruption of society during the French Enlightenment with brilliant and witty dialogue.

Responses To Literature

1. Though he fathered a daughter, Congreve never married. Assess Congreve's portrayal of the external influences that jeopardize love or marriage. Do you feel that Congreve was fundamentally opposed to marriage? Support your answer with evidence from at least one of his dramas.
2. Evaluate the complex plot of *The Way of the World*. Based on what you discover, write a summary of events that occurred before the beginning of the play. Would it have been helpful for Congreve to show these events in the play as well? Why do you think he chose not to?
3. Research the political upheaval in England from the civil war in the 1640s that led to the downfall of the English monarchy and to the "restoration" of Charles II in 1660. In what ways did political change help shape Restoration drama? How did political events contribute to the popular appeal of the comedy of manners?
4. In *The Way of the World*, Congreve gives his characters unusual names based on actual words. Some examples include Foible, Wilful, and even Mirabell, which is derived from the Latin word *mirabilis*. Make a list of

all the unusual character names you can find, offer a definition for each, and state why you think Congreve used the name for that particular character.

5. How close to reality do you believe the society in *The Way of the World* is in reference to Congreve's time? Does his presentation conform to English society during the Restoration?

William Congreve is a super-important playwright of the Restoration period, and a disciple of John Dryden's. He is known for his comedies, which catered to the tastes of the time: bawdy and full of sexual innuendo. Hmm. That sounds kind of like comedy today. Maybe some comedy themes are timeless?

Congreve's popularity didn't last long, however. By the end of the Restoration period in 1700, audiences were turning away from the "Comedies of Manners" that Congreve specialized in, and the author pretty much much gave up on theater toward the end of his life. We hope he found a new, old people-friendly hobby, like shuffleboard.

Love for Love (1695)

Love for Love is a comedy about love and money. It involves a romantic triangle between Valentine, his father Sir Sampson, and the woman they both fall in love with: Angelica. Things get really messy when Sir Sampson, who is mad at his son for wasting so much money, proposes to Angelica.

Uh, yeah. That sounds insanely awkward.

Love for Love is a typical Restoration comedy. In it we find the usual themes of romance, trickery and a focus on social class and social hypocrisy.

The Way of the World (1700)

This is another comedy whose plot revolves around all sorts of romantic entanglements. The two lovers at the center of the play—Mirabell and Millamant—want to get married, but Millamant's rich old aunt stands in the way. The play focuses on the two lovers' attempts to get around the aunt.

The Way of the World is considered to be Congreve's most accomplished comedy. It was published right at the end of the Restoration period (in 1700), at which point theatrical tastes were beginning to change. Congreve's work fell out of favor soon after this play was performed. It took some time before critics began appreciating the work again.

Check in Progress II

Q1. Write a short note on Literary work.

Answer

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Q2. Give brief account on work in critical context.

Answer

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13.12 LET'S SUM UP

Congreve withdrew from the theatre and lived the rest of his life on residuals from his early work, the royalties received when his plays were produced, as well as his private income. His output from 1700 was restricted to the occasional poem and some translation (notably Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*). Congreve never married; in his own era and through subsequent generations, he was famous for his friendships with prominent actresses and noblewomen for whom he wrote major parts in all his plays.These women included Anne Bracegirdle and Henrietta Godolphin, 2nd Duchess of Marlborough, daughter of the famous general, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough. Congreve and Henrietta probably met by 1703 and the duchess had a daughter, Mary (1723–1764), who was believed to be his child. Upon his death, he left his entire fortune to the Duchess of Marlborough.

As early as 1710, he suffered both from gout and from cataracts on his eyes. Congreve suffered a carriage accident in late September 1728, from which he never recovered (having probably received an internal injury);

he died in London in January 1729, and was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

13.13 KEYWORDS

Legacy :an amount of money or property left to someone in a will.

Literary: concerning the writing, study, or content of literature, especially of the kind valued for quality of form.

13.14 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Discuss in detail the literary career of the Congreve.

2. Discuss the attitudes of nineteenth-century critics to Restoration comedy.

3. Discuss the characteristics of Congreve's wit .

4. Give the detail introduction about the life of William Congreve.

13.15 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

↑ Scott McMillin, *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy (Norton Critical Editions)* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company; 2 Sub edition, January 1997).

↑ William Congreve also participated in a number of translations after 1700, much of which are not accounted for.

