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FOUR YEAR DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

ENGLISH NOVELS

Block 2

Fourth Semester

Discipline Specific Core Course

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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BLOCK 2
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BLOCK INTRODUCTION: BLOCK 2

The second block of the Course on English Novels consists of eight units.Here the learners will get an opportunity to study four significant novelists namely George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf. The eighth unit deals with George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and throws light on the context of the novel and provides a summary highlighting the main issues raised. The ninth unit further deals with Eliot's *Middlemarch* in a detailed way highlighting the style and the important characters of the novel and also the critical reception of the novel. The tenth introduces the learner to Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* which narrates the obstacles faced by the young protagonist Oliver and his struggle for survival in the face of odds and challenges that he encounters. The eleventh unit is based on the reading of the novel *Oliver Twist* in terms of its various important themes, characters and narrative technique reflecting upon Dickens' projection of the grim reality of England through his fiction. The twelfth unit deals with Joseph Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* providing a brief overview of the background and context of the novel. The thirteenth unit provides critical commentary on the novel *Lord Jim* and includes a discussion of the major themes, characters, style and reception. The fourteenth unit comprises Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and attempts to place the novel in a specific literary and socio-historical scenario of the twentieth century of which Woolf was a part. The fifteenth unit elaborates on the novel *Mrs Dalloway* in terms of important aspects such as major themes, important characters, etc. and reflects on the various innovations and experiments applied by Woolf into narrative fiction in general.

Afetr going through these units, the learners will be able to appreciate the different aspects encompassed by the novels and analyse the development of English novels in terms of subject matter and style. While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study.

UNIT 8: GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 George Eliot: The Novelist

8.3.1 Her Life

8.3.2 Her Works

8.4 Context of the Novel

8.5 Summary of the Novel

8.6 Let us Sum up

8.7 Further Reading

8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.9 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- gain an idea of the novelist George Eliot and her works
- discuss the context of the novel
- explain the summary of the text
- appreciate the text of the novel

8.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will get to know about the Victorian novelist, George Eliot (pseudonym of Mary Evans). Eliot is considered one of the most important novelists of her time. An important aspect in her writing is that her characters are well rounded and a gradual growth is seen in the characters throughout the novel. Unlike novelists such as Charles Dickens, she does not attempt to portray her characters as completely good or completely evil. She represents her characters from a psychological point of view, and is often regarded as one of the precursors of early modernist

writings. Further, Eliot is also known for having written about the contemporary developments in the society during her time. For example, in *Middlemarch*, she uses the context of contemporary historical developments such as the Reform Bill. Her work is infused not only with a moral vision but also with a deep sense of compassion.

8.3 GEORGE ELIOT: THE NOVELIST

Let us discuss the life and works of George Eliot in order to appreciate her novel *Middlemarch*.

8.3.1 Her Life

George Eliot (1819-1880) was the pen-name of the novelist Mary Evans who was the youngest child of Robert Evans, an estate agent from Warwickshire, England. She received education at girls' schools in Nuneaton and Coventry. During her early years, she showed an extraordinary aptitude for study and was far ahead of her brother in academic achievements. At the age of twenty-two, she went with her father to Coventry, and soon began to liberate herself from the narrow religious outlook which bound her family. She later came into contact with thinkers such as John Chapman, Francis Newman, Herbert Spencer and was deeply influenced by their philosophy. She also came across George Henry Lewes who was a married man but both became deeply attached to one another. In spite of being in a loveless marriage, Lewes could not separate from his wife as divorce was not feasible in Victorian England. But Eliot, defying Victorian convention, began to live with him as a partner and remained with Lewes until his death. Poverty and misfortune dogged them for a while, but Lewes recognised her superior intellect and encouraged her with praise and devotion.It was Lewes' encouragement that enabled her to commence her career in writing. Years later, after the demise of Lewes, she married her long time acquaintance John Walter Cross in 1880. Unfortunately, Eliot died seven months later in a hot air balloon accident.

8.3.2 Her Works

Eliot's first work was a translation of D.F. Strauss' *Life of Jesus* which was published without her name in 1846. Soon she became a regular contributor and the assistant editor of the *Westminster Review* during 1850-51. She is also known to have published a translation of Ludwig Feurbach's *Essence of Christianity* in 1854. Her career as a novelist was first initiated after she was encouraged by George Lewes. Her first work of fiction was *Scenes of Clerical Life* which appeared in the *Blackwood Magazine* in 1857. *Adam Bede* was published in 1859 and it was received with great enthusiasm which established her as a leading novelist. She wrote under the pseudonym, George Eliot, which led to much speculation about the true identity of the author. *Adam Bede* was followed by *Mill on the Floss* in 1860 and *Silas Marner* in 1861. Her novels were characterised by elements of English provincial life, domestic realism and pathos. In 1860, when she travelled to Florence, *Romola* was materialised and it was published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1862-1863. Eliot also wrote some of her best known novels in the later part of her life. These include *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871-72) and *Daniel Deronda* (1874-76). Her last two novels are considered to be the longest and the greatest novels that she wrote. She is also known to have written numerous poems including the dramatic poem "The Spanish Gypsy"(1868) that was inspired by her travels in Spain during 1867.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What was the real name of George Eliot?

Q 2: What are the common characteristics of the novels written by George Eliot?

Q 3: What was the first novel written by Eliot?

8.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

Middlemarch was written during a time when George Eliot was undergoing a period of trauma following the death of Thornie Lewes, the young son of her partner George Lewes. Following the death, Eliot composed only poetry for about a year until a new story called “Miss Brooke” began to take shape in her imagination. By the March of 1871, Eliot made great progress on the multi-plot *Middlemarch*.

The plot is set in the English Midlands in a town called Middlemarch and the entire action of the novel occurs between the autumn of 1829 and the spring of 1832. The reference to the year 1832 in the novel is significant as it reflects the socio-political climate of England after the First Reform Bill was passed. This is exemplified in the change in mode of thinking, lifestyle and attitude of the people. For example, in the novel, Lydgate and the hospital suggest the reforms made in medicine. Similarly there is reference to the coming of the railways and the changes in transportation that was taking place. Dorothea’s plans and James’ implementation of them are reflective of the reforms seen in housing. All these examples in the text contribute to the sense that men and women in England at that time believe in the march of progress as suggested by the title.The uniqueness of the novel comes from placing the town rather than an individual character at the centre, and from the authority of the omniscient narrator.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What was the most significant development in England that has been reflected in the novel?



ACTIVITY 8.1

1. Try to find out the effects of the Reform Bill by consulting any book on the social history of England.

8.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The novel *Middlemarch* centres on the residents of a fictional town of Middlemarch in the Midlands, England during the 1890s.The novel begins with a description of the Brooke family that comprised the two sisters, Dorothy and Celia, and their old, Puritan uncle, Mr Brooke. The sisters became the wards of their uncle after the demise of their father who was Mr Brooke's elder brother. Both the young women were brought up in the manner befitting the ladies of their age with traditional outlook, good social behaviour and connections.They grew up as ladies in the estate of Tipton that belonged to their uncle. However, out of the two, Dorothea, like her uncle, was religious by nature and drawn more towards questions relating to intellect and religion. She was a pious, resourceful, young woman whose hobbies include renovating buildings belonging to old tenants in the vicinity. Celia, on the other, desired everyday comfort, warmth and friendliness over academic inclinations. The latter, even with her ordinary aspirations, had more sense and is more practical than her elder sister. Dorothea was of such serious disposition that in spite of being a young girl, she refutes wearing any kind of jewellery, even the ones that she inherited from her dead mother and so hands over the ornaments to her younger sister. However, on Celia's persistence, she finally agreed to keep a bracelet and a ring.

At a dinner party organised by Mr Brooke, a middle-aged scholar called Edward Casaubon and a young gentleman Sir James Chettam were invited. Both men competed for Dorothea's attention but she was attracted to the serious-minded Casaubon. Celia, however, who was more practical than her elder sister disapproved the latter's choice asserting that Casaubon was unsuitable for a young beautiful woman like her sister. That very afternoon Dorothea, contemplating the wisdom of the scholar, was walking and encountered Chettam. As he was in love with her, he mistook her silence and assumed that she might love him in return. When Casaubon made his proposal of marriage by letter, Dorothea accepted him at once. Her uncle, like Celia, thought that Chettam was a much better match. Mr Brooke

decided not to interfere in her plans, but Celia felt that the event would be more like a funeral than a marriage, and frankly asserted her thoughts.

Soon after, Casaubon invited Dorothea, Celia, and Mr. Brooke to see his home so that Dorothea might order any necessary changes. Dorothea, intending in all things to defer to Casaubon's tastes, said she would make no changes in the house. During this visit Dorothea also came across Will Ladislaw, Casaubon's second cousin, who seemed to be hardly in sympathy with his elderly cousin's marriage plans. After their marriage, Dorothea and her new husband were travelling in Italy. The narrative soon introduces us to a new group of characters.Tertius Lydgate, an ambitious and poor young doctor, met the pretty Rosamond Vincy, to whom he was much attracted. Rosamond's brother, Fred Vincy, had indicated that he expected to come into a fine inheritance when his uncle, Mr. Featherstone, would die. Vincy, meanwhile, was burdened by a debt he was unable to pay while Lydgate became involved in petty local politics. When the time came to choose a chaplain for the new hospital of which Lydgate was the head, the young doctor realised that it was to his best interest to vote in accordance with the wishes of Nicholas Bulstrode, an influential banker and founder of the hospital. A clergyman man named Tyke received the office. In Rome, Ladislaw once again encountered Dorothea,who, by then began to see the arrogance and incompatible nature of Casaubon. Seeing her disappointment, Ladislaw initially felt pity for her but later he fell in love with his cousin's wife. Unwilling to live any longer on Casaubon's charity, Ladislaw announced his intention of returning to England and finding some kind of lucrative occupation.

When Fred Vincy's document came due, he tried to sell a horse at a profit but the animal became vicious and he failed to do so. Caleb Garth, who had signed his document, now, was about to lose a hundred and ten pounds because of Fred's inability to raise the money. Soon Fred Vincy fell ill, and Lydgate was summoned to attend him. Lydgate used these visits to further his relationship with Rosamond. Meanwhile Dorothea and her husband returned from Rome and came to know about Celia's engagement to James Chettam. Will Ladislaw included another note to Dorothea in a

letter he wrote to Casaubon. This attention resulted in a quarrel between the two and it was followed by Casaubon's serious illness. Lydgate, who attended him, urged him to give up his studies for the time being. To Dorothea, Lydgate confided that Casaubon had a weak heart and must be guarded from any kind of anxiety.

All the relatives of old Mr. Featherstone too waited impatiently for his death, but he hoped to thwart their wishes by handing away his fortune to Mary Garth, the daughter of the man who had signed Fred Vincy's note. When she refused it, he fell into a rage and died soon afterwards. When his will was read, it was learned he had left nothing to his relatives; most of his money was to go to a Joshua Riggs, who was to take the name of Featherstone and a part of his fortune was to endow the Featherstone Alms houses for old men. Plans were made for Rosamond's marriage with Lydgate. Fred Vincy was ordered to prepare himself finally for the ministry, since he was to have no inheritance from his uncle. And Mr. Brooke, having gone into politics, enlisted the help of Ladislaw in publishing a liberal paper. During that time, Casaubon had come to loathe Ladislaw intensely after his cousin had rejected further assistance from him, and he had forbidden Ladislaw to enter his house. He soon passed away and it was discovered that he had made some conditions before giving Dorothea any right to his property. It was stated in a codicil to his will that Dorothea will be given his property as long as she did not marry Ladislaw. This strange provision caused Dorothea's friends and relatives some concern because if publicly given out, it would appear that Dorothea and Ladislaw were not discrete or prudent in their relationship.

Mr. Brooke, on the advice of his Tory friends, gave up his liberal newspaper and thus cut off his connection with Ladislaw. The latter realised that Dorothea's family was in some way trying to separate him from Dorothea but he refused to be disconcerted about the matter. He resolved to stay on in Middlemarch until he was ready to leave. When he heard of the codicil to Casaubon's will, he was more than ever determined to remain so that he could eventually disprove the suspicions of the village concerning him and Dorothea. Meanwhile Lydgate and Rosamond married, and the doctor had

gone deeply in debt to furnish his house. When he found that his income did not meet his wife's spendthrift habits, he asked her to help him economise resulting in frequent quarrels between the two. This resulted in deterioration of both his popularity and his practice as a doctor.

Around that time, Raffles, a man of ill reputation, appeared in Middlemarch.He was familiar about the past of Ladislaw's family. In the past, Ladislaw's grandfather had amassed a fortune as a receiver of stolen goods and Nicholas Bulstrode, the highly respected banker of Middlemarch, had once been the confidential clerk of Ladislaw's ancestor. More than that, Bulstrode's first wife had been his employer's widow. Upon money inherited from her, money which should have gone to Ladislaw's mother, Bulstrode had built his own fortune. Already threatened to be tarnished by Raffles, Bulstrode reasoned that the rogue would tell Ladislaw the whole story. To forestall trouble, he sent for Ladislaw and offered him an annuity of five hundred pounds and liberal provision in his will. Ladislaw, feeling that his relatives had already tainted his honour, refused, unwilling to be associated in any way with the objectionable situation. Ladislaw makes a decision to leave Middlemarch and goes to London without assurance that Dorothea loved him.On the other hand, Lydgate drifted deeper into debt. When he wished to sell what he could and take cheaper lodgings, Rosamond managed to make him hold on,to keep up the pretence of prosperity a little longer. At the same time Bulstrode gave up his interest in the new hospital and withdrew his financial support. Faced at last with the seizure of his goods, Lydgate goes to Bulstrode and asked for a loan. The banker advised him to seek aid from Dorothea and abruptly ended the conversation. But when Raffles, in the last stages of alcoholism, returned to Middlemarch and Lydgate was called in to attend him, Bulstrode,was terrified that the doctor would learn the banker's secret during one of Raffles' delirious outbursts. So he changed his mind and gave Lydgate a cheque for a thousand pounds. The loan came in time to save Lydgate's goods and reputation. When Raffles died, Bulstrode felt at peace at last. But the rumour soon spread that Bulstrode had given money to Lydgate and that Lydgate had attended Raffles in his final illness.

Both Bulstrode and Lydgate were publicly accused of malpractice in Raffles'death. Only Dorothea spoke in favour of Lydgate while the rest of the town was busy with gossip over the affair. Rosamond was anxious to leave Middlemarch to avoid further public disgrace. Bulstrode also was anxious to leave the town after his secret, which Raffles had told while drunk in a neighbouring village, became known. However, he fell ill and his doctors would not permit him to leave his bed. Dorothea,sympathetic with Lydgate, becomes determined to give her support to the hospital and to try to convince Rosamond that the only way Lydgate could recover his honour was by remaining in Middlemarch. Unfortunately, she came upon Will Ladislaw, to whom poor Rosamond was pouring out her grief. Afraid Rosamond was involved with Ladislaw, Dorothea left abruptly. Angered at the false position Rosamond had put him in, Ladislaw explained that he had always loved Dorothea, but from a distance. When Dorothea forced herself to return to Lydgate's house on the following morning, Rosamond told her of Ladislaw's declaration. Dorothea realised she was willing to give up Casaubon's fortune for Ladislaw's affection. In spite of the protests of her family and friends, they were married several weeks later and went to live in London. Lydgate and Rosamond lived together with better understanding and prospects of a happier future. Fred Vincy became engaged to Mary Garth, with whom he had long been in love. For a long time Dorothea's family disregarded her, but they were finally reconciled after Dorothea's son was born and Ladislaw was elected to Parliament.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: In the novel, what is the profession of Lydgate?

Q 6: What condition did Casaubon add in his will?



8.6 LET US SUM UP

The unit provides the learner with an insight on the life and works of George Eliot. A brief study of the background and context of the age enlightened us about the society and contemporary developments that influenced her writings. The summary of the novel essentially shows that the novel is centred on the stories of Dorothea and Lydgate with various sub-plots that add to the length of the narrative. Thus, *Middlemarch* is essentially a depiction of nineteenth century provincial England with its changes, hopes and aspirations.



8.7 FURTHER READING

1) Eliot, George. (1998). *Middlemarch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2) Henry, Nancy.(2008).*The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3) Levine, George(Ed).(2001). *A Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Mary Evans.

Ans to Q No 2: English provincial life, domestic realism and pathos.

Ans to Q No 3: *Scenes of Clerical Life.*

Ans to Q No 4: The socio-political changes seen in England with the passing of the First Reforms Bill.

Ans to Q No 5: Doctor.

Ans to Q No 6: That Dorothea should never marry Will Ladislaw.



8.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write an essay on the life and works of George Eliot.

Q 2: Discuss the backdrop of the novel *Middlemarch*. How successful is Eliot in representing the changes that came over in nineteenth century England? Illustrate with examples from the text.

Q 3: Throw light on the plot of the novel *Middlemarch*.

Q 4: How does the novel *Middlemarch* end ?

****

UNIT 9: GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Reading the Novel

9.3.1 Major Themes

9.3.2 Major Characters

9.3.3 Narrative Style

9.4 Critical Reception

9.5 Let us Sum up

9.6 Further Reading

9.7 Answer to Check Your Progress

9.8 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explore the milieu in which George Eliot's novel was produced
- provide insight into the major thematic concerns
- discuss the character portrayal in the novel
- analyse the narrative style of the novel
- get an idea of the reception of the novel.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have been introduced to the summary and analysis of Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*. All of her works situate her characters' lives in relation to the broader social conditions of their times. Similarly, we must understand her writing within the public context of nineteenth-century society and culture. George Eliot lived in a time that witnessed the Industrial Revolution and other social changes. The First Reform Bill was passed in 1832 and it brought about significant changes in the society, life and attitude

of the people. Her fiction,with the exception of *Daniel Deronda* and *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, is set too early to incorporate or examine these new changes, but part of her careful historicising involved showing the impact of whatever was new at the time of her narratives' settings. For example, *Middlemarch* describes the first steps of surveying the land for the laying of a railway line into the town. In the face of opposition, questions arose on whether such life and land-altering technology was in fact "progress". In the following sections, therefore, we will get a better insight into the nature of the characters and the themes present in her novel.

