Age. The romantic imagination dealt with the individual, subjective experience, the irrational, the supernatural, mystical and the spiritual elements. The present unit introduces you to some of the major writers of the **Romantic Age** in the history of English literature namely William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, John Keats, P.B. Shelley, Lord Byron and Charles Lamb.

10.3 MAJOR WRITERS

It may be noted that it is not possible to cover all the writers of the Romantic Age as it is an exhaustive exercise. Yet, you will be curious to learn about the major Romantic writers whose literary works represent the Romantic literary fervour. Thus, the section will acquaint you with the major Romantic poets and writers who are considered to represent the spirit of the age.

William Blake:

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was a 'prophetic' poet, a skilled painter and engraver. He was brought up in London and was mostly tutored at home by his mother. As a young boy, he attended a drawing school and later went on to engage in seven years of training and apprenticeship with an engraver, at the young age of 21. Blake took to engraving as his chosen profession and blended this art along with his writings.

The Bible was a major influence throughout Blake's life and is reflected in most of his works as well. He is considered a **'visionary'** or a **'prophetic' poet** due to the visions he was often subject to; at the age of four he had a frightful vision of God peering through a window. He often confided in his parents about seeing 'angels' while strolling in the fields and even meeting prophet Ezekiel under a tree. Blake illustrated several of his works with what he called as **'illuminated printing'** or **'relief etching'** by using copper plates to etch every single design on paper, in keeping with the theme of the respective poems.

Among his major literary works are his volumes of poetry including epic or narrative poems like ***Songs of Innocence and of Experience*****,**

Other Poems (1798), ***Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*** (1800), ***Poems, in Two Volumes, Guide to The Lakes***, ***The Excursion***, ***Laodamia*** and ***The Prelude***. In the first volume the well read poems are "Simon Lee", "Lines Written in Early Spring", "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey". The second volume contains the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads,* 'Lucy Gray", and "Michael". The third volume *Poems, in Two Volumes* contains the poems: "Daffodils", "The Solitary Reaper", "Ode on Intimations of Immortality", "London, 1802", "Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" and "The World is Too Much With Us". Also he wrote the only play of his literary career which was titled ***The Borderers***, a verse play.

Apart from other honourary degrees from Durham and Oxford University, Wordsworth was appointed the **Poet Laureate** after the demise of Robert Southey in 1843.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

S.T. Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who built an association with the Lake Poets and most importantly with William Wordsworth in founding the Romantic Movement in England. He belonged to a privileged family and as a Vicar's son received a good education. During his childhood years, he read classics which stirred his imagination and wrote poetry and it was in his school years that he came to be acquainted with his lifelong friend Charles Lamb. He went on to matriculate from Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791 where he was inclined towards political and philosophical ideas along with Robert Southey.

The three poems that are considered as masterpieces are- **"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"**, **"Christabel"** and **"Kubla Khan"**. His works create an atmosphere of what he called "the willing suspension of belief" with the elements of the mysterious and the supernatural and he is considered to have reignited the craze for gothic romance and to have had subsequent influence on writers such as Mary Shelley who wrote *Frankenstein*. "The Ancient Mariner" is one of the most well read poems which counts on the symbolic and the supernatural to create an engrossed

Relations of the World and Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation to the Present. Having read it and fallen asleep under the influence of opium, he dreamt and wrote the poem. The poem which remained a fragment or incomplete is about a pleasure dome in the ethereal Xanadu and refers to figure of the singing Abyssinian maid and the Mongol emperor Kubla Khan. Another of his fragmented poem is "Christabel" based on the female character by the same name and her meeting with an abducted woman named Geraldine.

John Keats:

John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821) was one of the finest English poets. He belonged to a fairly well-to-do family of London but was orphaned at an early age. It was at the school library at the Enfield school run by Rev. John Clarke where he developed an early interest in the Classics, history and Renaissance literature were to influence him throughout his life. Keats knew that he was destined to be a poet from the time he learnt to speak.

Keats penned a series of his famous odes titled **"Ode to a Nightingale"**, **"Ode on a Grecian Urn"**, **"Ode to Psyche"**, "**Ode on Melancholy**", "**Ode on Indolence**" and "**Ode on Fancy**". Among his much read poems and ballads are **"The Eve of St. Agnes"** and **"La Belle Dame sans Merci"** and sonnets like **"On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"**. His other major works include a poetic romance ***Endymion***, an abandoned epic poem ***Hyperion***, a narrative poem ***Lamia*** and the drama ***Otho*** which was not dramatised until 1950. Also Keats penned several epistles mostly to his bother George and his life long friend Charles Cowden Clarke which were later published in 1848 and 1878 which also poetic and reflected his literary ideas. It was in his correspondences that he first used the term **"negative capability"**. His poetry had a characteristic sensual imagery and one of his famous reflections on beauty appeared in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" which is **"'beauty is truth, truth beauty,' – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know"**. Based on his reflection on

Die*, *The Cloud*, *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude, The Masque of Anarchy and ***Adonaïs*** (a threnody or song of grief which is based on Keats' death). His long, visionary poems such as ***Queen Mab***, ***Alastor***, ***Hellas***, ***The Revolt of Islam*** and ***The Witch of Atlas*** are also considered as revolutionary works. ***The Cenci*** based on an Italian story and ***Prometheus Unbound***, based on the Greek myth of Prometheus are among his visionary verse dramas.

In his *Defense of Poetry* Shelley likened prophets to poets and declared that **"poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"**. It is considered as one of the major work of literary criticism which reflects Shelley's philosophical ideas of poetry and the role of poets. According to him, poetry inspired moral good and improved man and his society.



LET US KNOW

You will be interested to know, that the figure of **'Prometheus'** is a figure of Greek mythology and in his works, symbolically stood for political defiance. Prometheus who was the son of Iapetus and Asia had stolen and gifted mankind with 'fire' by defying the Gods. When Jupiter took fire away from earth; he again stole it from the chariot of the sun. Thus an angry Jupiter punished immortal Prometheus by nailing him to the rock of Caucasus for 3,000 years, with his eagle devouring his regenerating liver everyday, until Hercules slaughtered the bird and unbound him. Shelley had obviously added his own twists to the same theme in his *Prometheus Unbound*.

Lord Byron:

George Gordon Byron (22 January 1788 – 19 April 1824), 6th Baron Byron also commonly known as Lord Byron was an influential English poet who was born in London. After his mother Catharine Gordon, was abandoned by her husband she took him away to her native place in Aberdeenshire, Scotland where the young Byron grew up in the Scottish countryside. When his great-uncle passed away, Byron inherited the title of the sixth Baron in the English Barony, at the tender age of 10. He was an avid reader and so

be acquainted with Hazlitt, Hunt and Shelley. He remained a bachelor for life due to the commitments he had towards his family. He took it upon himself to take care of his sister until his last. She was affected with mental illness and had stabbed her mother in a fit of mania. After their father passed away suffering from prolonged mental illness and a heart stroke, Charles moved in a new home at Mitre Court Buildings in the Temple, with Mary where they resided together for nine long years. Their home was a meeting place for their literary friends and Lamb was particularly close to Coleridge who was his schoolmate. Both the friends were devout believers and friends for life.

You will be interested, to know that he wrote under the **pen name of 'Elia'** while writing for the *London Magazine* and his popular collection of personal essays are titled as ***Essays of Elia***. His works include ***Rosamund Gray***, a tragic play ***John Woodvil*** and the ***Last Essays of Elia***. He had collaborated with Mary and together they wrote three books, of which *Tales from Shakespeare* was most well received. His reflective essays endear him to the readers and thus he is considered as one of the major English essayists. Lamb passed away after catching an infection at the age of 59. His sister Mary outlived him but both brother and sister were buried beside each other.