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13.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 13.4

Answer 2 : Check Section 13.5

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 13.8

Answer 2 : Check Section 13.11

UNIT - 14: CONGREVE- THE WAY OF THE WORLD

STRUCTURE

14.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Unit is to understand the poetry Way Of World by William Congreve

Unit helps to achieve following objectives:

- **Introduction to Way Of World**
- **Character List, Way Of World**

- **Summary and Analysis Dedication of Way Of World**
- **Summary and Analysis Prologue of Way Of World**
- **Summary and Analysis Act of Way Of World**

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Before the action of the play begins, the following events are assumed to have taken place.

Mirabell, a young man-about-town, apparently not a man of great wealth, has had an affair with Mrs. Fainall, the widowed daughter of Lady Wishfort. To protect her from scandal in the event of pregnancy, he has helped engineer her marriage to Mr. Fainall, a man whom he feels to be of sufficiently good reputation to constitute a respectable match, but not a man of such virtue that tricking him would be unfair. Fainall, for his part, married the young widow because he coveted her fortune to support his amour with Mrs. Marwood. In time, the liaison between Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall ended (although this is not explicitly stated), and Mirabell found himself in love with Millamant, the niece and ward of Lady Wishfort, and the cousin of his former mistress.

There are, however, financial complications. Half of Millamant's fortune was under her own control, but the other half, 6,000 pounds, was controlled by Lady Wishfort, to be turned over to Millamant if she married a suitor approved by her aunt. Unfortunately, Mirabell had earlier offended Lady Wishfort; she had misinterpreted his flattery as love.

Mirabell, therefore, has contrived an elaborate scheme. He has arranged for a pretended uncle (his valet, Waitwell) to woo and win Lady Wishfort. Then Mirabell intends to reveal the actual status of the successful wooer and obtain her consent to his marriage to Millamant by rescuing her from this misalliance. Waitwell was to marry Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid, before the masquerade so that he might not decide to hold Lady Wishfort to her contract; Mirabell is too much a man of his time to trust anyone in matters of money or love. Millamant is aware of the plot, probably through Foible.

When the play opens, Mirabell is impatiently waiting to hear that Waitwell is married to Foible. During Mirabell's card game with Fainall, it becomes clear that the relations between the two men are strained. There are hints at the fact that Fainall has been twice duped by Mirabell: Mrs. Fainall is Mirabell's former mistress, and Mrs. Marwood, Fainall's mistress, is in love with Mirabell. In the meantime, although Millamant quite clearly intends to have Mirabell, she enjoys teasing him in his state of uncertainty.

Mirabell bids fair to succeed until, unfortunately, Mrs. Marwood overhears Mrs. Fainall and Foible discussing the scheme, as well as Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall's earlier love affair. Since Mrs. Marwood also overhears insulting comments about herself, she is vengeful and informs Fainall of the plot and the fact, which he suspected before, that his wife was once Mirabell's mistress. The two conspirators now have both motive and means for revenge. In the same afternoon, Millamant accepts Mirabell's proposal and rejects Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady Wishfort's candidate for her hand.

Fainall now dominates the action. He unmasks Sir Rowland, the false uncle, and blackmails Lady Wishfort with the threat of her daughter's disgrace. He demands that the balance of Millamant's fortune, now forfeit, be turned over to his sole control, as well as the unspent balance of Mrs. Fainall's fortune. In addition, he wants assurance that Lady Wishfort will not marry so that Mrs. Fainall is certain to be the heir.

This move of Fainall's is now countered; Millamant says that she will marry Sir Wilfull to save her own fortune. Fainall insists that he wants control of the rest of his wife's money and immediate management of Lady Wishfort's fortune. When Mirabell brings two servants to prove that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood were themselves guilty of adultery, Fainall ignores the accusation and points out that he will still create a scandal which would blacken the name of Mrs. Fainall unless he gets the money.

At this point, Mirabell triumphantly reveals his most successful ploy. Before Mrs. Fainall married Fainall, she and Mirabell had suspected the man's character, and she had appointed her lover trustee of her fortune. Fainall is left with no claim to make because Mrs. Fainall does not control her own money. He and Mrs. Marwood leave in great anger. Sir Wilfull steps aside as Millamant's suitor; Lady Wishfort forgives the servants and consents to the match of Mirabell and Millamant.

14.2 CHARACTER LIST

Mirabell A young man-about-town, in love with Millamant.

Millamant A young, very charming lady, in love with, and loved by, Mirabell. She is the ward of Lady Wishfort because she is the niece of Lady Wishfort's long-dead husband. She is a first cousin of Mrs. Fainall.