9.3 READING THE NOVEL

Let us look at the following aspects of the novel.

9.3.1 Major Themes

Reforms : The major social movement with which her fiction is concerned is social and political reform. In the nineteenth century, the passion to reform institutions, laws, and even personal behaviour touched every aspect of society, from the abolition of slavery in the British colonies (1833) to the removal of disabilities (or prohibitions on civil rights such as the ability to hold office) for Dissenters (1828), Catholics (1829), and Jews (1858). The greatest change that the Reform Bill of 1832 achieved was in extending "the right to vote to all males owning property worth £10 or more in annual rent." In effect the voting public thereafter included the lower middle classes but not the working classes, who did not obtain the vote until 1867, when a second Reform Bill was passed, an event that preceded the publication of *Middlemarch*. The Reform Bill therefore broke up the monopoly of power that the conservative landowners had so long enjoyed and thus represents the beginning of a new age, in which middle-class economic interests gained importance. In the novel, it is seen that different characters have attempted to bring about changes in different areas. This is exemplified in Lydgate's approach towards medicine and the fever hospital, Dorothea's ideas regarding

housing and Chetam's implementation of them, Caleb and Fred's investment in farming and also the changes in transportation. These people essentially believed in the march of progress and it is significant that the title has been aptly chosen as "Middlemarch."

Treatment of Women : During her time, George Eliot also saw the advancement in women's rights and improvements in education, health and sanitation. This finds expression in *Middlemarch*. Characters like Dorothea, Mary and Mrs Garth display intelligence and resourcefulness which is set in direct contrast with the qualities of Rosamond and Celia. While the former group of characters believed in taking control of things for betterment, the latter essentially believed in the traditionalist notions of women's role being limited to maintaining elegance and domesticity.

Marriage : *Middlemarch* also deals with the theme of marriage.The narrative primarily focuses on how marriage affects the life and choices of the protagonists. The narrative gives a picture of the married life of three couples- Dorothea and Casaubon, Lydgate and Rosamond, and Celia and James Chettam. Both the protagonists, Dorothea and Lydgate, in spite of their intelligence, make wrong choices in the selection of their spouse. While Dorothea accepts Casaubon's proposal in quest for knowledge and companionship, Lydgate is swayed by the beauty and elegance of Rosamond. Both these characters fail to see the true nature of their spouses in the beginning. Although they somewhat emerge wiser than before by the end of the novel, Lydgate's married life essentially remains unfulfilling. Dorothea gets a second chance to marry but her aspirations ceased to exist after her marriage with Ladislaw. Celia, on the other hand, remains happily married to James Chettam and leads a blissful but uneventful and ordinary life.

9.3.2 Major Characters

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is a multi-plot novel in which separate stories of characters that live in the fictional town of

Middlemarch have been fused and connected together in the narrative. It is pertinent that the title of the novel has been named Middlemarch while the subtitle is 'A Study of Provincial Life'. The word Middlemarch itself seems to be a generic term meaning the middle borderland, a representative place but which is not a centre of civilisation. The novel has been much acclaimed because of the well defined characters and the subtle psychological probing done in the narrative.

Female Characters :

George Eliot has represented an interesting range of female characters in *Middlemarch*. In the beginning of the novel, Dorothea has been projected as the central character. The narrative, however, provides very little about the early life of this character and the environment in which she grew up with her younger sister Celia. She is described as young woman who has been deprived of the security and affection provided by a family as her parents were dead. Her only consolation was the presence of her uncle, Mr Brooke, who in spite of his traditional outlook maintains peace in the household by letting everyone have their way. Dorothea is a resourceful woman but too much of an idealist. Her idealism seems misplaced because she wishes to do great things for a world about which she does not have much knowledge. Dorothea, even with her good upbringing, does not seem to fit in the provincial English society because it expects women to be submissive and accept the role assigned to them without much aspiration for more. It is her idealism and dream to supplement in accomplishing a great work and because of this blunder; she commits the blunder of marrying the scholarly but much older Casaubon. After marriage, Casuabon remains aloof in his own private world and Dorothea becomes lonely and disillusioned by the marriage as she does not get the appreciation and respect she expected from her husband. On the contrary, she discovers that he is an egoist and self-centred person. Even after her husband's death, her reputation is threatened by the codicil that

was added by him in his will. Towards the end of the novel, Dorothea accepts Ladislaw's proposal for marriage giving up her right as Casaubon's heir and begin her life afresh in London. With Ladislaw elected to the Parliament, the narrative ends on a happy note for Dorothea as we are told she accepted her domestic responsibilities but she helped the people by actively engaging in good deeds for the society. Thus, Eliot concludes the novel by asserting "for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric events." We see a psychological growth in Dorothea throughout the novel.

Unlike Dorothea, her younger sister, Celia is described as a young lady who did not believe in doing extraordinary deeds for the good of the world. She is a woman of the world who loves her sister and opposes Dorothea's decisions that she knows would affect her destiny in a poor way. She is a traditional young woman suited to the English provincial life and does not have high aspirations of her own. It was Celia who convinced Dorothea to accept some of their mother's ornaments and she was also vehemently opposed to Dorothea marrying Casaubon as she believed the marriage would only bring unhappiness to her sister. Celia makes a sensible decision to marry the kind and sensitive Sir James Chettam who was earlier rejected by Dorothea.

The third female character is Rosamond Vincy, a vain and rather empty headed young woman. She is the pampered and spoilt child of the Vincy family who has received education in a ladies academy. Although her social manners and elegance is impeccable, she considers herself to be much superior to the society in Middlemarch. She is somewhat similar to Dorothea in the nature of her aspirations. But while Dorothea aspires to work for serving humanity, Rosamond is driven by her selfish desires. Her reason for accepting Lydgate was merely because she heard that he was connected to some old, aristocratic family. For her, marriage was means to escape from the provincial life to a more accomplished society. Even after her marriage, she enjoys the attention of other men around her much to the chagrin of Lydgate.

Her spendthrift nature adds to the burden of Lydgate who begins to see the true nature of his wife.

Other minor female characters include Mrs.Garth and Mary Garth. Mrs Garth is represented as an honest and hard working woman. She gives lessons to her own children and village children as well, making extra money from this. She respects the qualities of responsibility, education, and honesty, and ensures that all her children have these traits. She is a harder judge than her husband, but they are still a good match. Her eldest daughter, Mary, is an intelligent girl who knows a good bit of literature, and she also has good experience with human nature. Mary is very affable, practical, and independent. She also helps Fred to improve himself immeasurably.

Male Characters :

Eliot has brought about diversity in the representation of the male characters as much as the female characters. Edward Casaubon is a cold and reserved man who goes to extraordinary lengths to display dignity and learning. Dorothea and her uncle are readily fascinated by his learning but it is Celia who correctly points out that beneath the air of knowledge lies vanity and a sense of pretension. He imagines that Dorothea would be a perfect wife as she can also serve as his hostess and secretary. But he is unable to cope with her optimism and enthusiasm towards life. He spent his time working on a project called “The Key to All Mythologies” a work that is supposed to integrate his life’s learning. However, Casaubon really has no intention of writing or finishing it, and has lost his ability to live and his will to achieve in the musty pages of books. He realises about his own inadequacy as he notices Dorothea’s intelligence and perception. Casaubon’s insecurity is further increased with the coming of Ladislaw and his friendliness towards Dorothea because he senses the same traits in his cousin as his wife. He turns envious thinking about the possibility that his cousin might marry his wife after his death. It is for this very reason that he includes a codicil to the will.

Another character who has been represented as a learned, dignified man is Tertius Lydgate, a 30 year old gentleman and a doctor by profession. Unlike Casaubon, Lydgate's learning and intelligence is genuine and is based on experience. As a surgeon, he holds great promise. This is best reflected in his decision to bring about changes in the area of his expertise. However, his weakness for Rosamond brings about misfortune for him. When Lydgate fails to achieve his ambition of being an affluent, renowned surgeon, he is disillusioned and resorts to unscrupulous means in fear of being exposed. It is particularly important for him to present the image of a respectable man of medicine, since a good reputation will help him to further his career by establishing a good practice in the elite society.

The third significant male character is Will Ladislaw. He represents the world outside Middlemarch. He is very different from his much older cousin Casaubon and is seen sympathising with Dorothea for her plight. He feels bad for her as he believes that the marriage was clearly incompatible due to different personalities of both Casaubon and Dorothea. His father was a musician, mother an actress, while he is a dilettante and a Radical. He rejects the superficial liberalism of Mr. Brooke.

The other male characters include Mr Brook, the uncle and sole guardian of Dorothea and Celia. He owns an estate called Tipton where he and his nieces lived. He is a strong-willed man, with definite, though outdated, ideas about what women should and should not do. He means well for everyone. Another character is Fred Vincy, the only son of the Vincy family. Just like his sister, Rosamond, he is a spendthrift and a very irresponsible young man, though by the end of the novel, he becomes humble and more responsible. He is in love with Mary Garth, though she is below him in social standing. However, Mary is much more sensible than he is, and gets him to work hard and prosper.

9.3.3 Narrative Style

The novel's uniqueness comes from placing the town rather than an individual character at the centre of the narrative and from the authority of the omniscient narrator. The narrator, whose gender and age are unspecified, occupies a position between the past and future of the characters and speaks as though suspended over the years 1829–32, poised to tell us exactly why it is that the older characters like Casaubon and Bulstrode makes a mistake and fail in their ambitions and also why the young characters such as Dorothea and Lydgate are in the process of making the mistakes that will lead them to failure. The narrator has a constant awareness of himself or herself, sometimes as a scientist making "A Study of Provincial Life" (the novel's subtitle), and sometimes as a historian with the knowledge of how the story ends.

The narrator has knowledge both of the present event being narrated and of one that will occur in the future, both of course having already occurred in the past. It is as if the narrator had first read the novel before beginning to narrate it, for despite the fiction that the events in the novel are real, the narrator's ability to point out ironies and contradictions like this one in Brooke's politics, remind us of the textual, literary nature of this reality. Furthermore, rather than pretending to be a historian, the narrator is a commentator on the rhetorical practices of historians.

Eliot uses the narrator's hindsight, foresight and insight to examine the mixture of external circumstances and personal choice that determines the success or failure of lives that are always solitary yet also always connected. One of the most notable failed lives in the novel is that of Mr Edward Casaubon, whose intellectual incapacity to complete the great task of his life, the "Key to All Mythologies," and the psychological consequences of his suppressed knowledge of his incapacity, are examined in painful detail. The narrator makes overt attempts to generate sympathy for

the prematurely withered scholar, but Casaubon's insensitivity to Dorothea, his jealousy and the ungenerous codicil to his will make his overall impression an unpleasant, even despicable one.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: The most important theme that *Middlemarch* explores is_____

Q 2: Casaubon was writing a book called_____

Q 3: Write a note on the female characters in the novel.

9.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The novel *Middlemarch* was written and published in 1871 and is considered to be one of Eliot's greatest novels along with *Daniel Deronda*. In the initial years of its publication, it was received with mixed criticism. Literary magazines such as *The Spectator* and *Athenium* pointed out that it had a melancholic quality and its serialisation made the work tedious. However, in the later years, writers such as Henry James appreciated it as one of the strongest English novels. The work was particularly well received by the later day women writers such as Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf. One of the important feminist voices of the twentieth century, Kate Millett asserted that the novel displays how the dreams and aspirations of an intelligent and resourceful woman like Dorothea become subordinated to those of Ladislaw. F.R.Leavis, in his seminal work *The Great Tradition*, placed *Middlemarch* as one of the most significant works of the nineteenth century as no other novel has been as successful as it in showing the society with its mechanisms and the way people of different classes lived.



9.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit enabled us to acquire an idea of the social background of the age based on which Eliot wrote her narrative. Her treatment of the male and female characters shows her insight into human nature as well as her

feeling of compassion towards all. The analysis of the structure of *Middlemarch* shows that though the novel appears to be rather unwieldy, it is carefully constructed with the two main stories of Dorothea and Lydgate being closely woven with the various sub-plots. George Eliot touches upon several themes in the novel such as social progress, politics, treatment of women, social aspiration, etc.



9.6 FURTHER READING

1) Eliot, George. (1998). *Middlemarch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2) Henry, Nancy. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3) Leavis, F.R. (1948). *The Great Tradition*. New York: George W. Stewart.

4) Levine, George(Ed). (2001). *A Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Reforms.

Ans to Q No 2: *The Key to All Mythologies*.

Ans to Q No 3: Refer to section 9.3.2



9.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write an essay on the characterisation in *Middlemarch*

Q 2: Give a detailed explanation of the themes in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

Q 3: Discuss the narrative style in the novel *Middlemarch.*

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UNIT 10 : CHARLES DICKENS: *OLIVER TWIST* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Charles Dickens: The Novelist

10.3.1 His Life

10.3.2 His Works

10.4 Context of the Novel

10.5 Summary of the Novel

10.6 Let us Sum up

10.7 Further Reading

10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.9 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of one of the greatest novelists of the world, namely Charles Dickens
- develop an idea on the late Victorian novels
- gain an insight into the historical background of the age
- form an idea of the background of the novel *Oliver Twist*
- summarise the content and context of the novel

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* which is the author's second novel. *Oliver Twist* which is subtitled as *The Parish Boy's Progress* was published in the year 1838. The novel chronicles the obstacles faced by the young protagonist Oliver and his struggle for survival in the face of perilous situations that he encounters. Oliver has to face extreme misery and suffering as he is an orphan confined within a workhouse, left to be exploited. Dickens, in this novel, vehemently criticises

the system of workhouses and the Poor Law Act that aggravated the misery of the paupers and increased crimes in the Victorian England. He gives a sordid description of the life of the social miscreants and the poor, living in the peripheries of the English society. The book exposes the maltreatment faced by young orphans in London, especially during the Victorian age. *Oliver Twist,* much like Dickens' other novels can be called a social novel as it invites the readers' attention towards child labour, juvenile criminals created by the society and the condition of paupers in the workhouses.

10.3 CHARLES DICKENS: THE NOVELIST

Dickens is one of the most significant novelists of the Victorian Age. Nineteenth Century was a period when Britain produced some of the best works in literature. This was caused mainly due to the changes brought about in the society by the preceding era with the coming of the French Revolution and also the effects of Industrial Revolution. Realism was seen in representation of the characters and their social conditions. Dickens was somewhat influenced by the Ben Jonsonian technique in his portrayal of characters, and as such his characters (even the dark and evil characters such as Fagin) often come out as caricatures. Dickens had written a wide range of fiction, the novels were primarily structured in episodes which regaled their readers. These include *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Little Dorrit*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* among others. Some of his more mature works were *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*. By reading this unit you will learn about the life and the works of this great writer.

10.3.1 His Life

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, England. He was the second of eight children to John Dickens (1785-1851) and Elizabeth Dickens (1789-1863). His father was a clerk in the navy pay office. After his birth the family moved to Norfolk Street, Bloomsbury, and then, at the age of four they moved

to Chentham, where he spent his formative years until the age of eleven. The early part of Dickens' childhood was happy in Chentham where he attended a private school. Charles was playful as a child and was a voracious reader. He especially enjoyed the picaresque novels of Tobias Smolett and Henry Fielding. Unfortunately this period of bliss did not last for long. The financial position of the family forced them to move to Camden in London in 1822. Dickens' father was imprisoned in 1824 by his creditors for his inability to clear debt. His mother and his youngest siblings joined his father at the prison as it was the practice at the time.

Subsequently, Charles Dickens, then at the age of twelve was left under the care of Elizabeth Roylance, a family friend. She was an impoverished old lady, long known to their family, and whom Dickens later immortalised in the character of Mrs. Pipchin in *Dombey and Sons*. Later, he was moved to the house of an agent for the court, Archibald Russell, a kind old man who lived with his wife and their handicapped son, in Borough. They provided the inspiration for the Garlands in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Dickens later used the prison as a setting in *Little Dorrit* because for him it remained a symbol of the suffering and misery he and his family had to go through. Dickens was forced to leave school and work in a black ware house to afford his family. The strenuous and often harsh working conditions made a lasting impression on Dickens and later influenced his fiction becoming the foundation of his interest in the reform of socio-economic and labour conditions in England.

Charles was eventually sent to the Wellington House Academy in Camden Town, but he found that the school's environment was not good as the students were brutally treated by the headmaster and the teaching system was inept.

10.3.2 His Works

The misery that he witnessed during his childhood later

inspired much of his fiction especially that of *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* which have become the classics of British literature. Dickens then started working as an office boy and became a reporter for the *Morning Chronicles*. He also started contributing articles to the periodicals such as the *Evening Chronicle* (1835), *Monthly Magazine* (1833- 35) among others. These writings were later republished as *Sketches by Boz*, *Every-day Life and Every-day People* (1836-37). He also succeeded in publishing *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (or *The Pickwick Papers*) in a serial format from April, 1836. *Pickwick Papers* was a series of anecdotes and stories concerning the members of a London club. The exploratory nature of the club allowed Dickens to place his characters anywhere in England and find themselves in various comic situations. The plot of these series received greater success when its protagonist Pickwick was imprisoned after getting entangled in the legal system. It was during this time that he met John Forster who became his close friend and biographer.