Finally, while going through books on the History of English Literature it is important to note, the subtle differences in the treatment and emphasis of the poetic perceptions of the major Romantic poets. To the visionary in Blake, the 'imagination' was equated with a divine, the spiritual and a transcendental experience. For the philosophically inclined Coleridge, the power of the imagination is likened to the 'creative activity' of God. Both of them rejected the sensational experience of the outer world and instead, emphasised on the transforming spiritual power of the inner world.

Wordsworth and Keats through their poetry celebrated the 'sensory' experience of the visible and the outer world i.e., in which the live senses were perceptive of the outer world. Wordsworth shared common ideas with Coleridge on imagination and the difference between fancy and imagination. Shelley in his essay *Defense of Poetry* asserted the moral

Q 5: Who wrote under the pen name of 'Elia'? Name the popular collection of his personal essays published first in the *London Magazine*.

Q 6: Briefly state the difference between imagination and fancy.



10.4 LET US SUM UP

The present unit discusses some of the prominent writers of the period and briefly outlines their life and works in order to provide you an idea of the time and context in which they wrote. A brief sketch of the various literary forms along with the 'dominant' forms has been discussed to provide the learner with a broader view of the prevalent literary practices and popular readership. Thus, the unit will provide you with a better perspective on the cultural history of the Romantic Age, as well as, enable you to appreciate the contributions of the Romantic Age to English Literature.



10.5 FURTHER READING

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2) Roe, Nicholas. (ed.) (2007) *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

3) Wu, Duncan. (ed.) (2006) *Romanticism: An Anthology.* Cowley Road, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

4) Website: http://www.bloomsburyacademic.com/



10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Preface to Lyrical Ballads.*

Ans to Q No 2: "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel", "Kubla Khan".

UNIT 11: THE VICTORIAN AGE I

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Features of the Age

11.4 Major Literary Forms and Writers

- 11.4.1 Novel
- 11.4.2 Poetry
- 11.4.3 Prose

11.5 Let us Sum up

11.6 Further Reading

11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.8 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the major literary features of the Victorian age
- classify the major literary forms that had evolved during the period
- appreciate the literary practices and the development of English literature in the age.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is based on the English literary history of the Victorian age. This age roughly started in 1830, or alternatively 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill), or 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria); and extends up to the death of Victoria in 1901. For the convenience of discussion, literary historians often subdivide the long period into three phases: Early Victorian (beginning to 1848), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901). You will see that much of the Victorian writing reflects the major social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems of the period.

Intellectual Developments:

The literary works of the period was inevitably affected by the new ideas in science, religion and politics. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had a revolutionary impact on the contemporary world with its scientific thought. You can easily perceive the influence of Darwin's ideas in Tennyson's poem "In Memoriam". In the religious and ethical fields, the 'Oxford Movement,' needs mention. This movement had its source among the young and eager thinkers of the old university, and was headed by the Newman, who joined the Church of Rome. As a religious portent it marked the widespread discontent with the existing beliefs of the Church of England. There was also an immense outburst of social and political theorising represented mainly by thinkers like Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. This resulted in a great increase in the productions of the Press and of other more durable species of literature. The New Education Acts, made education compulsory which rapidly produced an enormous reading public. The cheapening of printing and paper increased the demand for books, so that the production was multiplied. The most popular form of literature was the novel, and the novelists responded with a will.

The Victorian Compromise:

The growth of London and of other major cities in Great Britain marked a final stage in the change from a way of life based on the land to a modern urban economy based on manufacturing, international trade and financial institutions. Great Britain was one of the first countries of the world to industrialise, to establish markets and to reinvest the profits in further manufacturing developments. Britain became the centre of the new philosophy of Free Trade, of new technology and of continuing industrial inventions. But the Victorian age is also one of faith and dilemma. 'The Victorian compromise' is one way of seeing this dilemma. It implies a kind of double standard between national success and the exploitation of lower-class workers at home and of colonies overseas; a compromise between philanthropy and tolerance (the abolition of slavery, 1833; tolerance for Catholics, 1829) and repression (the punishment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, 1834; the conditions of the poor).

producers and readers of novels but also as the subjects of the novel around whose lives the narratives were woven. During this period various categories of novels were being produced during the period which included the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among others.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) One of the significant developments of the Victorian period is the impact of Industrial Revolution.

(true/false)

Q 2: Critically analyse the development of novel during the Victorian Age.

11.4.2 Poetry

Poetry of the Victorian age, unlike that of the preceding Romantic age displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis. This was an outcome of the upheavals changes brought by rapid urbanisation, mechanised lives, changes in men and morals and the repeated tussle between faith and doubt, hope and despair. The ideas evinced from Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals while creating a value system that afflicted that society with a feeling of crisis and anxiety. Poetry of the age therefore, reveals the poet's persistent efforts to come to terms with the visible changes happening in every sphere of life. There were a variety of poetic forms that emerged ranging from elegy to dramatic monologue, from lyric to narrative poetry. In the poetic works of **Alfred Tennyson**, **Robert Browning**, **Matthew Arnold** and **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** among many others, one can clearly see the Victorian ethos.

Dramatic monologue is a poem in which there is one imaginary speaker addressing an imaginary audience. This was the form effectively created by Tennyson and Browning. However, during the Victorian period a large number of poets re-established the sonnet form, and in particular the



11.5 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, you will learn that the term 'Victorian age' is often used to cover the entire nineteenth century starting with Queen Victoria ascending the throne of England in 1837 till her demise in 1901. A history of the Victorian age records a period of economic expansion and rapid socio-economic change. The changes taking place in the society get reflected in the various literary forms like novel, poetry and prose. The unit provides the learner with a broad view on how the Victorian literature is characterised by loss of faith and religious doubts and is marked by an intellectual transformation. The complex Victorian society and its ideals came to be mirrored in the corresponding literature of the age. Thus, after a thorough study of the unit, you will be able to classify the different literary forms and features of Victorian literature.



11.6 FURTHER READING

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3) Ousby, Ian. (ed). (1988). *Companion to Literature in English*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

4) Thornley G. C. and Gwyneth Roberts. (1991). *An Outline of English Literature.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman.



11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

Ans to Q No 2: The Victorian age witnessed the flourish of fictional writings mainly the novel. The popularity of the novel rested mainly on the realistic

UNIT 12: THE VICTORIAN AGE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Major Writers
12.4 Let us Sum up
12.5 Further Reading
12.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.7 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- list some of the great writers whose contributions enriched different types of literature in the Victorian age
- discuss some of the important works of Victorian literature
- explain the overall impact of the Victorian age on the subsequent development of English Literature

12.2 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age, famous mostly for the development of both prosaic and poetic works was marked by poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, and Gerard Manley Hopkins; essayists like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Arnold, and Walter Pater; and novelists like Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, George Meredith, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, and Samuel Butler and so on. The present unit in continuation of its discussion on the Victorian age will take up some of the major writers of the period and examine their literary contributions to the literary practices of the Victorian age.

farcical characters, grotesque and terrible creatures and sensitive pictures of children.

William Makepeace Thackeray:

Thackeray (1811-1863) was born at Calcutta. He was another novelist who gained prominence during the Victorian age.His earliest literary work consisted of light and popular contributions to periodicals like *The Yellowplush Correspondence* (1837-38), *Fraser's Magazine.* His *The Book of Snobs* (1849), which originally appeared in *Punch* as *The Snobs of England.* Similarly, *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841), and *The Fitzboodle Papers* (1842-43) appeared first in *Fraser's Magazine.* They are deeply marked with his biting humour and observation of human weaknesses. However, he is perhaps renowned more for his *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), *The New-comers* (1853-55), *The Virginians* (1857-59) are some of his other great novels.