Fainall A man-about-town. He and Mirabell know each other well, as people do who move in the same circles. However, they do not really like each other. Fainall married his wife for her money.

Mrs. Fainall Wife of Fainall and daughter of Lady Wishfort. She was a wealthy young widow when she married Fainall. She is Millamant's cousin and was Mirabell's mistress, presumably after her first husband died.

Mrs. Marwood Fainall's mistress. It does appear, however, that she was, and perhaps still is, in love with Mirabell. This love is not returned.

Young Witwoud A fop. He came to London from the country to study law but apparently found the life of the fashionable man-about-town more pleasant. He has pretensions to being a wit. He courts Millamant, but not seriously; she is merely the fashionable belle of the moment.

Petulant A young fop, a friend of Witwoud's. His name is indicative of his character.

Lady Wishfort A vain woman, fifty-five years old, who still has pretensions to beauty. She is the mother of Mrs. Fainall and the guardian of Millamant. She is herself in love with Mirabell, although she is now spiteful because he offended her vanity.

Sir Wilfull Witwoud The elder brother of Young Witwoud, he is forty years old and is planning the grand tour of Europe that was usually made by young men to complete their education. He is Lady Wishfort's nephew, a distant, non-blood relative of Millamant's, and Lady Wishfort's choice as a suitor for Millamant's hand.

Waitwell Mirabell's valet. At the beginning of the play, he has just been married to Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. He masquerades as Sir Rowland, Mirabell's nonexistent uncle, and woos Lady Wishfort.

Foible Lady Wishfort's maid, married to Waitwell.

Mincing Millamant's maid.

Peg A maid in Lady Wishfort's house.

14.3 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS DEDICATION

Summary

In this dedication, as in most others of the period, we may ignore the rather fulsome praise of the man to whom it was addressed; that praise is a convention of the time. Some of the comments made in the letter, however, are of interest. Congreve was obviously chagrined at the play's lukewarm reception and attributed it to the coarse taste of the audience. The playgoers were accustomed to plays where "the characters meant to be ridiculed" were "fools so gross" that "instead of moving our mirth, they ought very often to excite our compassion." Congreve's description of his own purpose when creating comic characters is revealing: "to design some characters which should appear ridiculous, not so much through a natural folly . . . as through an affected wit . . . which . . . is also false." This statement has often been considered the basic definition of characterization in the "Comedy of Manners," a genre where "affectation" is the great fault. Unfortunately, Congreve continues, many people could not distinguish between "a Witwoud and a Truewit."

Not all of the comic characters in *The Way of the World* are "affectations," for Congreve included some that were created as "humours." He is here making the point that he is avoiding the extremes of farce, what we might call slapstick, in this comedy.

14.4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS PROLOGUE

Summary

The Prologue was a conventional requirement for all plays. This one was delivered by the sixty-five-year-old Betterton, the grand old man of the Restoration stage. Congreve did not keep the promises he made in this prologue:

He swears he'll not resent one hissed-off scene,
Nor, like those peevish wits, his play maintain,
Who, to assert their sense, your taste arraign.

The dedicatory letter indicates that he did arraign the taste of his audience because it did not approve his play (although his scenes were not hissed).

His statement about what is in his play has more value: "some plot," "some new thought," "some humor too," but "no farce," the absence of which, he adds, ironically, would presumably be a fault. The fact that he describes his play as having no farce indicates that he planned the Wilfull-Witwoud scenes and the Lady Wishfort scenes as less broadly burlesqued than some of his contemporaries might have wished.

The statements that there is no satire because the town is so reformed and that there are surely no knaves or fools in his audience are, of course, ironic.

Check in Progress I

Q1. Give short analysis of Prologue.

Answer

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Q1. Give brief about character list

Answer

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14.5 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS ACT I

Summary

The curtain rises as Mirabell is defeated by Fainall in a desultory card game at the chocolate-house. The conversation reveals that Mirabell is in love with Millamant but is intensely disliked by Millamant's guardian. Lady Wishfort's dislike seems to have some justification: Mirabell at one time pretended to court her in order to conceal his love for her niece. She is fifty-five years old, and her vanity was offended when she discovered that Mirabell did not love her.

When Fainall leaves for a moment, a servant enters and informs Mirabell that his valet married that day. Mirabell is pleased because his marriage is a necessary prelude to some secret scheme — which is not revealed.