In 1837, Dickens and his wife Catherine Hogarth were trying to overcome the loss of the latter's Sister Mary. It was also the year in which the engaging tale of Oliver Twist began to appear in the fresh periodical *Bentley's Miscellany* of which Dickens was the first editor. This was followed by *Nicholas Nickleby*, also in the form of a monthly series. *Nicholas Nickleby* tells the tale of a nineteen year old boy, Nicholas, his mother and his sister, who are left penniless after the death of the father. He is soon sent by his uncle to work in Dotheboys' Hall, in which the young boys, mostly street urchins and orphans are maltreated. The independent spirit of Nicholas did not allow him to bear any mistreatment, and soon he flees along with his new found friend, Spikes and joins a theatre company. The novel is episodic in structure and is filled with the humour and optimism that we associate with Dickens. In 1840, a new weekly called *Master Humphrey's Clock* was launched, written wholly by Dickens. It contained sketches as well as installments of the full length-novels

such as *Old Curiosity Shop* and his long deliberated *Barnaby Rudge*. The novels became so popular that their connection with the weekly was dropped, and they were republished separately. In1842, Dickens and his wife Catherine made their first visit to America and were warmly received. Although his first impressions about the country were favourable, he was soon disillusioned by the society. He offended the American public with the part-travelogue and part-social pamphlet *American Notes* (1842). The American readers also did not like his stereotypical portrayal of Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44).

Although *Martin Chuzzlewit* failed to draw the interests of the reading public, he was successful with *A Christmas Carol* (1843). *A Christmas Carol* was a part of Dickens' Christmas series, comprising *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man*. In 1844, after his long stay in Italy, he composed "Pictures from Italy" which was contributed to the *Daily News*, a new paper founded and edited by Dickens in 1846. He began writing *Dombey and Sons* (1848) during a visit to Switzerland in 1846. In 1850, he again started the weekly periodical *Household Words* and in 1849 it was incorporated into another periodical *All the Year Round* which he continued to edit until his death.

The period that followed was highly productive one for Dickens as he was able to compose some of the best known works. *David Copperfield* appeared in monthly numbers in 1849-50.Written in the first-person narrative, this ***bildungsroman*** showed the growth of its protagonist, David from childhood to adulthood as he learnt from the many experiences of life. This novel is considered as the most autobiographical of all his works. This was followed by *Bleak House* (1852- 53) and *A Child's History of England* (1851- 53). The former is a dark and complex novel that strongly criticised the abuses of the old court of Chancery. *Hard Times* followed in 1854 and was succeeded by *Little Dorrit* in 1855- 57 and *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859. In the manner of *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* was largely a critique of the education and the social system that gave too much



***Bildungsroman*:** a novel which shows the development of the mind and character of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood after going through varied experiences in life.

importance to '***Utilitarianism***'. The novel showed the demerits linked with the suppression of the creative and humane side of mankind. *A Tale of Two Cities* is a rendering of the French Revolution and its effect on the lives of its protagonists. It lacked the humour which is typically associated with Dickens and is considered one of his more serious works. The novel was largely influenced by Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* which Dickens greatly admired. In the following decade, Dickens' two novels *Great Expectations* (1860-61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) was published.

During these years of utmost creativity, Dickens also involved himself in ***philanthropic*** activities, and at times engaged himself in ***amateur*** theatrical performances. In one such fund-raising programmes, he was introduced to the young actress Ellen Ternan. Dickens' admiration for her affected his marriage, and consequently he and Catherine separated in 1858. He tried to attempt public scandal and came out clean by making frequent public appearances. He involved himself in literary compositions and public readings of his own novels, and that kept him away from the thoughts of domestic unhappiness. Although these sessions were very successful, it was also physically and emotionally tiring for Dickens. When he revisited America in 1867- 68, he delivered a series of readings, and on his return toured the countryside of England. He had started working on his new novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. But suddenly he had an attack of stroke and five days later he passed away in 1870, leaving the work unfinished.



Utilitarianism: the system or ideology which gives importance to the economic use of the individual living in the society.

Philanthropic: charitable, generous.

Amateur: someone who is new in a profession or skill, a beginner.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How do the characters of Charles Dickens appear?

Q 2: What marked a lasting impression on the life and works of Charles Dickens?

Q 3: Name some of the novels by Charles Dickens.

10.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

During the period beginning with the French Revolution (1789-92) and the succeeding Napoleonic era which lasted till the first two decades of the nineteenth century, England witnessed as well as became a part of numerous changes that began to unfold in Europe. Early in the French Revolution, many Englishmen enthusiastically welcomed the overthrow of the old order and tradition. But as violence and terror in France reached extreme heights, the English society underwent social stratification. The upper strata of the society, represented mostly by the governing classes were alarmed at the way certain events across Europe created radicalism and unrest among the common population. While the needy and the liberals were encouraged to protest for improved conditions, disorder, followed by repressive measures, became commonplace, particularly later when England was at war with France. This internal conflict within Europe led to hardship and poverty of the English people.

At the same time, the heavy tax that was imposed on the common people to support military resources increased the sufferings of the people. The upper sections of the British society did not have much to lose but the working classes were badly affected by inflation and food scarcity. Their hardships were multiplied when the government issued paper currency leading to further inflation. After the crowning of William IV as the King in 1830, the power was in the hands of the Whigs who favoured reform and change unlike the traditionalist Tories. Among the most urgently recommended steps was the call for parliamentary reform. In 1829, the first Catholic was admitted to Parliament. In spite of determined opposition in the House of Lords, the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. The bill removed many of the problems in representation, and the middle class was enlarged. Then on 1833 came the beginning of the Child-Labour laws. Since that time, an increased amount of legislation was enacted to control the hours of labour and working conditions for children and women in manufacturing plants.

A new concept was also adopted to deal with the issue of poverty. This was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which further aggravated

the problem when the provisions were confined to only the aged and sick paupers as being eligible for relief. The able-bodied paupers were made to work in the workhouses under terrible conditions. Further, the inmates of the workhouses became objects of social stigma, and to further heighten the unpopularity of these institutions and its residents, the living arrangements in them were deliberately made harsh. In one way, the plan was successful. Within three years, the cost of poor relief was reduced by over one-third. However, the system was sharply criticised, and the increased prevalence of crime has been attributed to it. Dickens made the Poor Law of 1834 a conspicuous target of criticism in his novel *Oliver Twist*.

In 1837, Queen Victoria came to the throne of England as the long period of the rise of the middle-class was gaining grounds. At that time, Dickens's hugely popular character, Mr. Pickwick of *The Pickwick Paper* had already captured the attention of the reading public. At the same time, the troubles faced by young Oliver Twist were engaging the sympathies of a large audience. The coming of the Victorian Age led the then twenty-five-year-old Charles Dickens to literary fame that would take him to ever greater eminence throughout his life. *Oliver Twist* is an early example of the social novel and the book represents the various social evils of Dickens' time such as child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children. Dickens used his fiction as a way to mock the hypocrisies of his time by surrounding the novel's serious themes with sarcasm and dark humour. He was particularly interested in what came to be known as the "Condition of England" works, and this came about due to the influence of the French writer, Thomas Carlyle.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention some of the contexts out of which a novel like *Oliver Twist* emerged.

Q 5: Do you think that Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is a social novel?

10.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The narrative of this wonderful novel, that has imbibed elements of the bildungsroman as well as the picaresque, has been summarised for our thorough understanding of the novel.

CHAPTERS 1 TO 7

Oliver Twist begins with the first chapter *Titled Treats Of The Place Where Oliver Was Born And Of The Circumstances Attending His Birth* and it opens with the description of workhouse in state of decay. A child is born in that unidentified place. While the infant is struggling to survive, the mother was quite close to death. She requests the doctor and the assisting pauper to bring the child to her. Soon after taking a look at it, she passes away. The pauper observed that she was without a wedding ring and concluded that the infant is ***illegitimate*** and unwanted. Thus, he becomes the new inmate of the ***parish***, and is clothed in old garments. He becomes a parish child who is unwanted and despised by everyone.



***Illegitimate*:** born out of wedlock or unmarried parents; unlawful.

***Parish*:** community Workhouse: an asylum or place intended for the healthy and young paupers.

***Unscrupulous*:** dishonest, corrupt.

Oliver as the infant is so named, is kept in the workhouse for some months, but later is transferred to a private asylum for children run by the ***unscrupulous*** Mrs. Mann. She is a woman who prospered by starving the children and using the charity money for her own benefit. Consequently, the children of that asylum died frequently due to malnourishment but she always succeeded in getting away as the report always confirmed that deaths were caused by natural causes or accidents. Here we see Dickens bringing out the true picture of the workhouses culture and the plight of the parish children. The Poor Law failed to protect the needs of the paupers and the needy.

Oliver spent the first nine years of his life here. We are introduced to Mr. Bumble, a minor church official and a corrupt boastful man, who is proud of his position. He tells Mrs Mann that he is there on business. He informs that he attempted to find the true identity of Oliver's parents but has failed. So the authorities instructed to send Oliver to be returned to his birthplace, that is the workhouse. In the meantime, Oliver is brought forth and introduced to Mr. Bumble, who takes him to his new home. That very evening, the

board in control of workhouse affairs meets where Oliver is summoned to face the body. After ***rebuking*** the little boy for the ingratitude shown by him, he is told that he will learn the skill of picking ***oakum*** from the very next morning.

Following this scene the author discloses that the authorities have made a new rule for the workhouse. The paupers are restricted to a very small portion of food, and are also deprived from other basic necessities so as to humble them. The policy succeeds in reducing the population of the workhouse as many of them perish subsequently. Meanwhile, the boys at the workhouse are very hungry and often they send one of them to ask for more food. One day it was Oliver's turn to do so. Oliver approaches the fat workhouse master and asks for more who is surprised and annoyed by his demand. In a state of ***agitation***, Bumble rushes to inform the board, which is in session and Oliver is instantly sentenced to ***confinement***.

The next morning, a notice is posted on the gate offering five pounds to anyone who will accept Oliver Twist as an apprentice. One morning, Gamfield, a passing chimney sweep sees the notice and expresses his willingness to take Oliver. The authorities reject his offer and later Mr. Sowerberry, agrees to take the boy to work for him. When they arrive at the ***undertaker's*** establishment, Mrs. Sowerberry permits Oliver to feast on leftovers neglected by their dog and is made to sleep beside the coffins. Dickens here represents the horrors undergone by the young child who is otherwise in need of care and security.

The next morning Oliver is awakened by a noise and he sees a ***repulsive*** looking youth kicking the outside door. The adolescent introduces himself as Noah Claypole and informs Oliver that he is his superior. The other boys as well as a girl called Charlotte treat Noah with respect for he enjoys the distinction of being a charity boy of known parentage. After spending some weeks at the Sowerberries, Oliver is assigned the duty of serving as a ***mute*** at the children's funerals.

After a month's probation is over, Oliver is formally apprenticed. He regularly attended many funerals, gaining an understanding of human ***avarice*** and ***hypocrisy***. Having Mr. Sowerberry pleased with his work, Oliver becomes the object of jealousy of Noah Claypole. The undertaker's regard for Oliver



Rebuking**:** scolding.
Oakum**:** a fiber soaked in tar used in ships.
Agitation**:** protest, sentenced to.
confinement**:** locked as a punishment.
Undertaker**:** person in charge of the graveyard and funerals.
Repulsive**:** disgusting.
Mute **:** a hired mourner at funerals arranged by the undertaker.
Avarice**:** greed.
Hypocrisy**:** saying or doing something that one does not mean.

also makes Mrs. Sowerberry his enemy, and Charlotte is against Oliver because of Noah. At dinner time one day, while Charlotte is out of the kitchen, Noah takes advantage of the opportunity to torment Oliver by questioning his mother's reputation. In an outburst of violent fury, Oliver punches the bigger boy and knocks him down on the floor. On hearing the noise, Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry come rushing to the rescue, and all three combine forces in subduing little Oliver. He is finally forced into the dust cellar, but he continues showing his dauntless rage by hitting the locked door.

Oliver persists in his defiance, even after Bumble tries to reason with him through the keyhole, and Bumble comes to the conclusion that Oliver's fury is the result of feeding him meat. The board members, who according to him, "are practical philosophers," have prescribed ***gruel***. So, Bumble suggests a period of starvation to restore Oliver to normalcy. After the ***negotiations*** have been reached, Sowerberry returns. Then for no reason he drags out the ***battered*** child and beats him mercilessly. Oliver is then locked up until Mrs. Sowerberry orders him to his bed among the coffins. When he is finally alone, Oliver give way to tears. As soon as it is morning, he opens the door and walks away from the place. He follows a path that takes him past the establishment where he had been kept before being committed to the workhouse. Dick, a child younger than Oliver, who had been his special companion in misery, waits to bid him farewell.



Gruel**:** liquid food.
Negotiations**:** discussions.
Battered**:** beaten and worn out.
Deceitful**:** dishonest
Haven**:** safe place.

CHAPTER 8 TO 13

In the succeeding chapters Oliver would find himself experiencing a new society, much different and more ***deceitful*** than the one he left behind. He manages to get away from the town by noon and on the way, he notices a stone marker showing that he is seventy miles from London. He decides to go to the city where he believes he would find some safe ***haven***. After undergoing many difficulties on the way, Oliver reaches Barnet seven days later. He rests on a doorstep, weary with exhaustion and hunger. Suddenly, he cites a boy observing him. This boy tries to get friendly with Oliver by giving him food and drink. He also offers to help Oliver by introducing him to a kind, old gentleman in London who provides free food and lodging to the

needy people. The boy tells him that his name is Jack Dawkins but is better known as "The Artful Dodger."

Although Oliver is suspicious of Dawkins, he goes with him hoping to win the old gentleman's favour. However, Oliver soon finds himself in an unpleasant dwelling. There, he sees an old repulsive looking man with red hair called Fagin preparing some food. Some other boys are also present who were smoking and drinking like grown men. Oliver takes some food and falls asleep after consuming some warm drink. Jack Dawkins and the other boys are characterised by a ***conspicuous*** adult behaviour and mannerisms. We would soon come to know that it is the world of crime that robbed them of their childhood and innocence.



Conspicuous**:** something that can be easily noticed
Lasciviously**:** greedily
Naive**:** innocent
Diligence**:** carefulness
Erratic**:** unpredictable
Stupefied**:** confused

The next day exhausted Oliver wakes up late. He notices the old Jew, Fagin remove a small box from a secret place in the floor. Fagin was looking at its precious contents ***lasciviously***, and is alarmed to see Oliver watching him. He explains that the box contains his life's savings and tries to divert Oliver's attention. Later, the Dodger comes in with another boy Charley Bates, who tells Fagin they had successfully attended an execution. After breakfast, the duo practice picking pockets from old gentlemen. This is described as a game to the ***naive*** little boy who is delighted. The game is soon interrupted by the entrance of two girls, Betsy and Nancy who were dressed untidily. Fagin tells Oliver to take “The Artful Dodger” as his ideal and gives him his first lesson in picking pockets. This is deliberately done by the old man to introduce Oliver to the world of crime.

Oliver starts living in Fagin's room for many days. He notes that whenever the other boys return empty-handed, they are either denied supper or beaten up. The naive boy believes that it was done for maintaining discipline and ***diligence***. He is soon granted permission to go out with the Dodger and Bates. Outside, he is confused by their ***erratic*** behaviour. At the sight of a gentleman absorbed in reading outside a book stall, they initiate the plan. The Dodger steals the man's handkerchief and passes it to Bates, and the duo run away leaving Oliver alone. Suddenly, Oliver realises what is going on and is ***stupefied*** with fear, he is caught and is hurried to a nearby police office and locked up in a dirty prison cell. Though Oliver is released, he

becomes traumatised by what happened and is taken away by the old gentleman Mr. Brownlow in a coach. Mr. Brownlow brings Oliver to Pentonville residence, and he is immediately put to bed in an unconscious state. After remaining in a state of unconsciousness for many days, he awakens feeling weak with fever. Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper, Mrs. Bedwin takes good care of him and when he feels a little better, he is carried down to her room. There, Oliver sees the portrait of a beautiful lady and is attracted by the divine beauty of the lady's face. Mr. Brownlow comes in and cannot deny the tenderness aroused in him by Oliver's pitiful condition. He begins to wonder as Oliver's features seem very familiar.

Meanwhile Dawkins and Bates who quietly managed to escape goes back to Fagin's quarters. Fagin is enraged at Oliver's absence. All the members feel that Oliver would create trouble for them and so they agree that someone should visit the police office to learn the boy's fate and also whether Oliver has betrayed Fagin and his associates. None of the company is willing to undertake the mission but the arrival of Betsy and Nancy solves their problem. Nancy decides to undertake the risk.

CHAPTER 14 TO 16

The next chapter begins by showing Oliver's disappointment at the removal of the portrait from the wall. According to Mrs. Bedwin, it was done to spare him from tension. The boy feels happy to be living in this changed environment where everything is in a state of peace and order. Mr. Brownlow gifts him with a new suit, and Oliver throws away all his old rags. Then, one evening, Brownlow calls Oliver to his study and requests him to tell everything honestly about his life. Just as Oliver is about to begin, he is interrupted by a visitor, Brownlow's friend Mr. Grimwig who is a garrulous gentleman with an aggressive nature. So, the conversation with Oliver is ***deferred*** until the next day. After his arrival, Grimwig attempts to ***tarnish*** Oliver's image in front of Brownlow. Although Brownlow is convinced about Oliver's innocence, a doubt rises in his mind.