As a writer, Thackeray refused to bow to conventions. His novelistic art catered to a representation of the human life and nature of his time. The realistic narratives of Thackeray reveal that he was more often an observer than an analyst which consequently seemed to deprive a somewhat compact structure from his novels. His vision in his novels is that of a man who sees life through the wider prism of society and culture rather than studying characters as isolated, individual cases. His most famous example of this is *Vanity Fair* which represents the contemporary Victorian society. Crude materialism in the wake of an industrial and mechanised society and culture forms the object of satire in many of Thackeray's novels written in the genre of domestic fiction.

The Bronte Sisters:

You will be interested to know that among the women writers of the Victorian age, the Bronte sisters were very prominent. Charlotte (1816-55), Emily (1818-48), and Anne (1820-49) were the daughters of an Irish clergyman, Patrick Bronte, who held a living in Yorkshire. Charlotte Bronte stated her novelistic career with the novel *The Professor* although it was published much later in 1857.*Jane Eyre* (1847) is her greatest novel. Other

was the subtitle of his novel *Sybil* (1845). He began his literary career as a novelist with *Vivian Grey* (1826-27). His next effort was *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla* (1828), a modern *Gulliver's Travels, Contarini Fleming. A Psychological Autobiography* (1832), *Henrietta Temple* (1837), *Coningsby: or the New Generation* (1844), and *Tancred: or the New Crusade* (1847). It underlines the fact that social concern and reform were sympathetic subjects for a novel many years before Disraeli himself actually implemented some of the reforms described.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) The novel became the primary literary form during the Victorian age. **(true/false)**

b) The novels like *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Hard Times* were written by Thackery. **(true/false)**

c) Mary Ann Evans is the actual name of George Eliot. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The Victorian age roughly started in 1830, or alternatively 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill), or 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria); and extends up to the death of ……..in 1901.

b) As a religious portent 'The Oxford Movement' marked the widespread discontent with the existing beliefs of the …….. of England.

c) Charles Darwin's ……. had a revolutionary impact on the contemporary world with its scientific thought.

d) A *Tale of Two Cities* is written by……...

Some of the great Victorian poets were:

Alfred Tennyson:

Victorian poetry is probably best represented in the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) whose *In Memoriam* (1850) stands as the mouthpiece of Victorian dilemma. It gave voice to the feeling of hope and

hero. His first important work is *Pauline* (1833), which clearly shows the influence of Shelley. Browning also wrote some plays the important among which are *Strafford* (1837), S*ordello* (1840), *Pippa Passes* (1841), *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *The Return of the Druses* (1843), *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843), *Colombe's Birthday* and so on. But he lacked the fundamental qualities of the dramatist. Subsequently, he wrote *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) that clearly marks his entry into dramatic monologue. Browning produced some of his best poems in *Men and Women* (1855) which consists entirely of dramatic monologues. This volume contains poems like *Fra Lippo Lippi, An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Andrea del Sarto, Cleon* and so on. The year 1864 saw the publication of his last really great volume, *Dramatis Persona,* again a collection of dramatic monologues which contains works like *Caliban Upon Setebos, A Death in the Desert, Rabbi Ben Ezra,* and *Abt Vogler.*

You will find that Browning's themes were divided into three groups(philosophical or religious, love, and lighter themes). His philosophical poems, on which his reputation rested in his own day, all bear on his central beliefs that life must ever be a striving for something beyond our reach. His poems reflect the abundant vitality of his character. He is master of a surprising variety of metrical forms and excels in the manipulation of rhythmic effects. His fame now rests on the volumes of poetry, published between 1842 and 1864, which contain his love lyrics and dramatic monologues.

Matthew Arnold:

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was a writer of many activities, but it is chiefly as a poet and critic that he now holds his place in literature. *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* was published in 1849. Then followed *Poems* (1853), with its famous critical preface, and *New Poems* (1867). For the subject matter, Arnold went back to classical themes, to which he gives a meditative and even melancholy cast common in modern compositions. His meditative poems like *Dover Beach* and *A Summer Night,* resembles that of Thomas Gray in its subdued melancholy resignation. In



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Choose the correct answer:

a) The themes of Browning's poems were divided into three types, namely :

i. Social, religious and satire

ii. Philosophical, love and lighter themes

iii. Religious, critical and heavy themes

Some of the great Victorian prose writers were:

Thomas Babington Macaulay:

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1830-1859) had been posted as legal adviser in India for four years under the British government. Before he left for India, Macaulay had written several essays for *The Edinburgh Review.* He also contributed five biographical pieces to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica.* He is, however, famous mainly as an essayist, and his essays are of two kinds— literary and historical. The success of his *History of England* (1849) lies in its narrative and the manner in which he imbues a sense of romance to the factual events of history. His essays were written chiefly during a time when England was witnessing various events of social, political and cultural significance such as the Reform Bill of 1832, and the industrial and commercial expansion of English lives and society which brought the middle class into power.

Thomas Carlyle:

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) is the other important prose writer of the Victorian age. In most of his essays, Carlyle reflects his disappointment and intense moral indignation against anything that he found was weak and superficial. Carlyle is best known for *Sartor Resartus* and *Hero and Hero Worship*. Through *Sartor Resartus,*he professed his indignation at the pretentiousness of the society and critiqued contemporary culture and social customs which very often act as the veil to the shortcomings of actual life. Carlyle then turned to historical writing, which he handled in his own unconventional fashion. His major historical works are *The French Revolution* (1837), *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845). His



12.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you will be well acquainted with the great writers of this age along with their literary contributions to Victorian literature. Also, the unit will give you a broad idea on the important literary works that defined the literary practices of the age and further enable you to gain a broad idea on the context of the Victorian age that shaped its literary characteristics, forms and practices.



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12.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

a. True

b. False

c. True

Ans to Q No 2:

a. Victoria

b. Church

c. *On the Origin of Species*

UNIT 13: IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Defining Imperialism and Colonialism
13.4 Imperialism and Colonialism in English Literature
13.5 Impact on Indian English Literature
13.6 Let us Sum up
13.7 Further Reading
13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.9 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the historical roots and basic tenets of imperialism and colonialism
- frame the nature of imperialism and colonialism
- explain the accumulation of imperialism and colonialism in conditioning English literature
- trace their impact on Indian English literature
- further explore various aspects of imperialism and colonialism

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Imperialism and Colonialism constitute a major space in European history. Although their origin is conveniently traced to various European nations, they attained wide-spread popularity across the globe because of overseas application. Indeed the prime agenda operating behind the developments had been the exploration of the 'unexplored'. The spirit of exploration apart, there were scores of potent factors marshalling the imperial and colonial principles of the European brigades. Of those factors, mention may be made of capitalist thrust upon profit-making,

to Australia and New Zealand, from Egypt to South Africa. Of course, India was regarded as the "jewel of the empire."

The overseas exploration had been a successful strategy made use of by the colonial powers. As it warranted sound leadership and shrewd administration, the colonisers did possess all this; there is no doubt about it. But the existing socio-political condition also proved handy in paving the way for foreign rulers. Internal rivalry, especially among various ethnic groups, or kings and emperors, turned out as weak point, and this was what the colonial machinery took advantage of. Sometimes they acted as mediators, while at times they stood in favour of a given side at the cost of the other. Initially, the image created by them was wholly acceptable for the natives or for the concerned. As time passed on, the natives realised the hidden, but powerful objective of the intruders. In fact, the realisation came too late, and by then they assumed such a stature that the natives found it hard to root out the practice. It does not mean that the colonial powers were ever-lasting. They too experienced resistance, usually resulting in deportation. But the process was not so easy since the natives had to face stiff challenge from the rulers.