Witwoud and Petulant then enter, and we gain the additional information that Witwoud's elder brother is coming to town to court Millamant. Witwoud and Petulant are also both courting Millamant but only because she is the currently reigning belle. There is further talk of an uncle of Mirabell's who is coming to court Lady Wishfort. The men leave for a walk in the park.

Analysis

The summary of this act points up one of the difficulties in the structure of the play. The first act does not seem to move forward. It contains only partial exposition so that the reader has trouble following the play. The relations between Mirabell and Fainall are not made clear. It would be the actors' task to suggest the strain between them. The skilled and, we might say, suspicious reader may glean as much from the lines.

Fainall distrusts Mirabell, with good cause. He suspects the nature of the friendship between Mirabell and his wife before their marriage. He also suspects that his mistress, Mrs. Marwood, loves Mirabell. Mirabell is aware of Fainall's suspicions and, of course, suspects that Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress. When Mirabell says that "for the discovery of this amour, I am indebted to your friend, or your wife's friend, Mrs. Marwood," the actor will put the emphasis on "or your wife's friend" so as to suggest that the innocent comment is barbed. Fainall pointedly replies, "What should provoke her to be your enemy unless she has made you advances which you have slighted? Women do not easily forgive omissions of that nature." The actor must read the lines properly on the stage, and so must the reader.

Other lines also demand careful reading. The talk about Lady Wishfort is not merely casual: She is very important in the subsequent action. The comments about Millamant's character are highly significant. Despite Mirabell's wit and irony, we must realize his sincerity. The speech beginning "I like her with all her faults" is a highly ironic yet thoroughly convincing admission of love. The rather mysterious concern with Waitwell's marriage seems strange until later developments.

Witwoud and Petulant are a pair of the fops and false wits that abounded in Restoration London, or at least in Restoration drama. They have no part in the action of *The Way of the World*; at most, they serve to suggest Millamant's train of suitors. Congreve's deftness of line is such that, over the years, critics have complained about the brilliance of some of Witwoud's speeches — for instance, "a letter as heavy as a panegyric in a funeral sermon" is not a bad line. But we can see that Witwoud lacks the style and the dignity that is so marked in Mirabell, the ideal Restoration gentleman, and he is so self-satisfied that he is unable to distinguish between legitimate raillery and the personal insults directed at him by both Mirabell and Fainall. As Mirabell ironically states: "He has indeed one good quality — he is not exceptious; . . . he will construe an affront into a jest, and call downright rudeness and ill language satire and fire."

Petulant is a clearer case. He comes closer to the kinds of characters one observes in Jonson. The foppishness of both characters can be reinforced by the arts of the costumers and the actor.

14.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS ACT II

Summary

In St. James' Park, Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood discuss their favorite subjects, men and how to manipulate them. Beneath their apparent friendliness, they are wary of each other as they talk of Mirabell. Mrs. Fainall suspects, quite correctly, that Mrs. Marwood is in love with him.

After Fainall and Mirabell enter, Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall stroll off and leave Fainall and Mrs. Marwood alone on the stage. We now discover that Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress and that he only married his wife for her fortune so as to finance his amour. However, their love includes neither faith nor trust. Fainall is sensitive to the fact that Mrs. Marwood's seeming enmity of Mirabell covers her attraction for him. The scene ends with mutual recrimination and a reconciliation as they leave the stage when Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall return.

The conversation of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall supplies new revelations. Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall were lovers; she married Fainall as a cover for her affair with Mirabell. Mirabell, during their stroll, has told her of his scheme to trick Lady Wishfort and marry Millamant. As he does not trust Waitwell, he arranged for a marriage between Waitwell and Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid. (The news of this marriage arrived in the first act.) After all, having wooed and won Lady Wishfort, Waitwell might plan on actually marrying her.

Millamant now makes her first entrance, accompanied by Witwoud and her maid, Mincing. She is thoroughly aware of her own charm and her power over Mirabell, and toys with Mirabell's love at the same time that she returns it. She is apparently quite prepared to go along with Mirabell's plot, which Foible has revealed to her, a clear indication that in the end she intends to have Mirabell.

After her exit, Waitwell and Foible appear. Waitwell will woo Lady Wishfort in the guise of Sir Rowland, Mirabell's imaginary uncle. As Sir Rowland, he would be a fine match; in addition, the marriage would serve Lady Wishfort as a way to be revenged on Mirabell for his earlier slight, for presumably Mirabell would be disinherited when Sir Rowland married. All exit, with Waitwell making wry, typically Restoration comments.