***Deferred*:** postponed.
***Tarnish*:** spoil.

A parcel of books arrives from the stall where Mr. Brownlow was robbed and he is anxious to return some books and to pay his bill. Brownlow

then decides to test Oliver's honesty by sending him on the errand. Grimwig maintains that Oliver, with "a new suit of clothes on his back, a set of valuable books under his arm, and a five-pound note in his pocket," will rejoin the thieves instead of returning. Oliver is expected to be back in twenty minutes, and the two friends wait expectedly gazing at Brownlow's watch. Oliver proceeds toward the book stall. He takes a wrong turn and is halfway down a side street and finds himself lost. Suddenly, Nancy claims that it is her young brother. She starts crying out to people in the vicinity that her younger brother had left home to take up evil ways. Sikes hits Oliver on the head with the books that he was carrying while the bystanders shout their approval. The unconscious boy is then dragged away by the miscreants. Oliver is pushed along between Nancy and Sikes. Seeing Oliver in his respectable attire Fagin and Bates greets him mockingly while The Artful Dodger searches his pockets. Fagin and Sikes quarrel over the five-pound note, which Sikes snatches out of the old man's hands.

Oliver begs to have the books sent back to Mr. Brownlow. When he is told that now he will be considered a thief by his protector, he desperately makes an attempt to escape. At that moment, Nancy closes the door to protect Oliver from the dog trying to bite him. When Fagin starts to beat the recaptured boy, Nancy grabs his club and throws it in the fire. The girl then turns on Fagin with uncontrollable anger. She warns Fagin that if he harms the little boy, she will kill him. Nancy also accused Fagin for destroying her life and making it miserable. When she is about to attack Fagin, Sikes wrenches her wrists and she faints.

Oliver's clothes are taken from him and replaced by the rags that he formerly wore. Fagin remembered seeing the suit in the hands of the dealer who purchased them, thereby gaining a clue to the boy's exact whereabouts. Then, the boy is locked in a room.

CHAPTER 17

In this chapter, Dickens shows the ***undeniable*** interrelationship between tragedy and comedy in everyone's life. In the novel there are flashbacks in time and transitions in place which would help in resolving the



***Undeniable*:** unquestionable

mystery of the protagonist's birth and his parents. This explanation is a way of leading up to a change of scene back to Oliver's birthplace. This transitional chapter serves to preserve a tie between London, the present main scene of action, and the town where Oliver spent his first miserable years.

Mr. Bumble visits Mrs. Mann's place and tells her he is taking two paupers to London to appear in court regarding a settlement. The woman assures Bumble that all of the young ones are well under her care except for the mischievous little Dick. Bumble feeling annoyed, wants to see the disobedient child and the boy is brought in front of him. The boy's health was ***deteriorating*** and Bumble trying to show how kind he was, asked Dick to make a request. To this the innocent child expressed his earnest wish to convey his love and good wishes to his friend, Oliver. Bumble is further irritated and sends off the sick boy to the coal ***cellar*** as punishment.



***Deteriorating*:** weakening.

***Cellar*:** basement.

***Guineas (plural)*:** coin, a form of currency in Britain.

***Lair*:** hideout especially of criminals.

In London, Bumble notices an advertisement given by Mr. Brownlow who promised a reward of five ***guineas*** to any person who would provide information about Oliver Twist. Bumble decides to pay a visit to Pentonville. There, he succeeds in tarnishing the image of Oliver in front of Mr. Brownlow and Grimwig by providing some papers. Mr. Brownlow is deeply hurt by the disclosure and calls Mrs. Bedwin and instructs her never to mention Oliver's name in the house. Thus, in this chapter we see that Bumble's report about Oliver further darkens the boy's prospects.

CHAPTER 18 TO 22

When Oliver returns to the ***lair*** of Fagin, the latter rebukes him for his ingratitude towards those who helped him. He finds the surroundings rather gloomy although the rooms in that house seemed to have a history of elegance that has diminished due to neglect. One afternoon, Bates and Dodger tries to influence his mind and accept the world of crime. Oliver refuses to yield and reminds his companions of their betrayal when they abandoned him to suffer. The duo explains that it was all about surviving in the world. Soon it is decided to end Oliver's confinement, and Fagin attempts to train him by telling him stories of his criminal exploits in a humorous way. This was a ploy to make the world of crime colourful and attractive to the child.

As the narrative progresses Fagin moves outside his lair on a grim, wet night. He is moving towards Sikes' hideout where he also meets Nancy. Fagin is keen to involve Oliver because he believes that once he gets implicated in a crime, he would never escape from the clutches of the criminal world. Nancy is entrusted with the responsibility of bringing Oliver as the thieves will materialise the plan after two days. Next day, Oliver finds a new pair of shoes by his bed and Fagin tells him that he is to be taken to Bill Sikes. Oliver does not question anything but feels curious. Before Fagin leaves, he cautions Oliver to obey Sikes without any question as he is a brutal man. To spend his time, Oliver reads from a book that the old man gave him. The book was about the lives of infamous criminals and was filled with ***gruesome*** descriptions. The boy is shaken by the contents of the book and prays to God to protect him from such a fate.



Gruesome**:** horrible, frightening.

Enveloped by stillness**:** surrounded by quietness.

Wary**:** suspicious.

Nancy comes to take Oliver away and seems upset about something, and Oliver instantly senses that something bad is going to happen. He ponders on the possibility of asking for people's help on the streets. Nancy, realising his intentions tells him that nothing could be done as she had already tried whatever was possible and failed. She further tells him that both of them will be in danger if he attempts to escape. He is then taken to Sikes' hideout where he is filled with fear and terror. By his gestures, Sikes warns that he will shoot Oliver in the head if he tries to communicate with anyone while they are out together. Nancy translates the robber's threats into plain words. That night Bill and Oliver sleep while Nancy sits up. Before he goes to sleep and later the next morning, Oliver looks for encouragement from the girl, but she shows absolute indifference. Nancy awakens them, the next morning and they leave their dwelling.

When Sikes and Oliver walked out, it is raining and the city is ***enveloped by stillness***. They move towards through the western part of London, and continue the journey on a cart. Oliver is periodically threatened by Sikes as the latter was ***wary*** of the boy. Soon they leave the cart and loiter through the field of Hampton until they finally enter the town. They have dinner in an old public house and then moves to Sheppherton. Finally they reach the destination- an old decrepit house near a flowing stream. There

they are joined by Barney and Toby Crackit.

At half past one, the burglars cross a bridge in the darkness of the night, and approach the targeted house. Oliver realising what is going to happen is filled with grief and horror. He begs Sikes to let him go but is silenced at the sight of the pistol. Sikes expertly removes the safety bars from a window in the back of the house, and instructs Oliver to go through the passage and unlock the door for them. The boy decides that once he is inside he would raise an alarm. But as Sikes was lifting him to the window, two persons arrive and shouts at them. A gunshot is heard and Oliver is hit by the bullet. The burglars flee, dragging the bleeding boy with them. Here it is interesting to note that much of the actions in the novel unfolds in the darkness of the end. This is used to highlight the perils faced by the protagonist.

CHAPTERS 23 to 27

In Chapter 23 we see the growing closeness between Mrs. Corney, the matron of an establishment for paupers and Bumble. Bumble sees the utility of getting payments from Mrs Corney. As the two were engaged in an intimate conversation, they are rudely disturbed by an old pauper who announces that old Sally who is near her death wish.

In the garret room, Mrs. Corney finds the old inmate in an unconscious state. The impatient matron is just about to leave when the sick woman sits up and asks the other two persons to leave the room. The patient who was in her last stage tells her incoherent story: In this same room years ago, she nursed a beautiful young lady who gave birth to a child and died immediately. But before dying, the mother entrusted a gold object to her attendant. However, the narrator confesses, she stole the object, although she realised that the boy would have been better treated. In her final moments, the girl expressed the hope that if her child survived it might one day have reason not to be ashamed of its mother. Sally tells Mrs. Corney that the child's name is Oliver and breathes her last before being able to disclose anything further. This adds to the mystery of the origins of the parish boy.

Meanwhile, in another scene, Fagin is sitting thinking about something while Dawkins, Bates, and Chitling play cards.The others tease Chitling

about being in love with Betsy. Tom asserts that he served a jail sentence to protect the girl. The gang members humour each other. This is when the bell rings and the Dodger goes out to investigate. When he comes back, he whispers something to Fagin, who immediately instructs Bates and Chitling from the room. It was Toby Crackit - ***famished***, weary and alone. Fagin had already read about the failure of the burglary attempt in the newspapers. After Toby has eaten, Fagin questions him about Sikes and Oliver and is dumbfounded to hear that Toby is also ignorant of the whereabouts of Bill and Oliver. Crackit explains that the vicinity of the countryside was on a state of ***vigil***. It was therefore possible that Sikes has dumped and left the wounded Oliver in a ditch and left. Fagin immediately rush out of the room in rage and goes straight ot Saffron Hill. At the Three Cripples, the Saffron Hill public house, he enters a crowded room enveloped in smoke and signals the landlord. The landlord tells him that he has heard nothing of Barney. Then Fagin inquires about a man called Monks, and the landlord states that he might arrive tomorrow. To this Fagin looks somewhat worried and tells him he will meet Monks tomorrow.



***Famished*:** starving

***Vigil*:** at guard, watching cautiously

***Ill-contrived*:** badly planned

Next, Fagin goes to Bill Sikes' hideout, where he finds Nancy by herself in a state of deep despondency. She cannot offer Fagin any comfort. Provided Sikes escapes unharmed, she prefers that Oliver should be dead and thus out of Fagin's clutches. Fagin becomes angry and alludes to his power of putting the noose around Sikes's neck. He is irritated at the thought of losing the boy, who represents an investment and potential source of profit. And in his agitation he almost blurts out something involuntarily, but checks himself, thinking he has unwittingly disclosed something important. But Nancy was too drunk to have heard anything.

As Fagin returns to his lair, he is interrupted on the way by a stranger whose voice he recognises. He takes this mysterious man in a room alone to prevent the others from overhearing them. The mysterious man is none other than Monks. Initially they speak in small voices but Monks shouts at Fagin that the entire plan was ***ill-contrived***. They are discussing about Oliver. Monks remarks that Fagin could have made a thief of him easily and tarnished his reputation with the possible punishment sentence of transportation for



***Spectre*:** ghost.

***Tinker*:** a person who does small errands or collects left away things.

life. Fagin protests that he has done all that he could, and if the boy is still alive he is trapped. These chapters are filled with an air of deepening mystery as the plot becomes more intricate with the introduction of Monks. We come to know that whatever hardships Oliver faces is a part of a plan to bring about his downfall.

Although Monks apparently has an upper hand over Fagin, he is essentially a coward. This is seen when he sees a shadow outside and believes it to be a woman's ***spectre***. It is also possible that Monks is haunted by some guilt connected to his past. Fagin searches through the rooms and find nothing. Then the two leave the room.

The narrative scene then changes to Mr. Bumble, and we find him still waiting in Mrs. Corney's room. He takes a good look at the widow's property. Since no one is around, he surveys around and finds a locked box that is filled with money. He decides that Mrs. Corney would make a suitable wife and proposes to her. Mrs. Corney accepts him and tells him that Sally is dead. She further says that she will tell him everything after they are married. Here we see that Bumble has found a suitable life mate in Mrs. Corney who seems unaffected by his obvious greed for money and unscrupulous nature. This chapter concludes the events of Chapters 23 and 24 and continues in an unbroken time-sequence.

CHAPTERS 28 TO 32

The narrative in the next chapters goes on to pick up the adversities faced by the protagonist after the failed burglary attempt. It is revealed that it was Toby Crackit who first suggested abandoning the boy. Finding no other alternative, Sikes drops the boy and disappears over a hedge. Simultaneously, the pursuers lose the chase and turn back. The group consists of Mr. Giles, the butler and steward of the old lady residing in the mansion, Brittles, a general handyman, and a ***tinker*** with his two dogs.

When it is morning, the air becomes colder and the drizzle continues. Oliver lies in an unconscious state, and his left arm is bleeding due to the gun shot. Soon he recovers consciousness and struggles to his feet. In a semi-conscious state, the boy crawls painfully across the fields and manages

to reach the nearest house. As he gets close, Oliver recognises it is the same residence that they attempted to rob the previous night. He has no choice left and so he knocks the door alarming the residents inside. The helpless boy is dragged into the house and news of the capture is shouted up the stairs. The voice of a young girl conveys her aunt's wishes to have the wounded robber brought to Giles's room and be given medical attention. Brittles is sent off to bring a constable and doctor from Chertsey. The old lady of the house, Mrs. Maylie, and her niece Rose are having breakfast when Mr. Losberne, the surgeon from Chertsey, arrives. He seems to be an amiable and humorous man who goes inside to check the robber. We come to know that Giles has suppressed the information that the victim of his bullet is a young boy, and neither of the ladies has seen the housebreaker. The doctor thinks that the ladies of the house should go with him to see the patient, and they agree. When the ladies see that it is just a child fast asleep with pain and exhaustion, they are filled with pity for him. Rose sheds tears and requests that the boy be saved. Her aunt Mrs. Maylie too declares that she intends to take the suffering boy under her protection and appeals to the doctor for help. He volunteers to get the assistance from Giles and Brittles. Mr. Losberne asserts that the boy would soon become conscious and then they will talk to him to understand the boy's nature better. Oliver revives in the evening and instantly expresses his wish to speak. Accordingly, the boy tells his protectors everything he had to face in his life and sleeps calmly after his confession is made. Consequently the people around him decide to protect him in whatever way it is possible. Mr. Losberne cheerfully goes against the respected standards of conventional morality and order. In this he is supported by the Mrs. Maylie and her Rose. The doctor invents a bold story to trick the police, even to the extent of compromising his own professional integrity. He also tricks the trust-worthy servants into supporting him. Although it was against the tenets of law, all of this is in accord with Dickens's principles concerning justice. Dickens has little confidence in institutions, including the law, to bring about human betterment. He has more faith in the ability of the generosity of worthy people as an agency of bringing true justice than in the impersonal doings of legal machinery. Here he

emphasises on the significance of mercy and charity above the workings of formally instructed legal codes.

In the meantime, Oliver's arm starts healing and he begins to recover from illness. He is determined to convince Rose Maylie of his gratitude and expresses his wish to show his sincerity. Rose promises that he will have ample opportunity, for her aunt intends to take Oliver to the countryside with them. Oliver also begins pondering about Mr.Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin, the people who formerly cared for him when he was in a terrible state. To this Mr. Losberne offers to take him to see Mr. Brownlow.When Oliver has partially regained his strength, he and the doctor take Mrs. Maylie's carriage for a trip to London. As they come to Chertsey Bridge, Oliver becomes suddenly becomes tensed and points out the hideout of the robbers. The doctor at once jumps out of the vehicle and invades the building. But there he finds only an old hunchback. Inside nothing corresponds with Oliver's descriptions of the place. During this confrontation between the doctor and the hunch-back, the latter claims that he has been living there alone for twenty-five years. The doctor gives him a coin and leaves. In the carriage, Mr. Losberne feels doubtful of Oliver's truthfulness but dismisses them and reproaches himself for the habit of yielding to impulses. Here we see a difference between Mr. Losberne and Mr. Brownlow. Unlike the former, the latter easily accepted everything he saw or heard. Unfortunately when they stop before Mr. Brownlow's residence, they find a "For Rent" sign in the window. From the neighbours they discover that Brownlow had sold everything and left for the West Indies with his housekeeper and a friend six weeks ago. Oliver also urges a visit to the bookstall, but the doctor cancels it. Oliver is grievously disappointed at losing a chance of letting Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin know of his well-being and of regaining their trust. He continues, however, in the good graces of his present benefactors. Leaving Giles and another servant in the Chertsey house, Mrs. Maylie and Rose take Oliver with them to a distant cottage.

It is springtime in the country, and the boy finds himself in a vivid and new world. This is because he has passed the past years of his life living in grimy and ugly surroundings, and now the natural beauty of the place

corresponded to his inner peace and satisfaction. The days are peaceful and happy, and the nights free from worry and insecurity. There, he is taught to read and write by an old gentleman and Oliver cheerfully prepares his daily lessons. He now finds occasions to perform acts of kindness and provide services to the two ladies, in whose company he spends three idyllic months.

CHAPTERS 33-38

In the next chapters we are introduced to a new character of Henry Maslie. These chapters forms a minor plot concerning Rose and Henry's relationship. One warm evening, after Oliver and the ladies have returned from their regular walk, Rose all of a sudden begins crying uncontrollably. She excuses herself saying that she is unwell and goes to her room. It seems clear that she has lied but still Mrs. Maylie feels certain that her niece's condition is serious and will become worse and she tries to control herself. As feared by Mrs. Maylie, the very next morning, Rose is bed-ridden due to a high fever. At once Mrs. Maylie writes two letters; one to Mr. Losberne from Chertsey, and the other addressed to Harry Maylie.

Oliver takes the Losberne letter and speeds four miles through the fields to the nearest village. At the inn, the message to the doctor is entrusted to a special express rider. As Oliver hurries away, he accidentally collides with a tall man wearing a cloak. The stranger yells at the boy and then falls down in a fit. Oliver calls for help, and the man is carried into the inn. The distress at the cottage caused by Rose's illness drives the incident from Oliver's mind.

Rose is much worse, and the local doctor has given her up. The girl becomes delirious because of the fever and Oliver spends the night in terror. The following day the family spend a day waiting sadly, praying for her recovery. Oliver too sits in the local graveyard and prays for Rose. It seems incredible that one so young and good should die while on all sides vibrant life thrives under the sunny sky. But the paradox is confirmed by the sound of the church bell tolling for the funeral of some other young person. The sad boy returns home and joins Mrs. Maylie near the bedside of the ailing

girl. The patient is in a deep slumber that everyone believes will end either in death or complete recovery. After many hours have passsed, Losberne enters to announce that Rose will survive.