With imperialism and colonialism certain new things, both good and bad, became apparent, but customarily bad connotation is ascribed. Indeed the accusation is not without valid ground. Large scale economic exploitation, subjugation to the foreigners' rule, crisis in indigenous culture, racial discrimination, among a host of others, vitiated the image of colonial rule. As found, the natives had to live in constant fear because mass violation of human rights was the reign of the day. However, there were positive sides as well. For instance, infrastructure development, improved sector of health and hygiene, access to education at least for the select few, advancement in science and technology were initially possible under the pall of colonialism.

With their customary habit of cultural superiority, the colonisers saw the ruled or native inhabitants as the "Other" falling short of standardised way of living. The natives did not deserve subject position, which was completely reserved for their masters. Given such a proposition, the colonisers maintained that they were on a civilising mission and their

host of others, came under colonialism. However, American domination over the Philippines and Puerto Rico may be understood in terms of imperialism. Another significant development in colonialism is the pursuit of trade and commerce with the objective of earning the maximum benefit. Here, the profit is intended for collective upgradation or the royal affluence. Imperialism is also directed with the spirit of profit-making, but with a difference. Indeed, individual pursuits or the well being of individuals constitute a major part in the agenda of colonialism.

13.4 IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Given the far-reaching impact of imperialism and colonialism, every aspect of socio-cultural and political life was largely affected. Taking the developments as core issues, much of writing has come into limelight, and it constitutes a powerful body in world literature. Although colonial or imperial ethos takes the upper hand in literary output under the tag, offering a clear cut idea is not so an easy task. Causes were many and varied. Still the phenomena of heterogeneity and of being less canonised seem more redundant in this regard. Whenever the issues of imperialism and colonialism arise, a general tendency of assuring European superiority may be easily discerned. The expansionist mission conjoined with "civilising the uncivilised" or the "uncultured" turns out a potent factor in colonial literature. Indeed, the emerging concept of the "Self" that most of the colonial guns used to inherit was conditioned on the presumed superiority of their culture. The moment we talk about imperialism and colonialism in English literature, there is large body of writing accommodating such developments. Of course the writings of Herodotus, Marco Polo, Hakluyt or travel narratives of Mungo Park or Richard Burton came of great help to this direction. Travel writings in fictional mode such as Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* and *Don Juan* also encouraged writing of this category.

As colonialism attained consolidated position in the 19th century, there came a general tendency to deal with various facets connected to this. Though domestic fiction was of immense popularity, colonial ideology

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair,* Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, to mention a few, may be cited in this context. Products like the Indian shawl, bracelets, hot pickles, limes and ginger found their easy access in the overseas market.

13.5 IMPACT ON INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

It is interesting to know that the Indian writing in English came into effect against the backdrop of British colonial rule. Hence it is very much natural to deal with issues related to colonial machinery and the way Indian life and manners were impacted by them. However, the most potent aspect to Indian writing in English at the nascent stage was whether a foreign language like English could be a sound medium of expression for the natives. Much speculation followed. With the Charter Act of 1813, Macaulay's historic Minute and the pro-English mindset of emerging educated youths including Raja Rammohan Roy, English was soon indigenised and people started using the language as a preferred one in their pursuit of writing. R. K. Narayan's *English in India*, as most of the texts, also talks high of the importance of English in India. Though this new set of writing came into prominence in the 19th century, cutting out the image of India as a fabulously wealthy place for the merchant adventurers was a recurring theme in the early novels, published in England in the 1780s.

The 19th century had been a fertile ground for Indian English literature. In poetry, fiction, and non-fictional prose, Indian English literature has made a mark on its own. Arrival of poets like Louis Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, among others, gave a new turn. In early poetry, we notice a questioning motif, which was not directed towards the colonial brigade, but the orthodox Hindu customs and conventions. Derozio's skeptical outlook and renunciation of Christianity exerted far-reaching impact upon the young minds that they unfolded in their writing too. The year 1864 was a crucial one because of the grand entry the Indian English novel made with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife.* The novel heralded a new tone and temperament to the distinctive genre. One of the major concerns in this mode of writing was the strict sense of nationalism, which carried its flag in

accommodation of overpopulation, technological interest and religious impulse played their role. Imperialism and colonialism may be understood from geographical and historical points of view. Despite the usual negative connotations, the other side of colonialism is closely connected to positive note. Development of infrastructure, health and hygiene, access to education, among others, came into effect under the banner of colonialism.

Imperialism is more related to idealistic formation, while colonialism is the practical edition of imperialism. Enunciation of European superiority conjoined with expansionist agenda constitutes a major space in the writings coming under this category. Of course, the colonial machinery does not remain the same since paradigm shifts have appeared in course of time. Subsequent times saw the troubled phase of the colonial rule. Colonialism made strong entry into Indian English literature. Indeed, the alliance between colonialism and nationalism is of primary interest for the writers. If a few sets of writing appeared reactionary, there were certain others standing in favour of the colonial rule.



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13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: In European history, imperialism and colonialism constitute a major space. Their origin may be conveniently traced to a host of European



13.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. What is your observation on the historical roots and cultural conditioning of imperialism and colonialism? Give a detailed answer.

Q2. How did mercantilism motivate colonial machinery to establish its hold on foreign soil?

Q3. What were the prime factors operating in the formation of imperial and colonial racket in the world?

Q4. Do you find imperialism and colonialism identical? What are the defining traits that have given them distinctive meaning and position?

Q5. How did imperialism and colonialism exert influence on English literature? Discuss with special reference to their practitioners.

Q6. How do literary works respond to the shifting paradigms of colonialism and imperialism?

Q7. What is your approach to imperialism and colonialism in connection with their accomplishment in Indian English literature?

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from the previous modes of aesthetic engagements to dwell upon novel and experimental methods in creativity which resulted in an entire new world of creative forms including art and literature. The changed canvas that modern art and literature reflects may perhaps be due to the radical changes that were brought about in the various walks of life – be it science, technology, culture, religion and politics as well. The modern period saw a sustained progress of science and technology which on the one hand brought about new ways of life and living and on the other hand, resulted in a breaking down of hitherto, treasured values and ethics of the society. The tempo of life attained a pace that accommodated more material values unlike the earlier complacent ways of life. Human life now witnessed several luxuries that were the gifts of science and technology, thereby making man more and more material and mechanical. Such a material and comfortable life also ensued an awareness of 'class' structures, leading to greater divisions among the masses in the society.

14.3 LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE

Modern literature thus became the veritable storehouse of cross cultural ideas with which the writers engaged in a **close reading of the self and its situational context**. The self as an individual and its narrative delineation therefore becomes one of the most significant preoccupations for writers of this period. In doing so, the writers of the period also deliberated upon **symbolism**, **imagism** and **vorticism** which were some of the methods that provided the writers and artists alike, with the much needed novel conventions through which they were able to engage in an effective portrayal of the dilemma of the age. Einstein, Nietszche, Russell and Husserl were among others who provided the philosophical succour to the modern experimentalists in the literary and other creative fields.

A cursory glance at the literature produced during this period reflects the extensive **use of juxtaposition**, **irony**, **comparisons** and **satire.** Modernist writers also adopt **impressionistic mode** and other such contemporary experimental devices in order to call attention to the

of modernism, it may be safe to assert that the dates would vary in relation to the country in reference, the school in question and the critical assessment belonging to a particular perspective. However, it has been a convention to regard the beginning of modernist poetry with the **beginning of the French Symbolist movement** and is understood to come to close with the Second World War. The question of having precise dates for the beginning and end of modernist period again is an arbitrary matter.