Analysis

In this act, the tensions between the characters are exposed. Just as Fainall and Mirabell, presumably friends, engaged in a verbal duel that hid a real one, so Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood now fence. There is good reason for Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood not to trust each other; it *is* true that Mrs. Marwood is the mistress of Mrs. Fainall's husband. By the same token, she *is* in love with Mirabell, Mrs. Fainall's former, and perhaps present, lover.

One can, from a modern point of view, question the nature of the love of Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall. After all, if he had loved her, why had he not married her? She was presumably young, beautiful, wealthy, and available. Interesting also is the affair between Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. Fainall seems to love Mrs. Marwood after his fashion. That love should include trust does not even occur to him. As he says, does she think that the lover will sleep, though the husband may nod?

The scenes between Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall and between Mrs. Marwood and Fainall present a real challenge to the actors. Before the audience is given the information that makes it possible to follow the

play, the actors must convey the currents of feeling, essentially cynical and unpleasant, which underly the very polished manners and high style of the exchanges of wit.

The act includes important revelations of character. A clue to the character of Mirabell is presented when Mrs. Marwood accuses Mirabell of being proud. Mrs. Fainall reacts strongly: Pride, she says, is the one fault he does not have. We may have some difficulty interpreting the term "proud"; it would appear that he is gracious rather than arrogant.

Fainall describes himself as having "a heart of proof and something of the constitution to bustle through the ways of wedlock and this world." He is, we might translate, a man who can adjust to circumstance. Mirabell describes him as "a man lavish of his morals, an interested and professing friend, a false and designing lover, yet one whose wit and outward behavior have gained a reputation with the town, enough to make that woman stand excused who has suffered herself to be won by his addresses." These observations are ample preparation for Fainall's future actions. His suspicions of others are accurate because he recognizes his own faults in them.

Millamant is a contrast to all others about her. She is surrounded by intrigue, and, together with her fortune, she is the object and the potential prize of much of it. However, she is not herself active in any intrigue. Her banter and wit are usually good-natured and direct. She does not have the cynical opinion of human nature which is so important a part of the attitude of everyone else in the play. She delights in teasing Mirabell, with the justification that she thinks of him as already her property. She is vain but amused at her own vanity. She can play the game of wit and

make jokes about pinning up her hair with letters written in poetry — prose, of course, would be completely unacceptable. She is an ingénue of a type that could only have been presented on the Restoration stage, and she is without question the most successful of her kind.

The love story of Mirabell and Millamant differs from what might be expected. In most love plots, the male has to overcome the unwillingness, dislike, or simple reluctance of the other party. In *The Way of the World*, all the problems connected with the love affair are external. There is never any feeling that these two are not in love. Millamant postures, primps, and teases; it is fun to be desired and desirable. But these lovers have no internal conflicts.

14.7 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS ACT III

Summary

At her home, Lady Wishfort is trying to hide the signs of age with cosmetics applied externally and brandy internally. Mrs. Marwood enters and tells her that Foible was talking to Mirabell in the park. While Mrs. Marwood hides in a closet, Lady Wishfort taxes Foible with disloyalty. However, Foible takes advantage of this opportunity to forward Mirabell's plot; she says he stopped her only to insult Lady Wishfort, who therefore determines to accept Sir Rowland, due to arrive that day.

Unfortunately, after Lady Wishfort leaves, Mrs. Fainall enters, and she and Foible discuss Mirabell's scheme; Mrs. Marwood, still hidden, overhears their conversation. They also mention that Mrs. Fainall was Mirabell's mistress at one time, and that Mrs. Marwood is in love with Mirabell, but he finds her unattractive. Mrs. Marwood's anger is

reinforced in the next scene when Millamant also accuses her of loving Mirabell and makes biting remarks about her age.

When the guests arrive for dinner, Petulant and young Witwoud, and then Sir Wilfull Witwoud, the elder brother and Millamant's suitor, appear. In a scene that perhaps comes closer to farce than any other in this play, Sir Wilfull does not recognize his foppish brother, and young Witwoud refuses to recognize his country-bumpkin elder brother. Afterward, Mrs. Marwood, left alone with Fainall, describes Mirabell's plot. He is certain now that he has been a cuckold and wants revenge.

Mrs. Marwood then outlines a plan for Fainall. Since Lady Wishfort has control of Millamant's fortune, and since she is very fond of her daughter, Mrs. Fainall, he can insist that Millamant's money be made over to him on threat of making public his wife's transgressions.