Oliver goes outdoors and relieves the strain of anxiety with a flood of tears. A post-chaise comes up the road at full speed. The horses are stopped and Giles bellows out of the window at Oliver for news. The boy convinces him and the other passenger that is Mrs. Maylie's son Harry, that Rose is out of danger. As he greets his mother, Harry chides her for not writing sooner. The old lady had not sent her letter to him until Mr. Losberne had stated his opinion. Harry now tells his mother about his deep and resolute love for Rose. To this Mrs. Maylie responds by expressing her belief that even the most devoted attachment is subjected to social scrutiny. This can occur if the wife, even though innocent, has a doubtful past. This has no effect on Harry who ignores such notions and promises that he will declare his feelings to Rose within two days. Then the old lady reminds him that Rose may refuse him on account of her doubtful birth.

Mr. Losberne teases Giles a bit in his characteristic manner and then takes the butler aside to confide to him that Mrs. Maylie had deposited twenty-five pounds in a bank for him in recognition of his brave conduct on the night the robbery was foiled. The entire household pass the evening in a spirit of good-natured gratitude and joy. Oliver is relieved to find peace and happiness return to the life of his close friends. He is no longer alone on his morning excursions but is accompanied by Harry, who enthusiastically gathers flowers for Rose.

Being left more to himself now, Oliver begins to concentrate in his education and study diligently. One evening, after an active day, he falls asleep and dreams that he is in Fagin's house again. In the dream, Fagin points at Oliver, and shows him to another man. The other man speaks words of extreme hatred and Oliver wakes up in a fright. In reality Oliver finds that Fagin was standing beside the ground floor window with the man Oliver had encountered in the inn yard. They instantly recognise each other and the sinister pair moves away when Oliver calls for help. Harry Maylie

responds to Oliver's alarm and crosses the hedge to run after the intruders. Giles and Mr. Losberne also join the chase but the fugitives cannot be seen, and there is no trace of their movements. The night fall forces abandonment of the search and Giles makes a futile final attempt in the village to pick up clues about the men. He continues with his efforts even in the following days but nothing comes up and so he lose interest in the incident.

Rose quickly regains her health and resumes her place in the family life. Still there is a quality of tension in the atmosphere. Harry and his mother have long private sessions. Rose frequently appears to have been crying, and her uneasiness increases after Mr. Losberne sets the day for his departure. Finally, Harry Maylie decides to declare his love for her openly. Her first reaction is to wish that he had left sooner to find some work worthy of his abilities. Harry tells her that all he has ever wanted was to win her love but Rose is firm in her decision and she tells Harry that he must stop thinking about her as his beloved. When asked for reasons, Rose raises the objections of her unsuitability to be the wife of a man who aspires to rise in the world. She admits that she has made the decision rationally and not emotionally. Rose also asserts that if Harry were not so far above her in station and prospects, things would be different. Before they part, he convinces Rose to allow him to propose to her again within a year's time or less. While Losberne, Harry Maylie, and Oliver are at breakfast, the doctor scolds Harry for repeatedly changing his plans. The young man has at last made up his mind to leave with the doctor without seeing the ladies that morning.

Harry privately tells Oliver that since he will not be at home for a while, Oliver must write to him about every two weeks, addressed to the general post office in London. This is for the safety of the two women. Harry wants to know how his mother and Rose are, but he wishes to keep his location secret and the boy feels proud that he has been finally been trusted and given a major responsibility. Before leaving Harry looks at Rose's window and gets into the carriage, and moves off with great speed. Rose cries as she watches from behind the curtains.

Meanwhile, we come to know that has married Mrs. Corney and succeeded to the post of master, but in spite of his elevation, he sorely

misses his cocked hat and his social position. Earlier he commanded respect as a figure of authority and now he was idle. Bumble and the widow have been married for eight weeks. Going over the terms of his marriage dowry, he mutters that he sold himself too cheap. Mrs. Bumble did not catch all of his words but guesses at their meaning and starts quarrelling with him. Bumble meets the challenge by employing the forceful gaze that never fails to stop hungry paupers but his rebellious wife laughs at him and exercises her next weapon, that is tears. This tactic only entertains Bumble and feeling victorious he walks towards the door. Mrs. Bumble now resorts to more persuasive methods. She knocks her lord's hat off, grasps him by the throat, and begins to pound him with her fists. After a bit of scratching and hair pulling, she pushes him over a chair and orders the fallen warrior from the room. He picks up his ineffectual hat and retires from the field.

Bumble makes a tour of the workhouse. He enters the room where female inmates are laundering and tries to improve his damaged spirits by reprimanding them for talking too loudly. The strict disciplinarian is promptly cowed by the unexpected presence of Mrs. Bumble. To the delight of the pauper women, the workhouse master is threatened by his wife. Feeing humiliated, Bumble goes outside visits a pub. Inside there is only one other customer, a tall, dark person wearing a cloak, and the two begin a conversation. The stranger stresses that his identity is to remain secret, but he reveals that he knows something of Bumble's history. The dark man seeks information from Bumble and makes an advance payment. The inquirer directs Bumble to recall an event of twelve years ago. It becomes clear to the reader that the stranger is referring to the birth of Oliver Twist, but he savagely denies interest in the boy. The woman who nursed the mother is the object of his investigation. When informed that the woman is dead, the man appears both relieved and disappointed. Then, saying that the matter is of no importance, he is about to leave. Bumble's greed instinct senses that it could be profitable to know more about Oliver's history. His wife has never told him about what took place on the night of Sally's death, but he has learned that it concerned Oliver's mother who died in childbirth. So Bumble detains the stranger with the information that he can produce a witness to the old pauper's death. The

man's apprehension seems to be revived by this confidence, and he arranges an evening meeting for the next day and he leaves without saying anything. Bumble notices that he did not write down his name. Overtaking the man, Bumble is curtly told that he is Monks.

The next evening, Mr. and Mrs. Bumble walk down to the riverside. The structures in the vicinity are all neglected dwellings. Bumble leads the way to a large building which was once a factory of some sort but is now crumbling. As the man and woman pause in front of the ruins, a rainstorm begins. Monks calls them inside. As the thunder strikes, Monks is strangely disturbed by the sound. He leads the way to an upper floor and then turns to Bumble asking what does the woman know. But the dauntless matron earlier warned her husband to say as little as possible, and she assumes the role of spokesman. She has never confided in her husband about the business in hand. It becomes obvious that Monks is willing to pay well for information related to Sally's death. Mrs. Bumble negotiates cunningly until Monks agrees with her price of twenty-five pounds. Speaking in a whisper, the woman relates her story. She assures Monks that she was entirely alone with Sally when she died. Mrs. Bumble removed from the corpse's hand a scrap of paper that turned out to be a pawnbroker's ticket. Sally had pawned the object that she got from Oliver's mother, managing to keep up the interest payments. There was time enough for the matron to redeem the pledge, and she did so. Mrs. Bumble now produces a small bag, which Monks eagerly opens. It contains a little locket holding two locks of hair, and a plain gold wedding-ring. The ring has the inscription "Agnes," with a blank for the last name, also a date within the year before Oliver's birth. Monks allows Mrs. Bumble to ask two questions, without committing himself to answer. She first asks if it is the only information he needs, and secondly will it prove anything against her. To this Monks replies affirmatively to the first question and answers in negative to the second. He then pulls open a trap door at Bumble's feet, exposing the turbulent river below. He ties a weight and drops it into the surging waters. Monks warns the married pair to secrecy, to which Bumble agrees. The couple then gladly obey Monks's command to leave in haste.

CHAPTERS 39 TO 46

After the description of Monks' meeting with the Bumbles, the narrative takes us to the present hideout of Sikes. It is a slum near his former home, and there he is in a ferocious state because of ill-health brought about by extreme poverty. Nancy is in his company, and she looks pale and haggard. Even in such a condition, he abused her, and she protests at the treatment she receives. She tells him that unfair treatment is being meted out to her and falls unconscious out of weariness. At that moment, Fagin arrives with the Dodger and Charley Bates. They try to revive Nancy, and shows that they have brought ample provisions, food and drink for the two of them. Nevertheless, Sikes snaps at them for having neglected him during three weeks of sickness. Fagin defends himself claiming he has been out of town for a week and it prevented from coming during the rest of the time. Sikes makes a demand of five pounds but is obliged to settle for less. He tells Nancy to deliver the money as he trusts none, and so the four comprising of Fagin and his apprentices leave Sikes alone. Once they reach Fagin's lair, the old man tells the boys to leave.

As Fagin is about to get the money for Sikes, he hears a voice. Unobserved by the old man, Nancy snatches off her shawl and bonnet and shoves them under the table. Fagin remarks that it is a man whom he has been expecting, that is Monks. Nancy looks nervous and does not move from the table, so Fagin takes his visitor to another part of the house. The instant they leave, Nancy goes to the door and then also climbs the stairs. Fifteen minutes later, she comes back. When Fagin re-enters the room alone, the girl is apparently ready to be off, and he gives her the money.

Nancy is highly distraught. Outside, she first starts in a direction opposite from the way to Sikes' place. Then, in tears, she turns back and hastens to Sikes with the money.

The next day, Sikes does not notice Nancy's agitated state. But in the evening, he comments on her strange appearance, finally concluding that she is getting the fever. When Sikes asks for his medicine, Nancy turns her back to pour the contents and gives it to Sikes. Soon he falls in a sound

sleep as Nancy notes that the opium has taken effect. She quickly gets ready, kisses him and rush outside. It is almost ten as the girl hastily moves through the streets of London streets and finally reaches her destination - a family hotel in Hyde Park. Once inside, she requests to see Rose Maylie but is prevented by the servants. After some delay, Nancy sends a message to Rose, begging to meet her at once. Rose responds by having the bedraggled girl shown upstairs to wait in another room. When the two girls meet, Nancy is moved by Rose's kindness and confesses that it was she who ambushed Oliver, and at the same time told Rose of her disreputable life. Nancy further states that she would surely be murdered if her present action is known. Then Nancy asks Rose if she is familiar witha person called Monks, to which Nancy replies in negative. Nancy explains that she learned of Rose's location by overhearing it from the man who calls himself Monks. She tells about the way she eavesdropped on Fagin and Monks' conversation and heard that the latter is willing to pay a large a sum if Oliver is recovered and is destroyed by implicating him in the world of crime. Monks preferred to have the boy suffer all of the indignities of imprisonment and worse. Monks announced his determination relentlessly to persecute the butt of his hatred - his brother Oliver. Nancy also heard Monks mention that Mrs. Maylie and her niece would give a fortune to know who Oliver is. Then Nancy announces that she must be on her way.

Rose worried by this new information, asks how Oliver can be saved. To this Nancy suggests her to seek the advice of some trustworthy gentleman. As the girl was about to depart, Rose offers her protection and assistance but Nancy rejects the offer claiming that it is too late for her to turn back to a better life. She is fully aware that Sikes is a violent criminal who may yet kill her, but he is the only person who ever filled the void in her existence. In case she is needed, Nancy promises to be on London Bridge every Sunday night for an hour before midnight. There she will meet Rose and whomever the latter chooses to take into her confidence.

Rose and her aunt would be in the city for two more days and she is confused wondering whom she can entrust Nancy's information. Initially she thinks about numerous persons known to her, and wonders if she can

confide to Harry but she hesitates from doing so. This is partly a reaction to what had earlier passed between the two. She is soon interrupted by Oliver who reports that as he was out walking with Giles, he saw Mr. Brownlow enter a house. Giles learned that it was the gentleman's house and secured the address. Rose believes the problem has been solved and immediately determines to take Oliver to Brownlow.

At first she goes inside alone to see Brownlow and finds him with Grimwig. When she announces that she has knowledge of Oliver Twist, Grimwig looks highly displeased. Brownlow eagerly listens to Rose's report of all that has happened to Oliver since the gentlemen last saw him. Then, she tells him that the little boy was waiting outside. The old gentleman rush out of the house into the coach and brings the boy into the room, and Grimwig greets him cordially. Mrs. Bedwin is overjoyed to see Oliver and the reunion is a moving one. Rose privately informs Brownlow about Nancy's disclosures and he immediately volunteers to tell Mr. Losberne that evening and also advises her to inform about the situation to Mrs. Maylie.

When the doctor learns of the developments, he becomes characteristically carried away with indignation. Brownlow pacifies him and argues the advantages of discretion. He tells him that arresting the gang will not benefit Oliver in any way. It is more important for them to trap the mysterious man called Monks alone. In order to find out from Nancy how they can get to him, it is necessary to wait calmly until next Sunday. Brownlow recommends that Oliver should not be informed about these events as it will disturb the child. Brownlow's proposals are accepted and he requests that Grimwig be admitted to their proceedings. To this Mr. Losberne agrees on the condition that Harry Maylie must also be included. With these provisions settled, Brownlow ends the meeting by telling of his wish to remain silent for a time about his abrupt departure from the country.

Meanwhile we are told that Noah and Charlotte are on the run after robbing the Sowerberries and the two fugitives go to a seedy part of London, and Noak stops at the Three Cripples. They are received by Barney, who serves them in a room behind the bar. On being warned by Barney, Fagin takes a position at a secret observation post and watches the newcomers,

listening to Noah's absurd bragging. Noah assures Charlotte that he intends to prosper by engaging in theft and announces his ambition to become associated with some gang. That might help them to dispose of the twenty-pound note that Charlotte is carrying. Fagin makes his entrance after hearing his words. After friendly preliminaries, Fagin intimidates Noah by exactly repeating some of his words. The cowardly Noah accuses Charlotte of being the guilty party. But Fagin dismisses all of this, confiding that he is also in that kind of business, and that Noah might be interested. While Fagin offers to exert his influence to get Noah connected with a prominent person, he claims that it will cost the twenty pounds after which Noah can see the man tomorrow. Noah accepts the offer, partly because he is uncomfortably aware that he is in Fagin's power.

Noah observes that Charlotte is good at what she does and will be productive. As for himself, Noah would like assignments involving a minimum of effort and risk. He comes to know that the person he was supposed to meet was Fagin himself. After some deliberation, Fagin hits upon the ideal work for the new comer. He is assigned the task of stealing coins from young children sent on errands and then knocking them into the gutter. Noah is content with these arrangements and identifies himself and his partner as Mr. and Mrs. Morris Bolter. The next day, Noah, alias Bolter, learns that Fagin is the same man to whom he offered to recommend Oliver. Fagin delivers a persuasive lecture on the necessity in the business of each looking out for the others. To emphasise his argument, Fagin expresses sorrow that he lost one of his best members the previous day that is the expert Artful Dodger, who is accused of picking a pocket.

Charley Bates comes in looking strangely saddened. He explains that there are witnesses against Dawkins and he will surely be transported to the colonies on the charge of theft of a snuff box. Fagin tries to cheer Bated by supposing that the Dodger will put on a creditable performance at his trial. Fagin wants someone to report on Dawkins, and Bolter is given the duty to do so in spite his protests. He is dressed as a wagon driver and taken to the police station by Bates. Noah makes his way to the station and immediately recognises Dawkins when he is brought in to appear. The

Dodger impudently tries to make a mockery of the hearing, but a witness testifies against him and he is formally charged. He is sent to the prison, and Noah rejoins Bates to deliver the information to Fagin.

The hasty migration of Noah and Charlotte to London forms another connecting link between Oliver's starting point and the city. The plot is developing fast and Dickens gives specific time references to indicate this. One day after Monks transacted his business with the Bumbles, he consulted with Fagin.

Noah contributes more confirmation of his character. It is obvious that he allowed Charlotte to carry the loot so that if necessary, he could blame her to save himself. On the other hand, there is irony in the way Noah categorizes himself as a snoop and a coward. Here we are repeatedly shown the double dealings of the criminals and their absence of values. For them, violent death, arrest, imprisonment, and execution are part of the normal patterns of existence. Because Fagin and Sikes trust Nancy, she is well informed regarding their crimes. In spite of her grudge against Fagin, she is unwillingly to be a part of his crimes. In her conversation with Rose, Nancy said nothing that could injure Sikes. Still, she is worried and distracted that she has betrayed her friends.

Fagin and his gang members have no new plans to work, so on Sunday night they are idle while Nancy is frightened. After eleven o'clock has struck, Nancy attempts casually to leave the room but Sikes forbids her to go out. The girl becomes desperate and hysterical. Sikes detains her forcibly in another room until midnight, when she ceases to struggle.

The two men discuss about Nancy's strange behaviour until she re-enters the room. She is apparently subdued, so Sikes directs her to guide Fagin down the stairs as it is dark. Fagin whispers to her that if Sikes behaves like a brute with her, she can turn to him for protection and he asserts that he has the willpower to destroy the man whom he hates. On his way back, Fagin ponders about the sudden change in Nancy. He comes to the assumption that the girl has become tired of Sikes and has possibly formed an attachment with someone else. The old man believes it would be profitable to have that man in his gang. He was already against Sikes and his

dominating behaviour. So in the evening, he tells Nancy must know that if she takes up another man, none of them would ever be safe from the brute savagery of Sikes. So Fagin conceives a plot of killing Sikes with the help of Nancy. At their parting, she had betrayed no emotion at Fagin's hint that Sikes might be eliminated. As he walks away, the cunning old man plans to spy upon Nancy in order to find out about the new man in her life and where he lives. Once he knows the whole truth, Fagin can force her to help him murder Sikes.