We have poets such as **W. B. Yeats** and **R.M. Rilke** who adopted a post-romantic stance while experimenting with symbolism and modernised poetic idiom owing to the contemporary poetic and literary developments initiated during their times. Other poets of this school such as **T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound** or **E.E. Cummings** for that matter were seen creating a substantial body of work only after the Second World War. A fundamental concern of these modernist poets appears to the question of impersonality and objectivity in art. Traditionally speaking, modernism as a movement seems to have evolved from lyrical expression that focused on culture, personal imagination, emotion and memory of the poet artist. However, the demands of the modernist practice in poetic expressions necessitated a moving away from the merely personal towards an intellectual utterance that enclosed universal bearing. Thus, in the very personal poetic expressions such as T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* we may find a transformation of the personal into a poetic texture in which is embedded universal human significance. After the close of the Second World War, there were sustained efforts by poets to revoke traits of impersonality and objectivity that were induced by their predecessors. With the coming of **confessional poetry** of the likes of **Robert Lowell** and **Sylvia Plath** modernism may be said to have come to an end.

Let us now, come to some of the significant poetic voices of modernist poetry. To begin with, we may make a foray into what was known as war poetry that was produced during this period. Poets such as **Rupert Brooke**, **Wilfred Owen** and **Siegfried Sassoon** made significant contributions to this genre with their responses to the context of war around them. Rupert Brooke for instance, was known for his romantic association

unparalleled. The childlike world that he wove in his lyrics was a world that had its own share of mystery accompanied by its fears and pain that reflected the pains of a soul not being able to come to terms with the radical changes of the times. A great master of lyrics, de la Mare shall remain unequalled for his extraordinary sense of rhythm and sensitivity.

The most striking feature of modern poetry perhaps is its experimental tendency and one of such experimental engagements led to the movement known as **Imagism**, patronised by three Americans namely, **Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, H.D. (Hilda Dolittle)** and an Englishman **Richard Aldington**. In so far as the definition of poetry was concerned, the Imagists held that **poetry was "the presentation of a visual situation of the fewest possible concrete words, lightened of the burdens of conventional adjectival padding, and unhampered by general ideas or philosophical or moral speculations."** (Moody and Lovett, 474)

Although, the use of such a technique may be considered to have brought about limited poetic effect, it would be worthwhile to note that through their innovative use of language the Imagists were able to bring about radical changes in the use of diction while ridding poetry of extravagant artificialities. In the poems of Richard Aldington for instance one may be able to trace the positive and negative effects of the Imagist approach. Poems included in volumes such as *Images Old and New* (1915) and *Images of War and Images of Desire* (1919) display rich craftsmanship, delicate aesthetic values though presents limited scope and appeal brought about by the use of formulaic versification. Aldington's fiction, however, attained greater fame and attention. *Death of a Hero* (1929), *The Colonel's Daughter* (1931) and *Rejected Guest* (1939) are some of his novels which express his disenchantment with the bourgeois social order. Perhaps, one of the **greatest practitioners of Imagism may be found in Ezra Pound** whose poems display his handling of this modern technique, a mode of poetic expression designed to achieve aesthetic excellence in a manner which was to show the way to many later poets. Pound's single minded commitment to the development of the imagist technique resulted in poems

Magnetic Mountain" (1935) he made a significant appeal for the establishment of a new order that would do away with the old one through the imagery of a train journey towards the magnetic mountain, the motif of the new society he anticipates. However, in his later poems the poet directed his attention towards subject matter and style of poetry as revealed in "O Dreams, O Destinations" contained in the volume *Word Above All* (1943); poems of this period were more personal and intimate unlike his earlier compositions which had marked socio-political orientations.

W. H. Auden, a poet of the younger generation and a contemporary of Lewis was experimental and radical in his poetic expressions. In his memorial verses to Yeats and Freud, Auden seems to be questioning some of the constructs modernity had ushered in while pursuing more tolerant values that at times had political undertones. He was one of the most well read and informed poets of his generation. "New Year Letter" (1941), one of his most autobiographical poems looks back into the significant influences of his past that had shaped his sensibility. Stephen Spender made an early reputation as one the most radical voices through his predominantly romantic and introspective temperament that made his poems quite personal. He was influenced largely by European thought and culture and he consistently spoke for the significance of social revolution in relation to the individual as well as his ideology.

14.4.2 Non-Fiction Prose

The modern period was also witness to the growth and development in the genre of non-fiction prose writings namely **biography** and **criticism**. The publication of **Lytton Strachey**'s *Eminent Victorians* in 1918 may be seen as an event that marks the closure of the Victorian period while ushering in the modern era. Apparently appreciated, this work turned out to be ironical in its tone and for its attempt to do away with the halo and aura that had been associated with the heroes and heroines of the period. While intending to create an honest portrait he adopted a critical and a skeptical spirit in his biographical work.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) One of the most significant preoccupations for writers of the modern period is the self as an individual and its narrative delineation. **(true/false)**

b) Impressionistic mode of writing is preferred by the modern writers. **(true/false)**

c) The Georgian poets were fascinated by the English countryside and engaged with simpler and unsophisticated matters of life in their poetry. (**true/false)**

d) The modern period never witnessed writings on biography. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The modern period stood for a coming away from the previous modes of aesthetic engagements to dwell upon novel and ……methods.

b) The writers of the modern period employed ……narratives and ……..plot structures.

c) It has been a convention to regard the beginning of modernist poetry with the beginning of the …… movement.

d) Hopkins introduced the …… to poetry that is, a rhythmic structure that may be said to anticipate free verse.

Q 3: Write a note on war poetry and its practitioners.

14.4.3 Drama

Like poetry, drama too underwent series of experimentation with regard to theme, subject matter and treatment during the modern period. **One of the most prominent figures of modern theatre**, **Henrik Ibsen is considered to be a pioneer in the development of realist theatre** through which Ibsen ushered in experimentation in relation to style and presentation. Significantly aware of the needs of his contemporary times,

technique in the first act while in the second act influences of German expressionism was clearly visible in the manner in which the playwright employed stylised poetic litany to the guns which the soldiers echo on the battle front.

T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry were two poets who were conspicuously involved in the movement to revive poetic drama. In his essay "A Dialogue of Poetic Drama" (1928) and his Aristophanic melodrama *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) Eliot reveals his interest in the problems of modern poetic drama. However, it was only in *The Rock* (1934) where he employed the choruses in the pageant play, that he encountered the challenges of the modern stage seriously. *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is perhaps, his first full length play which displays an effective blend of a medieval saint's legend and comic relief that expresses itself in the form of contemporary satire while treating the conflict between the claims of the corporeal body and the spirit.

Considered as Eliot's most powerful play, *The Family Reunion* (1939) exhibits a stylistic complexity that makes performance difficult. The play is Eliot's modernised version of the old Greek theme of Orestes trailed by the Furies. Through these dramatic engagements Eliot realised the need to create a kind of poetic diction that would at once contribute towards the enhancement of modern drama while simultaneously providing drama the elevation which even the finest prose was incapable. Out of such a need was created the experimental play, *The Cocktail Party* (1949) in which Eliot brings in characters who belongs to upper class London society and who converse in highly sophisticated tone. In it, Eliot was able to create a poetic diction that was beyond the mundane gossip of a cocktail party through the theme which revolved around the distinction between the life possible for an average person and that of a saint.