Analysis

Lady Wishfort is a stock character of Restoration drama; and, indeed, the older woman, eager to entrap a husband, has always been a figure of fun. But that is not to say she has no individuality. In the last three acts, Congreve devotes more attention to her character development and gives her more lines than any other character. She is eager to be wooed but would not seem to pursue. She would be forward but not too forward. She dare not smile or frown, for the paint might crack. She is concerned about appearances, but "what's integrity to an opportunity?" She is a sanctimonious hypocrite (as her description of her daughter's rearing in Act V makes clear); her private library, to which she directs Mrs. Marwood in the closet, is made up of devotional and anti-theatrical

books. Quarles' *Emblems* are didactic poems, each with its moral attached; Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix* is a long attack on the immorality of the theater; Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* was published in 1698, two years before the production of *The Way of the World.* "Bunyan's Works" hardly need comment.

Lady Wishfort is in every way worth watching — obnoxious, laughable, vulgar, a little disgusting, and sometimes oddly pathetic. She craves friends, but with amazing consistency she invariably puts her trust in people who betray her.

Foible is different from the typical comedy lady's maid, represented, perhaps, by Mincing. She is an alive, mentally agile young woman and knows all the intrigues in the Wishfort household. She is aware of the passages between Marwood and Fainall, and the passages before that between Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell. She is indeed the key to all matters. Foible's comment that Mrs. Marwood "has a month's mind," with all its insulting connotations, is a key phrase in the development of the plot.

Mrs. Marwood's love for Mirabell now turns to hatred; she is the woman scorned. (It is Congreve's famous line in *The Mourning Bride* that hell has "no fury like a woman scorned.")

In the scene between young Witwoud and Sir Wilfull, some of the incidental values of the play are made clear. Witwoud's witticisms are, after all, clever and frequently apropos. Up to this scene, the fact that he has, as Mirabell says in Act I, "some few scraps of other folks' wit" has to be brought out by the actor in his portrayal of the character. However, his treatment of his brother is not that of the Restoration gentleman, who

might deplore Sir Wilfull's crudeness but would never try to deny his brother. He does not display the polish that Mirabell would under the same circumstances. Although Sir Wilfull is a stock Restoration country bumpkin, he displays a common sense and a forthright honesty that make him appear far the worthier of the brothers.

The last scene between Marwood and Fainall indicates clearly the direction of the play for the two following acts. The counterplot, opposed to the plot of the hero, is now set up.

14.8 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS ACT IV

Summary

After Lady Wishfort is seen preparing for the visit of Sir Rowland, Millamant and Sir Wilfull are onstage together. Sir Wilfull, somewhat drunk but very shy, is too bashful actually to complete his proposal to Millamant. Overawed by the aloof lady, he is eager to get away and grateful when she dismisses him. It is obvious that he will not succeed, but he is likable in his embarrassment.

Immediately after occurs the scene between Millamant and Mirabell that is often called the proviso scene. They discuss the conditions under which he is prepared to marry her and under which she is prepared to accept him. At the end of the scene, when Mrs. Fainall enters, Millamant admits that she does love him violently. As Mirabell leaves, the company — Sir Wilfull, young Witwoud, and Petulant — come in from dinner. They are all drunk — Sir Wilfull the drunkest of the three. Now the spurious Sir Rowland arrives to woo Lady Wishfort, and his wooing bids fair to be successful when a letter is brought from Mrs. Marwood in which she tells Lady Wishfort of the plot. However, Waitwell and Foible

between them manage to convince Lady Wishfort that the letter is actually sent by Mirabell and is designed as a plot against Sir Rowland. Apparently Lady Wishfort is convinced, at least for the moment.

Analysis

Much of Act IV is devoted to variations on the theme of courtship in the Restoration manner. First the comic country squire is portrayed. At the end of the act, the obviously burlesqued Sir Rowland woos Lady Wishfort in a broadly comic manner. Between the two is the proviso scene.

The proviso scene in *The Way of the World* is generally considered the finest in Restoration comedy. The motif was first used by Dryden in *Secret Love*. The scene must be read carefully and, in a performance, must be developed by the actors with some finesse. Under the polished phrases and the verbal fencing, the happy couple are very much in love, as Millamant admits at the end of the scene. The careful student might reread the scene at this point to see what has led up to this admission.