The next morning, Fagin assigns Noah the task of spying on Nancy and to provide him with full information about her activities. For six nights Noah stands by in his disguise but receives no further instruction. But on Sunday, Fagin tells his agent that his target will surely go out, for her oppressor will be gone all night. Fagin conducts Noah to the Three Cripples. Nancy is in the little room where the old man first saw Sowerberry's late companions. Barney disturbs the girl so that Noah can get a good look at her through the secret pane. When Nancy leaves, the cunning spy keeps her in sight. Nancy reaches London Bridge shortly before midnight and she crosses to the opposite side of the river with Noah constantly behind her back. She returns to the centre of the structure and stands there. Immediately after midnight, Rose arrives, accompanied by Brownlow. Nancy prevents them from speaking just as a figure in rustic dress (Noah) brushes past them. Nancy suggests that they move down some steps at the south end of the bridge, where it will be safer to talk. Aware of Nancy's intentions, Noah hastens on ahead and descends the stairs. The others come and stop short of the spy's place of concealment. Brownlow dislikes Nancy's arrangements, but she says in defence that she was afraid to speak in the open. Nancy explains why she was unable to go out last Sunday and confesses that she had to drug Sikes in order to see Rose the first time. Brownlow tells Nancy that he wants the opportunity to force Monks to reveal Oliver's secret. If this plan of attack fails, the old gentleman requests for Nancy's aid in trapping Fagin. But the girl strongly refuses to betray any of those who have trusted and stood by her, causing Brownlow and Miss Maylie to promise that Fagin will not be punished without Nancy's consent if she will cooperate in overpowering

Monks. The girl agrees on the condition that Monks does not learn who the informer is.

Nancy details the location of the Three Cripples and points out how Monks can best be observed. Then she gives a description of the man. When she is about to mention that his neckerchief covers something, Brownlow interrupts by describing the body marks before Nancy even completes. The old man tries to pass off his unintentional remarks with indifference, but Noah hears him tell himself that it must be the man he knows. After Nancy finishes giving her information, Brownlow assures her that she can be conveyed to some place in England or in a foreign land, completely beyond the reach of her old companions. But Nancy cannot be changed from her conviction that it is too late for her to look forward to anything but death. Again she refuses money, but asks instead for some personal trifle of Rose and the latter gives her a handkerchief. After Rose and Mr. Brownlow's departure, Nancy reclines on the cold steps and cries. But after sometime she climbs to the streets. Through the character of Nancy, Dickens represents his belief that human nature is basically good. In spite of her awful circumstances, she cannot take part in injuring Oliver, but neither will she turn against the amoral criminals who have placed their faith in her. The dilemma that she suffers from essentially shows that her soul is pure and she has a conscience.

CHAPTERS 47 TO 50

It is two hours before dawn when Fagin sits up, filled with fury after he has learned what happened. Sikes comes in and offers a share of the money he acquired the previous night. He is scared to see Fagin in a state of maniacal anger. Fagin announces that he has some serious matters to discuss. Then he asks Sikes what should one do if the sleeping Noah who is in possession of all their dark secrets, exposes them to danger. Sikes in anger at once remarks that the punishment would be death. Then Fagin further increases Sikes's temper by supposing someone in their group had betrayed them. He awakens Noah and orders him to relate his account of Nancy's secret dealings. When Noah reveals that Nancy drugged Sikes in

order to see Rose the first time, Sikes rushes for the door but is unable to get it open immediately. Fagin recovers some of his remarkable self-possession and pleads with Sikes to be calm down as it is for their own safety. Fagin unlocks the door and Sikes mad with rage goes out in search of Nancy. Without hesitation, Sikes charges home and quietly enters his room. He double-locks and blocks the door. When Nancy wakes up, she is pleased to see him back but instantly detects that something is wrong. Suddenly, he violently drags her into the middle of the room and tells her that he knows the truth about she has been doing of late. The frightened girl struggles hard and pleads to spare her. In her wild pleas, she promises Sikes that she will speak to Brownlow so that they can start a new life in some far-away place. She also repeats what Rose had earlier told her, that it is never late to repent. This angers Sikes more and he hits her with his pistol, knocking her down. The bleeding Nancy struggles to her knees raising her hands for mercy. Shutting his eyes from the damage he has done to Nancy, Sikes takes up a club and delivers the final blow on her head that kills her.

The next morning, Sikes is described as sitting in the scene of crime. He is shaken by his own misdeed and so he destroys the instrument used in the crime and removes the bloodstains from his clothing. At last, he backs out of the door, locks it, and leaves the house with his dog. Sikes retreats to the northern part of London towards a rural area. There he loiters around purposelessly. Soon he comes across a small pub in the village of Hatfield and enters for a meal. The local patrons are busy chatting when they are interrupted by the entrance of a vendor. The vendor is marketing the merits of a preparation specially made to remove any kind of stain. He snatches Sikes's hat to use for a practical demonstration, because it has the spatters of Nancy's blood on it. This at once pricked Sikes and he left the premises at once with the hat.

At the post office, Sikes walks around the stagecoach from London and overhears some talk about a murder in Spitalfields. But the chatting is broken off when the coach leaves. The tormented Sikes then turns toward St. Albans but is tortured by a vision of Nancy's spirit that is always behind

him and that he cannot in any way shake off. Filled with absolute horror, Sikes forces himself to enter a dark shed to sleep. But now he is haunted by a vision of his victim's eyes. As the night falls the sounds of distant cries can be heard and Sikes runs in the direction of the voices. A great fire is in progress. His conscience was filled with guilt for having killed Nancy and so he welcomes the opportunity for distraction and human company. He works furiously all through the night, with reckless disregard for his own safety, helping to combat the fire. After the relief of having something to distract him, the agonies of his conscience return again to torment him. As he shares some food with the fire fighters, he hears that he is being sought in the countryside. At that, Sikes decides that his best chance is to return to London, extort some money from Fagin, and leave for France.

Sikes realises he could be given away by his dog because descriptions circulated are likely to mention the animal. Sikes, therefore, decides to drown his companion and ties a heavy stone in his handkerchief. The canine sensing danger comes to his master unwillingly. As Sikes tries to put the noose around his pet's neck, the beast jumps back and runs off. After waiting some time for the dog to return, Sikes goes on by himself. At the end of Chapter 48, Sikes is in an ironic position. After having murdered mercilessly the one person who loved him unconditionally, he is unsuccessful in the attempt to kill his dog which he fears may be a threat to his own existence.

At twilight, Mr. Brownlow gets out of a coach at his door along with two men who invites a fourth passenger into the house. The reluctant member of the group is Monks. Brownlow gives him the final choice of either cooperating or being turned to be dealt with by the law after being charged with fraud and robbery. Monks finds himself completely overpowered and asks if there is any other recourse. Brownlow sternly replies that there are no other alternatives, nor time for deliberation. Monks enters the room, and his host instructs the guards to lock the door from the outside and to wait until he rings for them. Here we come to know from the conversation between Monks and Mr. Brownlow that the latter was an old friend of Monks' father. To

this the old gentleman replies that it is for the sake of that friendship that he has been spared. It is further disclosed that when Mr. Brownlow was young, he was engaged to be married to Monks' paternal aunt but she died leaving him heartbroken. Mr. Brownlow remained closely attached to the brother of his lost fiancée till his death. Mr. Brownlow, then calls Monks by his real name, that is Edward Leeford.

Interrupted by occasional complaints and weak denials from Monks, Mr. Brownlow spells out the past history of the present problems. Brownlow's friend, when only a boy, was forced into an unwanted marriage as per the wishes of his family. Consequently, Monks was born but still the couple grew distant from each other because of their mutual indifference and hatred leading to their separation. The woman went to the continent and forgot her immature husband, who was ten years younger than herself. When he had matured enough acquired new connections. Fifteen years ago, Brownlow's friend became friendly with a retired naval officer who was alone with two daughters, the youngest one only two or three years of age. The elder child was a beautiful girl of nineteen who attracted the attention of Mr. Leeford. And within a year, she and Monks's father were engaged. The man inherited money from a relative who died in Rome, making it necessary for him to go there immediately. However he went there never to return alive again. When Monks's mother learned of this in Paris, she decided to take her son to her estranged husband. The day after she arrived, he died. As there was written will, so legally all of the property went to Leeford's wife and their child. Monks seems relieved to hear about it but Brownlow continues, saying that before his friend left England on his last journey, he left a portrait of the officer's daughter with Brownlow. At the time, Monks' father talked vaguely about providing for his legal wife and child, before settling outside England. Brownlow never saw him again or heard from him. Later, Brownlow made an attempt to see the dead man's beloved, but the family had already disappeared. Monk's look of triumph turns to dismay when Brownlow tells him that he was the one who sheltered Oliver until the boy was recaptured by the thieves. Brownlow refers to Oliver's resemblance to the picture of the

unfortunate girl. Since he could not recover Oliver, Brownlow decided that the mystery could be clarified only by Leeford's eldest son Monks, who had retired to the West Indies after his mother's death. So Brownlow went there and learnt that Monks was in London. Brownlow stubbornly kept up the search without being able to catch up with his target - until two hours ago.

Thinking that he has heard all of the old gentleman's story, Monks becomes boldly defies and points out that the likeness between a picture and a child is not a convincing evidence, especially when his accuser does not even know if the lovers ever had a child. In reply, Brownlow addresses the young man fiercely, declaring that now he does know the whole truth. He accuses Monks' mother of destroying the will where it was clearly mentioned. Brownlow also confronts Monks with the very words Monks spoke after dropping the locket into the river in the presence of the Bumbles. Brownlow reproves him mercilessly, adding that he knows everything that passed between Monks and Fagin. He also reminds Monks that he is morally responsible for the murder of Nancy. This breaks down Monks and he agrees to tell all of the facts, before witnesses and in writing. Brownlow makes it clear that Oliver has been defrauded and that Monks must make amends to Oliver in accordance with the terms of the destroyed will of their father. This does not go down well with Monks, but just then, Mr. Losberne is admitted, in a high state of excitement. He informs that Sikes's dog has been seen and the owner is sure to be trapped in the neighbourhood. Harry Maylie has gone to join the manhunt. The doctor also says that the arrest of Fagin is certain. Having heard all this, Monks accepts the conditions for his liberation, and Brownlow promises to guard the secret.

Monks is locked in the room alone and Brownlow quickly informs the doctor of his success. Brownlow has added fifty pounds to the one hundred offered for the capture of Sikes who has murdered Nancy. Thus, in Chapter 49, in a dramatic way the truth concerning Oliver and some of the other characters are revealed. We can see now that, although at the outset the story promised to be a chronological record starting from the hero's birth, the chain of events leading up to the opening situation was set in motion

over twenty-five years before. The flashback technique is used to supply essential details of the past, the point of view coming from various characters. All the details seem more believable due to the fact that now there is agreement between people with opposing interests.

The narrative continues to progress as the novel rushes to a conclusion. A high state of excitement is set in motion by the rapid succession of stirring events. As a counterpoint, the reader is conscious of important activities, happening parallel at the same time in various places. Elsewhere in a small island called Jacob's Island on the banks of Thames, we are told that some of the former comrades of Sikes have gathered speaking about what happened to Fagin and his gang of members. They are interrupted by the arrival of Sikes whom they are not very pleased to see. In the rejection of Sikes by his former comrades, we see another example of how totally the thief and murdered is disowned. He is rejected by his own class. By killing Nancy, he has broken the bond of mutual interest. The arrival of Charles Bates leads to the public disclosure of Sikes. Bates is furious on seeing him and tries to apprehend him.

The setting for the final performance of Sikes's violent career is appropriate. There is wry irony when he screams at the gathered crowd that he would cheat them yet. A melodramatic peak is reached as the bloodthirsty mob roars and shrieks at the fugitive trapped on the roof of the crumbling building. The spirit of Nancy and her accusing eyes, causes Sikes to slip and fall to his death, fulfilling some traditional concepts of poetic justice. Sikes is soon joined by his dog that plunges to its death after the master.

CHAPTERS 51 TO 53

The concluding chapters tell us about the fate of the characters. We are told that two days later, a carriage is travelling toward Oliver's birthplace. Oliver is riding in the chaise with Mrs. Maylie, Rose, Dr. Losberne, and Mrs. Bedwin. Mr. Brownlow is following with another person in another chaise. Brownlow's recent activities have been revealed to Oliver and the ladies, but there are still some questions remaining to be answered in the narrative.

Oliver is excited and happy to come back to his old place He is especially determined to relieve his friend Dick and provide him a similar life that he enjoys at the Maylies. The party go to the best hotel, where they are gallantly received by Grimwig. All arrangements for rooms and dinner have been made.

At dinner, the air of mystery and tension still prevails, especially when Brownlow does not join the party. Mr. Losberne and Grimwig enters and soon exits to talk. Mrs. Maylie is sent for and returns an hour later with swollen eyes. Rose and Oliver is not informed of anything. Finally, at nine o'clock in the evening, the gentleman brings Monks into the room and Oliver is surprised to see him. He had expected to see a brother, but he recognises him as the man he met in the market town and later saw looking in his window with Fagin. Mr. Brownlow walks up with papers, informing Monks that although the instruments have been executed in London, it is necessary to review the details here. Monks asks that the business be settled quickly. Mr. Brownlow accordingly opens the session stating that Oliver is his half-brother and the illegitimate son of his father, Edwin Leeford, by poor young Agnes Fleming, who died in giving him birth.

Monks sarcastically confirms this and, as agreed, begins a summary of the matter recorded in the papers. He fills in the details concerning his father's death. Edwin Leeford had left two papers, dated when he first became ill. They were addressed to Mr. Brownlow with the instructions that they not be mailed until after the writer's death. The first paper was a letter to Agnes Fleming, who was then several months pregnant. The girl had trusted in Leeford's guarded explanation that there was difficulty for an immediate marriage. He alluded to his gift of a locket and a ring with a blank left for his name to be engraved. The letter was filled with incoherent, repetitions stating regret and honourable motives. Brownlow takes up the subject of the will. The dying father had written about the misery, his wife caused him and the wicked nature of his son, Edward who had been taught since childhood to hate him. So he left to each of them eight hundred pounds annually. The bulk of the property was to be divided between Agnes Fleming and their expected child, if the child should live until its adulthood. It is stated that a girl

would inherit unconditionally. Then it is mentioned that a boy would receive the money only if he has never have stained his name by any public act of dishonour, meanness, cowardice, or wrong. This last provision was an expression of confidence that a son of Agnes Fleming's would follow in her honest goodness. If the expectation was not fulfilled, then the legacy would go to Monks, as the senior nominee in the will. Monks then reports that his mother burned the will, but she kept the letter in case it should ever be necessary to document the irregular relationship between Leeford and Agnes. The girl confessed to her father, who then took his family to Wales and changed his name. Agnes eloped, and her father searched for her until he became convinced that she had committed suicide. The heart-broken father then died soon after this.

Brownlow remarks that years later, Edward Leeford's mother came to him. At the age of eighteen, her son had robbed her and then fled to London, where he spent two years among the social miscreants. The woman was ill and anxious to reclaim her son. Ultimately he meets her in France. Monks picks up the narrative by offering the information that his mother, before she died, told him all of the secrets. She was not persuaded that Agnes had taken her life, but was obsessed with the notion that there was a male child living. The dying woman's son promised her that if he ever found such a child, he would hunt down his half-brother and do everything that is required to destroy his life.

Here Brownlow adds that Fagin was a former associate of Monks and was paid to bring about Oliver's destruction. Part of the money was to be refunded if the boy was rescued, and for that reason the two plotters went to identify him in the country. Now Brownlow asks about the locket and ring, and Monks briefly states the facts. Grimwig brings in Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, and the couple denies having anything to do with either Monks or of a locket and ring. Next, two old pauper women are brought in. They claimed that they were listening outside the door when Sally died and know that the matron took a paper from the corpse and got a locket and ring from a pawnshop the following day. Sally had also told them that the girl, driven by

a sense of approaching death, was striving to reach her lover's grave. When she found that she couldn't disprove the accusation, Mrs. Bumble admits everything. Brownlow states that the Bumbles will be deprived of any socially responsible position. Bumble is upset that he has to lose his office and shows his true selfish nature by expressing whether he will be considered guilty if his wife is guilty.

After the disclosure concerning Oliver, Brownlow hints that there is also something coming that concerns Rose. When he asks what became of Agnes's younger sister, Monks asserts that after the death of the old officer, the child was adopted by some country folk. Brownlow failed to locate the girl, but Monks's mother succeeded in doing so. With a series of deceptions and lies, she prejudiced the adoptive parents against the child. The revenge-minded woman spoke of Agnes' past and said that her young sister was illegitimate, and because of this, the girl had to suffer a miserable existence after her adoptive parents abandoned her. Fortunately, she was noticed and taken away by Mrs. Maylie. Monks lost track of the girl two or three years later and had not seen her again until recently. This amazing revelation makes the Maylies and Oliver surprised and happy. Harry joins Rose by saying that he knows everything. He reminds her that he has permission to renew his earlier desire to marry her but Rose's position remains unchanged; there is still disgrace in her background. Harry's next move is to declare that he has nothing to offer but a heart and home, having altered his station in life to become her equal. When she refused him again, he confesses having severed all connections of rank and power of his early life to become a village parson and to lead a simple life.

The young couple then rejoin the company for supper and everyone is in a state of merry. But Oliver's happiness is short-lived when he learns about the death of his friend, Dick. In this chapter, all the significant remaining gaps in the tale are filled. Meanwhile the courtroom is packed with people on the day of Fagin's hearing. In this grim depiction of Fagin's last days, Dickens presents a disheartening picture. We see the same isolation felt by Fagin that was earlier suffered by Sikes. In the courtroom, the accused becomes

absolutely indifferent as he realizes that no one wants him alive. This is the punishment caused by his ulterior motives. He has been an enemy of society, and now all men are united against him. The final price of leading is degradation and death. He is visited by Oliver and Brownlow. And by that time Fagin is hallucinating and losing his sanity. The sight distresses Oliver so much that his guardian takes him away. The visit of Brownlow and Oliver to the prison is a clever dramatic way to demonstrate that the boy and the ladies have now been told about the fates that have come to members of the gang.