Christopher Fry on the other hand, did not seem to share Eliot's view that poetry should adapt itself to the demands of drama in his early compositions. *The Lady's Not for Burning* (1948) is Fry's attempt at medieval comedy which fascinated the audience with its exuberant language reminiscent of the Elizabethan stage. The play is based on the attempt of a

the works and philosophy of Hardy wrote the *Study of Thomas Hardy* in 1936 and incorporated in his own works Hardy's conception of his characters. D.H. Lawrence was a major writer of the period and wrote novels like *The Rainbow, Sons and Lovers*, *Kangaroo*, *Women in Love, Lady Chatterley's Lover* among others, represented his own interpretation and perception of life, the effects of the industrialisation and the modern world on human life and the current of human psychology. His novels reflect his inclination towards the primitive or natural world, rather than the mechanised modern world.

In terms of narrative techniques, mention must be made of one of the most influential writers James Joyce, who had experimented and explored the **technique of "stream of consciousness"** in his novels and wrote exceptional works like *Ulysses*, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce in his works represents his Irish experiences closely in relation to the conventions of the Dublin society, human relationships among others and it is his skill in handling the **internal monologue** which results in his remarkable writing. Another remarkable novelist and a leading intellectual who had employed and popularised the "stream of consciousness" technique is Virginia Woolf. By rejecting conventional concepts of the genre of the novel, she had highlighted the importance of details in incident and narration. Her novels like *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *Orlando*, *Flush,* etc. are some of her well known works. She had famously remarked: **"A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."**

It is evident that the disillusionment, despair and decadent moral values in the modern man are best depicted through the genre of fiction. The interest of the modern novelist shifted from Impressionism to that of an expressionist technique, thus, laying emphasis on the inner realities and the workings of the mind. Hence, an inner conception of time and the workings of the human psychology as well as narratives of fragmented realities were employed in the narratives of modern fiction.

"technical preoccupations", "doctrinal adhesions" and so on which established him as one of the shaping influences in the domain of literary criticism. Richards also directed his attention towards semantics, a study of the meaning of words as he was concerned with the way in which words acquire legitimate and illegitimate meaning reflected in his work *Interpretation in Teaching* (1938) through which he initiated his disciples such as F. R. Leavis and William Empson to the study of the process of criticism.

Under the competent leadership of F. R. Leavis, contemporary criticism achieved success in bringing about significant changes. Leavis was the editor of the celebrated critical journal *Scrutiny* (1932 – 1953) and he was able to gather a group of like-minded critics who were dedicated to a **close reading of literary texts** with exacting standards that was reminiscent of the New Critics in America. His unfailing concern and serious tone attracted attention and was able to leave a mark in the domain of criticism. His *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) is still relevant and is considered to be a major influence in the poetic movement led by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. In *The Great Tradition* (1948) Richards argues that the truly great novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad.

William Empson who succeeded Leavis is considered as one of the most seminal critics of his times with his work such as *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) which establishes him in a similar position to that of Kenneth Burke in the American scene. Empson was an important figure in the realm of literary criticism in both England and America while his work titled *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951) is regarded as one of the most significant contributions to literary semantics with its relevance undiminished till date.

In the field of literary criticism T. S. Eliot, the Anglo-American poet is considered to be one of the most profound practitioners. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Eliot's method of criticism was seen to be based on a logical sequence of doctrines which were however, not static. Eliot's theoretical method was greatly shaped by the movement known as humanism led by Professors Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More in America.

drama, fiction and literary criticism gives you a broad overview of the literary trends and practices of the age. It has provided you with an insight into how the writers, in each of the above genres had experimented with these forms and familiarised yourself with the important writers of this period. The unit thus, acquaints you with the modern period which is taken to have begun from the late nineteenth century onward and infused a new creativity, infusion of cross cultural contexts and cross fertilisation of ideas and experiences into modern English Literature.



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14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

b. True

c. True

Q 7: Trace the growth and development of literary criticism as one of the most significant genres of literary form during the modern period.

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engagements for writers, novelists, poets, thinkers and philosophers of this period. However, we need to remember that this exercise was not limited to the English soil alone. It became a world-wide phenomenon, as modernity broke barriers and had an effect on the entire human race, bringing about a similar experience of desolation. It left them vulnerable to the challenge of living life, in the wake of the **World Wars** and the following sense of decadence and destruction, anxiety and boredom.

Thus, we find a whole lot of writers such as **T. S. Eliot**, **W. B Yeats**, **D. H. Lawrence**, **Virginia Woolf**, **Joseph Conrad**, **Ernest Hemingway** and **Henry James** who traversed through the borders of their respective nations and engaged in an exchange of ideas, images, themes and issues which they reflected passionately and intensely in their works.

15.3 SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF THE MODERN AGE

Post war English literature may be said to have been shaped by the defining influences of the prevalent trends in the social, political and cultural spheres of contemporary period which provided the context within which the creative spirit blossomed. It is needless to say that the two World Wars had a sweeping impact all around the globe. However, the way in which they affected the British society was perhaps different from the manner in which it influenced people and their lives elsewhere around the world. As mentioned earlier, one of the most significant developments that had come upon the English soil was its declining control over its colonies which were becoming more assertive in their fight for freedom and liberty. Subsequently, the issues of English nationalism and national identity came to be redefined and reshaped.

Since the end of the First World War in 1918, there had been several intermittent political and economic events across the globe which culminated in the Second World War that began in 1939. By the time it came to an end in 1945, the world had been divided into opposing political blocks. However, it was during this period that the English society witnessed

Contemporary English society then was experiencing the repercussions of mindless destruction and violence that came in the form of the war, thereby giving rise to a tremendous sense of misery which was by far more intensely felt and experienced in comparison to the grandeur of English heroism and bravery displayed in the war. The almost dysfunctional industries owing to the declaration of freedom by many of its colonies created an environment of widespread unemployment and poverty; many young nations were rising in terms of industrial and economic growth leading to a kind of crisis to English domestic economy. The lives of people were in reality far removed from the romantic glory made manifest in literature earlier. The growing complexities of life – society, culture, economics, science and politics among others stimulated the intellectuals to contemplate upon the insecurities and uncertainties of the existential situation. The overpowering impact of the World Wars made writers rethink their mode of expression and engagement in the field of literary creativity. It was perhaps the complex contemporary ethos that made writers discard the conventional modes of expression in literature while they engaged with their creative representation of the world and life in it. On the other hand, the growth of science and technology opened up new vistas of imagination and achievement for the people and the intellectual and academic society appeared deeply influenced. The modern lifestyle comprising a reduced level of physical labour, increase in general literacy of the society and the benefits of technological advancements perhaps offered the writers and philosophers of the modern period a congenial atmosphere for the nurturing of their creative and contemplative faculty. In the field of art, late 19th century and 20th century displayed intense experimentation which became a predominant practice with the artists engaged in evolving techniques such as symbolism, impressionism, post impressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, imagism, cubism among others. It is interesting to observe that these experimentations that began in the field of art and painting began influencing the world of literature significantly wherein the writers began adapting the techniques employed in painting and art to their works in the field of literature. Modernist sensibilities that were manifest in the world of art and painting were not

is perhaps its 'questioning spirit' which became evident in literature produced in the early decades of the 20th century. An instance from A.C. Ward's work titled *Twentieth-Century Literature 1901-1925: The Age of Interrogation* (1928) would perhaps be sufficient proof:

From 1901 to 1925 English literature was directed by mental attitudes, moral ideals, and spiritual values at almost the opposite extreme from the attitudes, ideals and values governing Victorian literature. The old certainties were certainties no longer. Everything was held to be open to question…(quoted in Poplawski, 547)