This proviso scene is an emblem of the Restoration comic convention at its civilized best. At no time do the characters descend to any obvious display of emotion, let alone pathos. Even though in love, they conduct the scene with complete decorum. In the Restoration convention, in every exchange between a man and a woman, each is trying to build his or her own ego. All encounters are duels, and to be bested in the game of wits is to lose. The proviso scene is the reconciliation of these seeming irreconcilables. Mirabell will be a husband, Millamant will dwindle into a wife, but they have made a victory of their mutual surrender.

The gentlemen, drunk after dinner, who enter immediately afterward, are at once a comic interlude and a wry commentary. We have seen the Restoration ideal; we now see the gentleman as he actually exists.

The comic scene between Sir Rowland and Lady Wishfort is broad. Sir Rowland is a masquerade. He is the *servant* pretending to be a gentleman. Lady Wishfort plays the salacious widow to the hilt. Inevitably, the scene is a marked contrast to the love duel of the proviso scene.

The drunken comments are also nice counterpoint. Petulant's "if you can love me dear nymph, say it — and that's the conclusion. Pass on, or pass off — " and Sir Wilfull's "A match or no match, cousin with the hard name . . ." are a significant contrast with the mastery of style displayed in the preceding scene.

14.9 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS ACT V

Summary

The scene, as before, is Lady Wishfort's house. Lady Wishfort has discovered Mirabell's plot. Foible tries unsuccessfully to make excuses for herself.

Fainall now makes his demands. As Millamant's fortune of 6,000 pounds was presumably forfeit when she refused to marry a suitor selected for her by Lady Wishfort, he wants the money as his price for not blackening his wife's reputation. He also wants the remainder of Mrs. Fainall's fortune turned over to his sole control. And he insists on Lady Wishfort's not marrying again so that he be sole heir. These terms are very harsh, and Lady Wishfort might not be prepared to go along with them except

that Mrs. Marwood, standing by, goads her on by harping on the public disgrace of her daughter, Mrs. Fainall.

When the two maids now reveal that Fainall, in his turn, has been unfaithful to his wife, he refuses to be deterred; he is willing to be the subject of scandal himself, but he will still make public his wife's shame. When Millamant states that she is prepared to marry Sir Wilfull, thus meeting the wishes of her aunt and saving her 6,000 pounds, Fainall suspects a trick, but he can still demand control of the balance of his wife's estate, and now also the control of Lady Wishfort's. At this point, Mirabell presents the evidence which will protect Mrs. Fainall. At the time of her marriage, they had judged Fainall's character correctly, and Mrs. Fainall secretly signed over her fortune to Mirabell's control. There is, therefore, no money which Fainall can successfully obtain.

In great anger, Fainall and Mrs. Marwood leave the stage, vowing dire vengeance. Lady Wishfort, having discovered that Fainall was a villain and that Mrs. Marwood, her friend, was not a true friend, is now prepared to forgive Mirabell; Millamant can now marry him with her aunt's consent. It is on this happy but somewhat indeterminate note that the plays ends.

Analysis

The fifth act is muddled; there is far too much plotting and action. Fainall comes in with his demands. Mirabell and Sir Wilfull Witwoud enter to frustrate part of them. Foible and Mincing disclose the information that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood have also been guilty of adultery. For the first

time, we hear of the deed Mrs. Fainall signed. And, finally, Lady Wishfort forgives everyone.

If one looks at it structurally, it is possible to see that Mirabell's original scheme is here balanced by the counterplot of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. They, in turn, are foiled by Foible and Mincing on the one hand, and by Millamant's presumed willingness to marry Sir Wilfull on the other. But these developments are then countered by Fainall's insistence on the balance of Mrs. Fainall's money. And this move is conclusively countered by Mirabell's producing the deed signed before Mrs. Fainall's marriage, presumably in anticipation of, and protection against, just such a situation.

Lady Wishfort, in this act, becomes almost a sympathetic character. Her faults and her vanities are many, but here we see her trying to protect her daughter, finding that the people whom she trusted have proven completely treacherous. Caught on the one hand by the desire to save those whom she loves, and trapped by the treachery of those she trusted, she is an odd figure in a very unusual situation in Restoration drama.

The ending of the play is not entirely satisfactory. For one thing, one is finally left with the question, "What of Mrs. Fainall?" She will retain her money, but her lover is lost to her, and it is not entirely clear that Fainall and Mrs. Marwood will not find some rather unpleasant revenge.