In the final chapter of the novel closes a description of the different characters and their fate is given. We come to know that within three months, Rose Fleming and Harry Maylie are married and they move to their country parsonage along with Mrs. Maylie. The property which was under Monks's possession would yield three thousand pounds a year for each of the three shares into which it has been divided. Even though Oliver is the rightful heir, Mr. Brownlow suggests that Monks should keep half of it, and start life in a good way. To this Oliver readily agrees, and Monks goes away to the New World. But as old habits die hard, Monks misused all his money and returned to world of crime. Later he died in a prison. All the other members of Fagin's gang are also transported far from England. Noah Claypole receives pardon for testifying against Fagin, and he becomes an informer assisted by Charlotte. Charles Bates shocked by Sikes' crime and terrible end gave up his dishonest ways, and settled in Northamptonshire as a herdsman.

Oliver, after being adopted by Mr. Browlow, starts living with his guardian and Mrs Bedwin near the parsonage. Dr. Losberne, missing his friends, starts living in the countryside pursuing all kinds of rural activities. He finds a companion in Grimwig who becomes a frequent visitor to his residence. Giles and Brittles continue serving the families of Maylies, Mr. Brownlow and Dr. Losberne. Meanwhile after losing their positions, the Bumbles' economic condition becomes worse, and finally they too become the inmates of a workhouse.

So the traditional concept of poetic justice is fulfilled when the evil

characters had to suffer for their misdeeds whereas the good-hearted and the repentant ones are rewarded with a life filled with peace and happiness. In the concluding lines we are told about an empty tomb with a marble tablet inside the old church that bears the name of "Agnes." Thus the last chapter ends by dramatically revealing the destiny of the characters.



10.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit on Charles Dickens' life and works you have come to know that Dickens created an astonishingly vast collection of engaging novels that grasped the attention of the readers. Dickens was able to maintain a writing schedule that would have exhausted any other author but Dickens was different. It was within a period of three and a half decades that he created numerous literary pieces like no other author. During this period, Dickens published more than twenty novels and worked as an editor for various literary journals. He also brought out his own literary magazine, and at the same time, worked as a freelance reporter, and performed a series of charismatic public readings. Soon, he became one of the most popular literary figures in the English society. His significance as an important author of English literature is easily identified in contemporary literary canons. Dickens' second novel *Oliver Twist* was begun in February 1837 and it continued in the form of episodes in Bentley's *Miscellany* until April, 1839. The author had originally titled the novel *Oliver Twist: The Parish Boy's Progress* but later decided to keep it simply as *Oliver Twist*. The novel was initially categorised within the genre of a children's fiction but later it was established that it contains social protest as Dickens vehemently speaks about the Poor Laws and workhouses. Dickens uses his hyperbolic irony and sentimentalism in *Oliver Twist* to create characters residing in the grim criminal world of industrial London.



10.7 FURTHER READING

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10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Dickens is famous for his portrayal of characters. His characters often come out as caricatures.

Ans to Q No 2: The strenuous and often harsh working conditions made a lasting impression on Dickens. Later they become the foundation of his interest in the reform of socio-economic and labour conditions in England.

Ans to Q No 3: *Sketches by Boz*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, *Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Dombey and Sons*, *David*

Copperfield, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend* and so on.

Ans to Q No 4: Social stratification in the English society, disorder following the repressive measures of the Government, heavy tax imposed on the common people to support military resources, the imposition of Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 following which paupers were to work in the workhouses under terrible conditions.

Ans to Q No 5: *Oliver Twist* is an early example of the social novel and the book represents the various social evils of Dickens' time such as child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children. Dickens uses his fiction as a way to mock the hypocrisies shown by the rich people of his time.



10.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss some of the socio-political conditions out of which Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* emerged.

Q 2: Dickens is famous for his portrayal of characters who often come out as caricatures. Discuss with reference to some of his fictional works.

Q 3: Compare Oliver Twist with some other boys of the same age who grapples with various adversities in the novel.

Q 4: How is the world of crime is depicted in the novel *Oliver Twist*?

Q 5: Discuss how Dickens pairs some characters for contrast and how this technique further develops the plot of the novel.

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UNIT 11 : CHARLES DICKENS: *OLIVER TWIST* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Reading the Novel

- 11.3.1 Major Themes
- 11.3.2 Major Characters
- 11.3.3 Narrative Style and Language

11.4 Critical Reception

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 important themes of the novel *Oliver Twist*
- enlist the various characters and place them in the context of the novel
- explain Dickens' narrative style
- discuss the significance of the novel in its totality

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have discussed the life and works of Charles Dickens, and the background and summary of the novel *Oliver Twist*. In this unit, you will get an opportunity to read more about the themes, characters and narrative technique used by Dickens in the novel. You will note that *Oliver Twist* is a novel about the problems faced by the common ordinary people during Industrial Revolution in England. In the year 1837, when Dickens began *Oliver Twist* in its episodic form for Bentley's *Magazine*, it was given

the subtitle "The Parish Boy's Progress". This was written with reference to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *Oliver Twist*, as such records the inherent goodness and innocence of the protagonist that succeeds in overpowering all the obstacles and evils that he had to face. At first, Dickens had intended only to show the life and hardships faced by an ordinary parish boy after the passing of the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The writer understood the politics and problems in the Law due to his experience as a parliamentary reporter for the Morning Chronicle. He projected the grim reality of England through his fiction. You will find such instances as you read the novel. For example, when Dickens describes how Oliver was treated.

11.3 READING THE NOVEL

In the following sections, you will get an opportunity to study the various important themes and issues implicit in the novel *Oliver Twist*.

11.3.1 Major Themes

The following are the most important themes of the novel Oliver Twist.

Condition of England :

Oliver Twist was the second novel of Charles Dickens. Many societal issues are explored by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist* in keeping with the theme of 'Condition of England'. He had mainly two aims in mind while forming the narrative of the novel. First, he wished to draw the attention of the people towards the appalling condition of the paupers caused by the Poor Law of 1834. Under the directives given by this law, the unemployed, the orphans and the ailing were meant to be placed in the workhouses. The workhouse was a completely exploitative institution that deprived these have-nots even of the basic needs of life. The rules were so rigid and the food so meagre that it seemed worse than a prison. The novel gives an honest representation of the workhouses where the young characters

like Oliver and Dick are sent and subjected to much abuse. Dickens was innovative in the way through which he keeps the child as the protagonist. Unlike the earlier novels that came out during the Victorian era, Dickens had emphasised on the psychology of a child and the way society shapes his or her mind.

Reflection on the Grim and Dark Criminal World of England :

Dickens wanted to represent the grim and dark criminal world of England. He was accused by some critics of glamourising the world of crime. But this was not true since he was more concerned with the degradation and cruelty of the world of crime. He attempted to show how poverty had increased crimes in England, and the Poor Laws were hardly of any use. These laws had only increased the problem as the paupers have no other scope to improve their economic condition. They are forced either to spend a life of exploitation in workhouses, or to become a criminal in order to survive. The world of crime is a trap that has pushed young adolescents like Jack Dawkins, Charley Bates, Nancy, Betsy, Noah and others into an unending vortex.

Issues relating to Identity :

Another thematic aspect of the novel is that of identity. Both the two different worlds of the parish and the criminal den of Fagin either tries to deny Oliver's true identity or attempt to give him a new one. In Victorian England, even identity is based on utility of the person and not on humanity. This fact is ironically shown by Dickens when he refers to Oliver as a commodity "of mortality". Interestingly you will find in the novel that Dickens has made use of clothing as a symbol. For example when Oliver was enclosed in a blanket, he remains anonymous, but the moment he put on some ragged garments, he becomes a parish child, and again when he is given a suit by Mr. Brownlow, he receives a new identity.

Friendship and Kinship :

Friendship and kinship together forms another significant theme in this novel. The story of Oliver Twist contains two different categories of connection. Oliver is an orphan but he is equally claimed by two "families". From your reading of the novel you will find that kinship and friendship is formed in two ways. First is that which is formed with the outlaws and the second relationship is formed with the real or lawful. We see that there is a competition between the community of thieves and apparently Oliver's true guardians (Brownlow and Rose Maylie) to claim their right over Oliver. Fagin and his members sought to take Oliver within their own community as a way of increasing their numbers as well as for personal benefit. Within this section of criminals, however there are variations. We find that the relationship even between these thieving criminals is one that is based on mutual trust as in the case of a real family. Bates and Nancy are best representatives of loyalty. Nancy remains true to Sikes and Fagin's gang even she revealed information about Monks to Rose. When this trust is broken, there is the prospect of being abandoned. This was what happened to Sikes when he murdered Nancy, a member of his own class. He is denied by his own companions. In contrast to the world of the criminals is the true family of Oliver. Rose Maylie's attachment towards Oliver and the latter's concern for her shows the genuine love and affection needed by every human being. Similarly Mr. Brownlow becomes a father figure for Oliver. Under his care, Oliver would never deviate from the goodness which is also inherent in him. On the other hand, Monks who is in reality, Oliver's half-brother becomes his sworn enemy and had cunningly plotted against him in order to destroy him and become the sole heir to Mr. Leeford's property.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does the novel reflect the condition of England during Dickens' time?

Q 2: How is the novel *Oliver Twist* connected to the world of crime?

11.3.2 Major Characters

Characters in Dickens' fictional world are strictly represented in terms of either good or evil. Interestingly in *Oliver Twist*, there are many variations in the representation of the evil characters. The first type are those who are officially entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the orphans like Mr. Bumble, Mrs. Mann and the various members of the Local Board of Guardians who have been assigned to oversee the Poor Law. Mr. Bumble is quintessentially the petty village official and the beadle who bullies the young children and thrives on the profit made by the money given for charity. Similarly, Mrs. Mann is a highly self-centred character who tries to get the most by exploiting the orphans. While the rural characters in *Oliver Twist* represent the legally administered practitioners of the Poor Law, the criminals of the urban London have a more complex background. The second type of villainous characters is found in the urban London. They are driven towards crime because of wants. The scenes of London and the characters are better written. Dickens' own life as a young factory worker in Warren's Blacking Factory is reflected in *Oliver Twist*. Charles Dickens had encountered a boy called Bob Fagin who taught him how to wrap and tie labels on the bottles of blacking. It is very apt that he named a character Fagin in the novel who initiates Oliver in London's dark and grim world of crime.



LET US KNOW

William J. Long asserts that in the novels of Charles Dickens' there are at least three or

four widely used character types. First we have the figure of an innocent little child such as Oliver, Little Nell, David and Pip, whose vulnerability evokes the pity and concern of the readers. Then, secondly, we have the antagonist of the young character who is characterised by a state of physical repulsiveness. Characters such as Fagin, Uriah Heep, Bill Sikes and Quilp represent this character type. The third type of character is marked by essentially kindness and generosity with some humour such as Mr. Micawber and Mr. Losberne. Lastly, there is the presence of a tenderly or powerfully drawn figures such as Nancy, Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Maylie and Sidney Carton. In the novel *Oliver Twist* we find such character types that the author uses to critique the Victorian society and expose the corruptions and malpractices that ailed the society.

It is further interesting to note that Dickens has divided the characters in his novel according to their social position. For example, there is the class of criminals where each is given a position - Dawkins and Bates are the pickpockets, Noah is the spy, Nancy and Betsy are given responsibilities to move into places such as the court or police station, where they can avoid attention due to their gender. Then again, characters such as Mr. Brownlow, Dr. Losborne and the Maylies represent the urban middle-class. Most of these characters are professionals, engaged either in some kind of trade or occupation. They are the ones who have been sympathetic towards Oliver and tried to protect him. However it does not show that they are entirely free from faults. Mr. Brownlow is a noble character, but he has a streak of impatience that prevents him from understanding the true face of human nature. In a way, these characters shows the shallowness of Victorian society that judges people on the basis of birth. For example, when Rose's real identity and family background was unknown, even Mrs. Maylie was a little hesitant to whole-heartedly support her son Harry's decision to marry Rose.

The following is an attempt at exploring some of the significant characters in the novel *Oliver Twist.*

Oliver Twist :

Oliver Twist uses the child protagonist as a way to highlight the ills of the society and it becomes a kind of melodramatic novel of social protest. *Oliver Twist* is meant to appeal more to our sentiments than to our literary sensibilities, and this was because Dickens had written it keeping in his mind the taste of the readers of his age. For us, however, Oliver is not a believable character, because it is shown that although he is raised in corrupt surroundings among evil companions, his purity and virtue remains stable. Throughout the novel, Dickens uses Oliver's character to challenge the Victorian idea that paupers and criminals are already evil at birth, arguing instead that a corrupt environment is the source of vice. At the same time, Oliver's steadfast goodness undermines some of Dickens's assertions. Oliver is shocked and horrified when he sees the Artful Dodger and Bates pick a stranger's pocket and again when he is forced to participate in a burglary.

Oliver's moral ideas seem inborn in him, just as Dickens's opponents thought that corruption is inborn in poor people. Furthermore, other pauper children use unrefined Cockney language, but Oliver, oddly enough, speaks in standard British English. His grammatical accuracy is also inexplicable, as Oliver presumably is not well-educated. Even when he is abused and manipulated, Oliver does not become angry or indignant. When Sikes and Crackit force him to assist in a robbery, Oliver merely begs to be allowed to go away instead making any personal effort. Oliver does not show the complexity of human mind which is seen in the case of other characters like Nancy. M.P. Ginsberg claims in his essay that this was deliberately done by Dickens keeping in his mind the end of the novel. The Victorian society's admiration and respect for purity and

nobility is reflected in every action done and word spoken by the protagonist. The language remains as civilised as his actions and his thoughts.

As modern readers, we might feel that Dickens's social criticism would have been more effective if he had focused on a more complex poor character, like Dawkins or Nancy, but then again, the audience for whom Dickens was writing might not have been ready to accept such a portrayal. Dickens's Victorian middle-class readers were likely to hold not so favourable opinions on the poor that were only a little less cruel than those expressed by Mr. Bumble, the beadle. In fact, *Oliver Twist* was criticised for portraying thieves and prostitutes at all. Given the strict morals of Dickens's audience, it may have seemed necessary for him to make Oliver an absolutely pure-hearted and honest figure. Because Oliver appealed to the sentiments of Victorian readers, his story may have stood a better chance of effectively challenging their prejudices.

Nancy :

Nancy's character represents a major concern of *Oliver Twist* and it puts forward the question to us whether a bad environment can completely poison someone's character and soul. As the novel progresses, the character who best illustrates the contradictory issues brought up by that question is Nancy. We find that there is constant pull between her duty as a member of Fagin's gang (representing evil) and her moral duty as a human being. Nancy is perhaps the only character in the novel with a strong conscience that allows to take active steps for humanity. Her capacity to undermine personal benefits for the safety of Oliver speaks about her personality. At the same time, she remains loyal to Sikes as well as Fagin's gang in order to keep them safe. As a child brought up in the streets, Nancy has been a thief and an alcoholic. The narrator's reference to her "free and agreeable" behaviour indicates that she

also becomes a prostitute. She is trapped in the vicious world of crime, but she also commits perhaps the most noble act in the novel when she sacrifices her own life in order to protect Oliver whom she loves like her younger brother. Nancy's moral complexity is unique among the major characters in *Oliver Twist*. The novel is full of characters who are all good and can barely understand evil, such as Oliver, Rose, and Brownlow; and characters who are all evil and can barely do anything good, such as Fagin, Sikes, and Monks. Only Nancy comprehends and is capable of both good and evil. As such, for a modern reader, she seems more humane than even the more genteel members of the society. Her ultimate choice to do good at the cost of her life shows the incorruptibility of basic goodness, no matter how many social obstacles it may face. Interestingly this is similar to Oliver who remains a pure-hearted child in spite of the amount of guile and deceit he has seen. But it seems unreal that Oliver manages to avoid any form of vice because it is during childhood that the individual is most vulnerable to influences. Therefore Nancy's representation is more realistic.

Further, Nancy's love for Sikes exemplifies the moral ambiguity of her character. As she herself points out to Rose, devotion to a man can be "a comfort and a pride" under the right circumstances. But for Nancy, such devotion only brings about suffering and violence. Her character and life could be compared to that of Rose Maylie. Rose also was destined to lead a life very similar to Nancy after the death of her father and elder sister, but fortunately she found the right kind of guardian in the form of Mrs. Maylie. Rose's life was preserved as she was protected from the vices of the world. Nancy, however was not so fortunate as she was introduced to the world of crime along with Betsy at an early age. Nancy's relationship with Sikes leads her to criminal acts for his sake and eventually to her own death. Thus, Nancy's character suggests that the boundary between virtue and vice is not always clearly drawn. She is the most tragic character in the novel.

Mr. Brownlow :

When Mr. Brownlow is introduced in the middle of the novel, we were not really sure as to what role this character would play in Oliver's life. Initially, he typically seems like a minor character -a generous, old English gentleman who pities the poor child for his misfortune. But, as the plot progresses, we realise that Mr. Brownlow has a far greater role to play. This is suggested by Dickens when the resemblance between Oliver and the lady's portrait in Mr. Brownlow's room is asserted.