It is interesting to note that Ward had subtitled his work "the Age of Interrogation" – Ward's reading of the early period of the 20th century as an age of interrogation and subsequently his assertion that "Everything was held to be open to question…" seems to aptly summarise the prevalent temper of the first part of the modern period which was also witness to the First World War. The impact of the war came to be felt upon literature produced during this period as it provided a veritable source for the numerous texts that were being written besides also creating an atmosphere for experimentation regarding form, technique, content leading to a discursive ambience in the fields of literature and criticism. The resultant product in terms of literary texts was a diverse range of works which seemed to transcend the confines of formal classification as one had in the preceding ages of literature. The plurality of voices, multiplicity of forms, diversity of range and richness of technique and treatment made reading modern literature a difficult task. As mentioned earlier, several movements that began in the sphere of art and painting found its way into to experimental and innovative writings of the modernist writers of the period. Movements such as naturalism, symbolism, imagism, futurism, cubism, vorticism, surrealism came to influence the literary practices of several writers of the period. In the realm of English literature, the period till 1939, in general, is classified as the period of modernism which displayed a kind of experimentation and innovation in terms of form and technique. The overwhelming achievements in the sphere of science and technology alongside the all pervading impact of the war gave a new shape to literature as practitioners were motivated to

Arnold Bennett, Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy, Graham Greene, George Orwell, W. S. Maugham and H. G. Wells. On the other hand, in the sphere of poetry it would perhaps be difficult to have a precise category termed realist while the overwhelming literary atmosphere of modernism came to have its influence on almost all writers of the period in some way or the other.

SECOND WORLD WAR

When one examines the history of English literature, one would perhaps acknowledge that the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 may be considered to have brought about a close to the phenomenon of modernism while ushering in the post-war era which appears to be allied with what we call post modernism. It is noteworthy that unlike the First World War phase which displayed distinctive traits in the sphere of literature, the period post the Second World War is remarkable for its absence of precise characteristic qualities owing to the overwhelmingly intense changes that had come upon life and society since 1939. The Second World War brought about radical changes in all spheres of human existence – the existential predicament engendered by a crisis of scruples in relation to humane and social obligations. The dark realities of the war led many writers of the period to introspect upon the political and social ideologies of the contemporary time. On the other hand, within the prevalent atmosphere of war, events such as the liberation of Paris provided an opportunity to continue having faith in the possibilities of change and larger human values. Literature produced during this phase then may be said to have a representation of the opposite culture of elation and disenchantment although the thematic concerns and subject matter was not radically different from those of the First World War period. By 1940s one would be able to trace a fleeting existence of neo-Romantic and decadent writing which came as a response to and reaction against the war imposed sombreness. During this phase writers contributed primarily through poetry and the short story – literary forms that were comparatively convenient to engage with while posited in a politically, socially and culturally volatile environment. Within the decade

to remember that literature may not be neatly segregated into – realist, modernist or post modernist – the apparently varied phases of development. For students of literature it is of primary significance to understand that at any given point of time the literature that is produced would be reflecting the multifarious sensibilities of the contemporary era. The complexity of life and times during the post war period therefore was imbibed by the literature of this era in the obscure and diverse nature of writing that was being accomplished.

15.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

Some of the major writers of the modern age are as discussed below:

Thomas Stearn Eliot:

T. S. Eliot's (September 26, 1888 – January 4, 1965) was a poetic persona with a blend of English and continental influences. As far as his poetry goes he may be said to have been immensely influenced by the French poets such as Jules Laforgue and Tristan Corbiere. Eliot's verses display his cynicism and anxiety about modern life through the use of an apparently incoherent imagery which resulted in a poetic expression that was unmistakably his own. "The Wasteland" (1922), published in *The Criterion* is Eliot's most ambitious poetic expression which alludes to several historical and legendary sources while dealing with the theme of spiritual decadence and sordidness of modern existence.

Eliot's poetry may be seen as expressions that invite analytical negotiations achieved through a carefully cultured style, intellectual considerations and allusions. Eliot is considered as one of the predominant voices in modern poetry owing to his poems such as "Ash Wednesday", "Four Quartets", "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", besides "The Wasteland", which exhibits the poet's consistent experimentation with a form of expression, technique and style that pave the way for many modernist poets to come. Revolutionary in its technique, his poems involved a complicated style through which he gave voice to the post war attitude reflected within the contemporary society and culture.

to teach by the University College in Nottingham. After being certified he had left for London in the autumn of the same year in 1908. Later on, Lawrence went on to marry Frieda Weekley and also dedicated his collection of love poems "*Look! We Have Come Through*" (1917) to her. Lawrence wrote almost 800 poems in his lifetime and some of his well known collections are "Love Poems and Others"(1913), "Birds, Beasts and Flowers"(1923), 'Pansies"(1929) and "Nettles"(1930) among a few others.

Among his plays *The Daughter in Law* (1912) was his mining play which was written in the local Nottingham dialect. The names of his other plays were *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* (1914) and *Touch and Go* (1920). His well known short stories are "The Fox", "Odour of Chrysanthemums", "The Virgin and the Gypsy" and "The Woman who Rode Away" among others. He is best known as a novelist because of his works of fiction like *The White Peacock* (1911)*, Sons and Lovers* (1913)*, The Rainbow* (1915)*, Women in Love* (1920)*, Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Trespasser* (1912)*.* His novels explored the condition of workings of the human mind, modern man, relationships and life in a harsh, modern industrial world. Although, he had spent the second half of his life suffering censorship and gross criticism for some of his works, after which he had also opted for a voluntary exile, he undoubtedly emerged as one of the great modern writers in English Literature after his demise.

Virginia Woolf:

You will be very interested to know that the modern period had also witnessed some of the great women writers among whom Virginia Woolf (25 January 1882 – 28 March 1941) came to be considered as the representative modern woman writer. Virginia Woolf was born in London to the prominent intellectual figure, Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Duckworth. While her brothers were privileged to a Cambridge education, her sister Vanessa and she were taught at home and enjoyed the benefits of their father's huge library in their Hyde Park home and cultivated an early interest in English literature. Woolf was very sensitive by nature from a young age and she suffered several nervous breakdowns having lost her parents and her sibling at a tender age. But her life became much stable after she settled



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Why is T.S. Eliot considered as one of the predominant voices in modern poetry?

Q2: Write a few lines on D.H. Lawrence.

Q3. What is the defining prose style employed by Virginia Woolf in her literary works?

15.6 A NOTE ON THE MAJOR POST WAR WRITERS AND LITERARY FORMS

By now we have seen how literature produced after the First World War appeared to contemplate upon the futility of exuberance and confidence associated with the notion of progress and development. Let us examine the kind of writing that was being done in the various genres such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry through a reading of the major writers in the respective areas. (refer to Modern Age I)

In the world of fiction **D. H. Lawrence** (1885-1930), was a significant voice with his works reflecting an all pervading consciousness of the war and its implications upon the spiritual and ethical aspects of modern existence that had in part stimulated and extended support as well to the destructive war. For Lawrence, the war was testimony to the shame and disgrace it had brought about through an unleashing of 'mass mechanised destruction'. Lawrence's vehement abhorrence towards the war is perhaps aptly reflected in these lines quoted below:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the old London collapsed, the city in some way, perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed, and the genuine debasement began, the unspeakable baseness of the press, and the public voice and the reign of that bloated ignominy…(in Poplawski, 559-60)

Lawrence's attitude towards the war and its aftermath reflects the psychological contours of his creative engagement in his fiction and that of

and perhaps throughout the post war era, there was a considerable number of novels which dealt with the war theme in some way or the other. It is noteworthy that economic, social and cultural changes that had come over the contemporary life and times owing to the war appeared to have engendered a feeling of disillusionment with the war and its achievements. Writers such as **Virginia Woolf (**1882-1941) came to deal with such all pervading disenchantment through her representation of the shell shocked Septimus Warren Smith – a significant character in the famous *Mrs Dalloway*. This novel published in 1925 is a thought provoking narrative in which Woolf applies the modernist technique of 'stream-of-consciousness' to represent the inner life of the mind of her characters set against the backdrop of modern life permeated with gross decadence in all spheres. In this context one may refer to Woolf's views on life as reflected in her essay 'Modern Fiction' (1919) – life according to her was "a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end". It is this 'luminous halo' and 'semi transparent' aura, her perception towards life that became a predominant and recurrent issue in almost all of her fiction including *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). Woolf remained one of the most influential figures within the modernist genre owing to her innovative use of language and imagery with a technical efficacy which perhaps very few could equal.