Summary and Analysis Epilogue

Summary

Spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle, who played Millamant, the epilogue only makes conventional points: the essential inadequacy of critics who decry

plays without knowledge, and the statement that the characters are fictitious, and no individual is represented; the satire is universal, for

Check in Progress II

Q1. Give the summary of Act2.

Answer

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Q1. Write short note on analysis of Act V

Answer

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14.10 LET'S SUM UP

Because of its striking characterization and brilliant dialogue, *The Way of the World* is generally considered to be the finest example of Restoration comedy, as well as one of the last. Nevertheless, it was not successful when it was first presented in 1700. Although the English audiences, unlike the French, were accustomed to plots and subplots and to a great deal of action in their plays, they were confused by the amount of activity crammed into a single day. *The Way of the World* had only a single action to which everything was related, but it included a scheme, and a counterplot to frustrate the scheme, and then moves to foil the counterplot. There were too many episodes, events, reversals, and

discoveries, most of them huddled in the last acts, and they demanded too much of the audience. If the difficulty was ever overcome in a performance, it was only when actors and director were completely conscious of their problem.

Every play must start, in the traditional phrase, *in medias res;* that is, some events must have occurred before the opening curtain. The devices, called exposition, used to inform the audience or reader of these events could be as obvious as a character addressing the audience directly, or could be an important part of the action, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* or in Ibsen's plays, or in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night.* In Restoration drama, exposition was usually straightforward; two characters might meet and gossip, or a man might talk to a servant; but in *The Way of the World,* exposition is highly ingenious and long withheld. In Act I, we are told that Mirabell is in love and that there are obstacles to the courtship, but most of the significant facts are hidden until Act II so that the first part of the play is obscure. Then, just as Mirabell's scheme becomes clear, it loses significance, for Fainall's counterplot becomes the machinery that moves the action forward. It is, therefore, worthwhile to trace the story in chronological order.

Although there seems to be the usual happy ending to this comedy, *The Way of the World* leaves a number of loose ends that add to the confusion.

It is difficult to see where Mrs. Fainall's future is satisfactorily resolved. At one point in Act V, she says that this is the end of her life with Fainall; that is one comfort. But at the end of the play, it seems that she

will continue to live with Fainall in an obviously very awkward domestic situation.

It is not clear that Fainall is completely foiled. He could still demand control of Lady Wishfort's fortune or disgrace her daughter. Mirabell's statement that "his circumstances are such, he [Fainall] must of force comply" is hardly adequate.

Some problems of motivation in the play are not clear. Why didn't Mirabell himself marry Mrs. Fainall when she was a widow? Mirabell is not wealthy, and Mrs. Fainall apparently inherited a considerable fortune from her first husband.

Is the affair between Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall at an end? She married Fainall only to forestall scandal if she became pregnant. If it is at an end, why has it ceased? Why should she help Mirabell with his wooing of Millamant? Has he perhaps convinced Mrs. Fainall that he is marrying Millamant for money?

Apparently Mirabell had wanted to marry Millamant the year before, but the match was forestalled by Mrs. Marwood's interference. Fainall suggests that, had they married, Millamant would have lost half her fortune. Why then the elaborate plot now, to save the 6,000 pounds that Mirabell was prepared to sacrifice before?

There no real answers to these questions. They seem to be loose ends that the dramatist never bothered to tie together.

14.11 KEYWORDS

- **Epilogue:** a section or speech at the end of a book or play that serves as a comment on or a conclusion to what has happened.

- **Prologue:** a separate introductory section of a literary, dramatic, or musical work.
- **Analysis** : detailed examination of the elements or structure of something.

14.12 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- In *The Way of the World*, what characters display the best "wit"?
- Discuss William Congreve's play The Way of the World as a comedy.
- The Way of the World by Congreve is a mirror of the contemporary society. Please explain. why is it called so?
- How would Mirabell in The Way of the World be characterized?

14.13 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Congreve, William (2000). *The Way of the World*. London, England: A & C Black Limited.
- Klekar, Cynthia. "Obligation, Coercion, and Economy: The Gift of Deed in Congreve's *The Way of the World*." In *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Linda Zionkowski and Cynthia Klekar. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009
- *The Way of the World* at Project Gutenberg.
- *The Way of the World* at the Internet Broadway Database

- Oxford Playhouse Review of *The Way of the World* on the BBC website.
- Daily Info review of the play.

14.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 14.5

Answer 2 : Check Section 14.3

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2 :

Answer 1 : Check Section 14.7

Answer 2 : Check Section 14.10