James Joyce (1882-1941) a contemporary of Woolf was an Irish by birth and an exemplary writer of modernist fiction. Like most of the modernist writers who were preoccupied with the use of language, Joyce too engaged in experimentation with language through his masterpiece *Ulysses* which he began writing in 1914. It took him almost seven years to finish the work and it was finally published in 1921. The novel earned Joyce an everlasting fame as one of the greatest modernist novelists with his extraordinary use of the stream-of-consciousness technique and his eye for detail. Employing the technique of interior monologue, Joyce delineates the character of the central protagonist Leopold Bloom while representing like Woolf, the inner life of the mind of his character. *Ulysses* remains Joyce's outstanding contribution to literary modernism for its kaleidoscopic sweep

one would perhaps be able to discern not only a critical exploration of the good or a bad side of the war but more importantly, such narratives provided an instance of the intense critical dialogue within the historical contexts of the past, present and the future. By the end of the Second World War in 1945 and for almost a decade thereafter, literature seemed preoccupied with a wistful yearning for the pre-war life and times of yore. Moreover, such nostalgia was found to be combined with an effort to comprehend the actuality of the lived lives in contemporary socio-cultural setting. **Evelyn Waugh's** novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) presents a rather cynical understanding of the war as the novelist narrates the plight of a people situated in the vortex of the war afflicted society. Waugh also published a war trilogy during the period from 1952 to 1961, the first of which was *Men at Arms* (1952), followed by *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and finally *Unconditional Surrender* which was published in 1961. *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) is **William Golding's** attempt to look critically at the idea of civilisation while he engages in his narrative with childhood – a locale within which the child is conditioned and trained through the apparently civilised values of the adults, which in reality are embedded in violence and bloodshed. It is worth mentioning that by the middle of the twentieth century, literature displayed a new interest in the contemporary times while making an attempt to take into its fold the apparently peripheral sections of the society – such a change in approach may be said to have been displayed perhaps, as a reaction against the 'longing' for the so called serene pre-war society. Given such a milieu, the novel of the 1950s may be considered to have illustrated an attempt on the part of the margin to occupy the centre while giving expression to the general temper of disillusionment and discontent echoing similar sentiment as that reflected in the drama of the Angry Young Men and some poetry of The Movement as well.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1947) and *1984* (1948) regarded as dystopian narratives employ fantasy perhaps to illustrate the author's concern for the decadent ways of life and people in contemporary society. One may assume that Orwell's application of fantasy is suggestive of the idea that for him fantasy is not the means of escape from the realities of the lived world; on the contrary the use of fantasy allowed Orwell to articulate,

to the English soil but they had contributed considerably towards making the English novel grow further. Salman Rushdie is one such novelist who has received world wide acclaim for his great novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Satanic Verses* (1988) – works in which Rushdie has employed magic realism to build up the narrative world. Contemporary writers continue to engage in a similar mode of narration. Generally speaking, contemporary fiction draws perhaps considerably from the popular fiction while continuing to experiment in terms of technique, form and narrative structure as well which has established the novel as one of the most popular genres in the twentieth century. If one need to understand the post war novel in English, one would need to acknowledge that it is best described as a polyphonic entity which allows for the presence of variety and flexibility – the novel has by now become a medium through which the varied experiences of different classes, culture, nationalities and even gender may be given expression in a manner that would include realism and experimentalism as well.

Poetry, like fiction, registered the widespread upheavals that had come upon the contemporary lives of people and society during the war years. As mentioned in the previous chapter, modern poetry came to engage with a number of experimental techniques while reflecting changes in several aspects of poetry writing and also displaying a sense of continuity with the preceding forms that were available. Inheriting the tradition of modernist experimentation from the likes of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, the poets post Second World War too, remained obsessed with the themes of disillusionment, death and decadence in a war torn society. Poets who belong to this period were seen preoccupied with form while they gave voice to a feeling of dejection; experimentation with form gave the poets an avenue to express their private predicaments in relation to their lived realities within a society that witnessed not only the overwhelming war but also considerable growth in science and technology that had influenced human lives and society to a large extent. Poetry was influenced by various schools of thought such as Existentialism, Marxism, Feminism – all of which provided poetry a new way of expressing the predicament of contemporary life. Besides,

a blend of certain features of the English Movement and aspects of American Beat poetry in his tribute to heroism, his fascination for ferocity and his subtly conversational style.

Ted Hughes is known for his intense engagement with the animal world through his poetry. Almost all of Hughes' poems reveal his metaphorical representation of the animal world with his foregrounding of the violent and predatory instincts that are prevalent in the animal world. Some of Hughes' famous works are *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) *Lupercal* (1960), *Wodwo* (1967), *Cave Birds* (1978) and *Selected Poems, 1957-1981* (1982). In the first two volumes of poems Hughes reveals his awareness of intense affinity between the human world and the animal world. Devoid of sentimentality, Hughes poems appear to make an attempt to metaphorically trace several significant developments in human civilisation. *Birthday Letters* published in 1998 was Hughes' last volume of poems in which he reveals his personal world, his relationship with his wife Sylvia Plath.

Another significant poetic voice was that of Seamus Heaney who initiated himself into the world of poetry through his verses that revealed his intense love of the Irish landscape and culture, his childhood reminiscences which are beautifully expressed in volumes such as *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Door into the Dark* (1969). Heaney, however, appears more politically inclined in his later collections of poetry such as *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975) and *Field Work* (1979). Heaney was deeply affected by the contemporary history of Ireland and his intensely private feelings regarding several issues afflicting Irish social and cultural history were aptly expressed in *Sweeney Astray* (1983), *Station Island* (1984) and *The Haw Lantern* (1987). Highly inspired by the preceding traditions of Anglo Saxon School of poetry, the uniqueness of Metaphysical school, and the romanticism of the likes of Wordsworth and later poets such as Hopkins, Auden, Yeats and Ted Hughes, Heaney engaged with English poetry in a manner which made him one of the most important voices in literature.

In the field of drama, one would be able to notice significant activities in the form of experiments carried out through international theatre, regional

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15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Eliot is considered as one of the predominant voices in modern poetry owing to his poems such as “Ash Wednesday”, “Four Quartets”, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, besides “The Wasteland”, which exhibits the poet’s consistent experimentation with a form of expression, technique and style that pave the way for many modernist poets to come.

Ans to Q No 2: D. H Lawrence was an English novelist who according to F.R Leavis had made a significant literary contribution to the genre of the English novel. In the words of E. M Forster, he was described as “the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation”. He was not just a writer but also a literary critic and a thinker, poet and a playwright as well as a gifted painter. Lawrence was born to Arthur John Lawrence, a miner and Lydia Lawrence, a tutor. His childhood years were spent in the mining township of Nottinghamshire and it is important to note that most of his mature works are inspired by the inner lives of miners in such mining locales.

Ans to Q No 3: Woolf is known for her experimental use of a free prose style through the technique of the **‘stream of consciousness’** in which the narrator uses a free flowing narration in keeping with the flow of the thought patterns of the mind. Also her works were fragmented in nature, figured out the inner workings of the mind and her lyrical style of writing created impressions on the modern reader.



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