Mr. Brownlow, in spite of his kindness and generosity, can be easily swayed to form contrasting opinions. For example, when he took Oliver with him, he saw in him innocence, but no sooner did Grimwig raised a doubt about Oliver, he became suspicious. When Oliver was sent to the bookshop and he did not return, Brownlow instantly formed an opinion that Oliver was dishonest and didn't even consider that the child might have fallen in wrong hands. Mrs. Bedwin, the housekeeper, on the other hand seems more sensible in her understanding of human nature. However, it couldn't be denied that Brownlow represents the responsible guardian that is necessary for both the well being of both Oliver and Rose. When Nancy had revealed the truth about Monks' plan to Rose, the latter found that Mr. Brownlow was the right person to confide everything and ask for his help and guidance. As the plot progresses towards the climax, we realize how important is Mr. Brownlow as a character. Through him, the writer reveals the truth about everyone - be it Oliver, Rose or Monks.

Fagin :

Although Dickens denied any anti-Semitism in the portrayal of Fagin, the Jewish thief's characterisation seems to be influenced by stereotypes. He is described as a physically repulsive, miserly, and deceitful person. The constant references to him as "the Jew" seem to indicate that his negative traits are closely connected to his religious identity. However, Fagin is more than a statement of ethnic

prejudice. His character shows absolute villainy and at times, he seems like a child's distorted vision of pure evil. Beast imagery is used to describe his nature and actions. At times he is a "loathsome reptile" and apparently seems like having "fangs such as should have been a dog's or rat's." Also, Fagin usually moves around the city after sundown associating him with darkness. Other characters occasionally refer to him as "the old one," which is a popular English connotation for the devil. In the narrative of the novel, there are instances when Oliver wakes up to find Fagin nearby. Oliver encounters him in the hazy zone between sleep and waking, at the precise time when dreams and nightmares are born from "the mere silent presence of some external object." Indeed, Fagin is meant to cause nightmares in child and parents alike. To have one's child trapped by a Fagin-like character would seem dreadful for the Victorian readers.

Fagin's greed for money is prominent when he is alone looking at the "treasure" he had gathered after years of commitment to an evil life. He never regrets for having caused the fall of many children like Dawkins, Bates, Nancy and Betsy. Towards the end of the narrative, he becomes disillusioned by life and gradually moves towards madness, before death, which was already there in him from the very beginning.

Bill Sikes :

Bill Sikes is a described as a criminal characterised by his rough and brute appearance. He is constantly accompanied by a repulsive looking dog, Bull's Eye. Sikes is a character who is driven by pure instincts. His physical appearance causes fear in other members of Fagin's gang as much as Fagin. Sikes' only motive is acquisition of money based on a life filled with crimes. Although he creates fear in Fagin's mind, yet in the narrative we find that it is Sikes who becomes a pawn in the hands of Fagin. He is used as a tool to bring about the downfall of Oliver, especially when the latter's name is suggested by Fagin to accompany Sikes in a planned

robbery. Sikes is in a relationship with Nancy that is not based on any emotional bonding. He fails to sympathise with anyone and is driven by instincts rather than rationality.

It is Sikes who murders Nancy in a fit of rage and abandons her body. Consequently the entire gang is implicated in this heinous crime. Towards the end we find that the other members of Fagin's gang, especially Bates is disgusted by his presence after Nancy's murder and willingly catches him for his crime. He finally meets a dreadful end at Jacob's Island while trying to escape from the pursuing mob and the police.

Monks :

Monks is another evil character in the novel. His real name is Edward Leeford and he is later revealed to be Oliver's half-brother. He is described as an unattractive character with a red mark on his jaw. He has no moral conscience and is absolutely ruthless about Oliver, even though the latter is just a little child and his half-brother and perhaps his only surviving relative. This is primarily caused by his upbringing. After his parents' apparent separation, his mother had influenced him to hate his father and she had poisoned his mind against Agnes and her unborn child. Due to the absence of morally conscious guardians in his life, Monks happens to fall into bad company and moves towards the evil path. This is necessary for the plot as the character has been established as a foil to the character of Oliver. It is the younger son of Mr. Edwin Leeford, that is, Oliver who turns out to be the worthy heir to his father as his innocence and goodness is preserved in spite of the troubles faced by him. Unlike young Oliver who bravely faces even the worse form of emotional and physical abuse, Monks is essentially depicted as a coward. His fear for the supernatural as shown in the episode where he is speaking to Fagin, represents the burden of guilt that is present in his mind. A similar kind of guilt is seen in Sikes after the murder of Nancy. Both these villainous characters are haunted by their evil deeds.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What are the types of characters introduced by Dickens through his novels?

Q 4: What kind of a character is Oliver?

11.3.3 Narrative Style and Language

Charles Dickens' narrative style has a characteristic dramatic element as it easily moves between tragedy and comedy, and so successfully holds the reader's interest. This is mainly because his novels were printed in the episodic form in the periodicals and so each chapter had to reach come sort of climax. You will see that the writing style of Charles Dickens is marked by abundant linguistic creativity. He succeeds in using different language styles and vocabulary for the different characters based on their societal position. For example, the urban middle class speaks in the refined British English whereas the paupers and the miscreants speak in the typical Cockney style. Also Mr. Bumble, the beadle is shown often confusing the word parochial and pronouncing it as "porochial". As such it is evident that at times the language in his fiction is also used as an instrument to satirise the Victorian society.

In *Oliver Twist*, he has used the third-person narrative form and tries to narrate it from the perspective of an individual who belongs to the nineteenth century London. You will see that the narrative acquires an ***omniscient narrator's*** view, where the narrator knows everything and is recording each important event in the life of the protagonist as well as the other characters.



Omniscient Narrator: the all-knowing narrator who is already aware of the end. Unlike the first-person narratives where the narrator gives only subjective views, who is aware of only certain things, the omniscient narrator is aware of the motives of the characters and this is disclosed gradually.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Comment briefly on Dickens' narrative style in *Oliver Twist*.

11.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although his books sold and the audience waited for the next instalment of his works, critics of his time did not favour him much or consider him a serious literary writer. *Oliver Twist* was received in various ways. Many hailed the novel as a classic, poignant tale of loss and discovery, and a deserving successor to the highly popular *Pickwick Papers*. Early reviews from *The Examiner*, September 10, 1837, asserted that this novel was an "exact painting" of the societal reality that Dickens wished to present to the public. Dickens was praised for capturing the emotions surrounding the death of Nancy and the intrinsic detailing of Oliver's life as an orphan. The reviewer was surprised to see Dickens making use of the Poor Law Debates in the first chapters of the novel, and he understood the social cause for which Dickens wrote. In conclusion of this review, the author states: "We leave him most reluctantly, and so will every reader who has any capacity to see and feel whatsoever is most loveable, hateful, or laughable, in the character of the everyday life about him" (Dickens, 401). *The Spectator* states in the November 24, 1838 issue that Dickens "has genius to vivify his observation." The author was appreciated for his powerful use of pathos and his description of grim reality. The reviewer admires Dickens's ability to find good in all humanity despite the dirty surroundings of unfortunate orphans such as Oliver.

Other literary magazines such as *The Literary Gazette*, and *Journal of the Belles Lettres* declares on November 24, 1838, that Dickens has "dug deep into the human mind; and he has nobly directed his energies to the exposure of evils- the workhouse, the starving school, the factory system, and many other things, at which blessed nature shudder and recoiled." The ability of Dickens to capture the trials and tribulations faced by Oliver captured the attention of its readers. Those who are far removed from the factories and the workhouses became suddenly aware of the plight of the poor and the corruption done in the name of the Poor Laws. *The Quarterly Review* of 1839 also published a glowing review of the novel. The reviewer believed Dickens to be "a sign of the times" and that the author wrote with enough

vigour to demand that the public read the next instalment. His popularity was unparalleled and his episodes were always immediately read. Dickens manages to tell of "real pain" while the novel lacks in false sentimentalism (Dickens, 405-408). The reviewer wrote that, "He deals truly with human nature, which never can degrade; he takes up everything, good, bad, or indifferent...He is natural, and that never can be ridiculous" (Dickens, 406).

In spite of being socially relevant, *Oliver Twist* too had to face criticism. The novel didn't go down well with the Jewish population, and other critics also complained that the novel seemed too sentimental and lacking. One of the major issues raised by the Jewish community against the novel was connected to the derogatory portrayal of Fagin, the Jew. In his article "Charles Dickens, Fagin and Riah" Milton Kerker states that Fagin is the "most grotesque and villainous Jew in all of English literature." Fagin was found by the Jewish community to be a ruffian with the devil dwelling within his cold heart. In 1854 the *Jewish Chronicle* was outraged and presented the public with a criticism of Dickens. Despite the fact that Dickens maintained his innocence, Dickens did attempt to make alterations in the next edition of the novel to correct this offensive implication. In the 1867 edition of chapter 38, Fagin is referred to as "the Jew" more than 250 times. However, in later chapters he is referred to as "the Jew" only 32 times. This is thought to have been Dickens's attempt to reconcile Fagin's character with the Jewish community. Despite this characterisation of Fagin and Dickens's wording changes, Dickens never openly abused a Jewish person nor did he openly practice anti-Semitic opinions.

In a similar vein, the *Monthly Review* of January 1839 demanded that Dickens used characters that are so low that sympathy cannot be created. The reviewer felt that although there were comic pieces worth noting, the ending does not comply with the standard notion that the evil ones must face strict consequences while the just are rewarded. The reviewer does not go so far as to claim Dickens to be an immoral writer but he does not treat the characters with the morals that would classify Dickens with the "highest rank of our moral fictionists." Just as the Monthly Review

questions the worth of such characters as Nancy, Dickens has been criticised for his choice of characters and setting. At times the novel tends to shift to a sentimentality that seems more repelling to the readers.

It, however, cannot be denied that the novel performs a great social responsibility by condemning the world of the Poor Laws, its minute detailing of the life of a prostitute, orphan, gang of thieves, and other social miscreants who are otherwise ignored or neglected by the so-called civilised classes. After all, Dickens' motive was to describe the reality of where and how Oliver lived and survived the streets of a city that did not want him. The novel depicts the best of human nature in contrast to the worse sides of human nature. It is for this very reason that Charles Dickens remained one of the most popular as well as significant author of his times.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Discuss how *Oliver Twist* was received after its publication.



11.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have succeeded in understanding the historical background of the age and the way it had influenced the writings of Charles Dickens. Dickens had written a realistic novel based on his observation of some of the social as well political issues of his times. For a long time, *Oliver Twist* much like some his other novels was seen as a book for children. However, if you read the novel closely you will see the different societal and political concerns at work within its narrative. Victorian England was marked by social division based on wealth, class and position. This characteristic is present in the novel as it projects the numerous classes within England: the rural and the urban middle-class, paupers, the petty criminals. The novel portrays how this social division affects the society. The failure of the Poor Law Act to look into the interests of young children

like Oliver and Dick was essentially caused by such divisions and corruption in Victorian England. For your benefit, a list of books has been provided in the following section so that you can do your own reading as per your interest. The themes that appear within the text are the delineation of good vs evil, the hypocritical attitudes and behaviours of public institutions, and the ultimately flawed theory of individualism. Dickens uses the motif of mistaken identities and familial ties to create a story, which closely details the journey of a virtuous orphan through the mean streets of poverty.



11.6 FURTHER READING

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11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Oliver Twist* helps to discuss how following the Poor Law of 1834, the unemployed, orphans and the ailing were meant to be kept in the workhouses. The rules in the workhouses were so rigid and the food so meagre that it seemed worse than a prison, often subjecting its inmates to much abuse.

Ans to Q No 2: Dickens through this novel exposed the grim and dark criminal world of England. He was concerned with the degradation and cruelty of the world of crime. He tried to show how poverty had increased crimes in England, and the Poor Laws were hardly of any use as reflected through characters like Jack Dawkins, Charley Bates, Nancy, Betsy, Noah and so on.

Ans to Q No 3: Characters in Dickens' fictional world are strictly represented in terms of either good or evil. *Oliver Twist* portrays two different types of evil characters. The first type is represented by Mr. Bumble, Mrs. Mann and the various members of the Local Board of Guardians who have been assigned to oversee the Poor Law. The second type of villainous characters is found in the urban London. They are basically driven towards crime because of their necessities.

Ans to Q No 4: Oliver Twist is the child protagonist who exposes the ills of the society. Dickens uses Oliver's character to challenge the Victorian idea that paupers and criminals are already evil at birth, arguing instead that a corrupt environment is the source of vice. Oliver's moral ideas seem inborn in him. Unlike other such children, Oliver speaks in standard British English. The Victorian society's admiration and respect for purity and nobility is reflected in every action done and word spoken by Oliver.

Ans to Q No 5: Charles Dickens' narrative style moves between tragedy and comedy, and successfully holds the reader's interest. The writing style of Charles Dickens is marked by abundant linguistic creativity. He succeeds in using different language styles and vocabulary for the different characters based on their societal position. In *Oliver Twist*, he has used the third-person narrative form and tries to narrate it from the perspective of an individual who belongs to the nineteenth century London.

Ans to Q No 6: Initially, his contemporary critics did not consider Dickens to be a serious literary writer. Early reviews from *The Examiner*, September 10, 1837, asserted that this novel was an "exact painting" of the societal reality and that Dickens could very well understand the

social causes for which he wrote. *The Spectator* stated in the November 24, 1838 issue that Dickens "has genius to vivify his observation." The author was appreciated for his powerful use of pathos and his description of grim reality.



11.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. How far does Charles Dickens succeed in showing the problems caused by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 in his novel *Oliver Twist*? Illustrate with examples.

Q 2. Write short notes on the following:

a. Fagin

b. Oliver Twist

c. Nancy and Rose Maylie

d. Corruption and other malpractices in workhouses

Q 3. W. J. Long asserted that Dickens' novels comprise least three to four character types. Examine this statement based on the characterisation in *Oliver Twist*.

Q 4. Discuss the themes explored by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.

Q 5. Discuss Dickens' narrative style with special reference to his novel *Oliver Twist*.

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UNIT 12: JOSEPH CONRAD: *LORD JIM* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Joseph Conrad: The Novelist
12.3.1 His Life
12.3.2 His Works
12.4 Context of the Novel
12.5 Summary of the Novel
12.6 Let us Sum up
12.7 Further Reading
12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.9 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- form an idea regarding the background of modernist fiction
- discuss the life and works of Joseph Conrad
- identify Conrad as an important novelist of the early 20th century
- trace the context of the novel *Lord Jim*
- explain and summarise the novel

12.2 INTRODUCTION

The English novel became immensely popular at the turn of the nineteenth century. It is the only literary form that overshadowed poetry and drama, and continued to successfully compete with other mediums such as the radio and the cinema. Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was marked by wars, political uprisings, colonial rule, civil unrest, the ebb and flow of economic fortunes, all of which played a significant part in shaping the literature of the period. Important cultural issues, such as

effects of colonialism, women's suffragette, increased industrialism and mechanisation, scientific and technological advances, and the changing political climate were equally influential in doing the same. Furthermore, the literary, philosophical, and artistic movements of this period directly relate to the literature that appeared. Even more than other British novelists, Conrad was affected not only by important historical events in England but also by those on the continent. Although Conrad wrote in the English language, he was not a British by birth. Given his years in Poland, France, Russia and the Orient, Conrad's experience was far more cosmopolitan than that of most of his fellow novelists in England. In particular, Conrad was significantly influenced by events affecting France, Poland, and Russia during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. These events would form the context for Conrad's life and also for much of his fiction.

Conrad resisted being associated with any particular literary movement because he felt that it restricted and compartmentalised a writer's work. Nevertheless, one can still discuss certain tendencies in Conrad's work in light of the literary and artistic movements of his time, particularly since his own work was often instrumental in developing some of these movements. Among the literary and artistic movements of Conrad's time, Modernism was the most important to his work. Modernism is known for its formal experimentation and in fiction; this experimentation took a number of forms such as achronological narratives, multiple narrators, stream-of-consciousness narration, fragmented narratives, inconclusive endings, unreliable narrators. However, Modernism was not just concerned with formal experimentation. Modernist writers were just as concerned with larger philosophical issues. Modernist literature is often known for its insistence on issues such as an indifferent universe, alienation of the individual in the modern world, indeterminacy of knowledge, and for its emphasis on conceptions of the self. All of these come out of the atmosphere of uncertainty concerning traditionally held truths that arose in the nineteenth century. In the following section, we shall discuss briefly about the novelist Joseph Conrad.

12.3 JOSEPH CONRAD: THE NOVELIST

The following sections shall enable you to know in details the life and works of Joseph Conrad.

12.3.1 His Life

Joseph Conrad is best known for the writings of his middle period approximately between the period 1899 to 1911. This period was Conrad's most productive and has generally been seen as comprising his most artistically accomplished works like the short fiction namely, *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness, Typhoon and Other Stories* and the novels such as *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*.

He was a Polish-born English novelist. He is regarded as the greatest novelists to have written in the English language and is considered one of the prolific modern writers of England . The complexities of the human mind, suffering and distress, and power that lead to misjudgement have been the principle concerns in his novels. The character development in Conrad's works is enthralling and powerful. He was among the first writers to have introduced an essentially non-English sensibility into English literature. Conrad in his stories and novels, included nautical setting , that depicted the trials of human spirit amid the apathetic universe .

Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad) was born to Joseph Theodore Appolonius Korzeniowski and Eveline Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, in Berdyczew, Poland. His father was a writer and the translator of the works of William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616). His father was engaged in a movement seeking for Polish independence from Russia. In the year 1862 the Korzeniowski family had to forcefully move to Russia due to his father's involvement in politics . Conrad's mother died in the year 1865. Later in the year 1867 , Conrad and his father returned back to Poland.

Conrad was given education at home by his father. The early reading that was introduced to him that prevailed his life included Victor Hugo's *Toiler of the Sea*, and Shakespeare, both of which brought him into the orbit of English literature . The two prominent writers apart from Hugo and Shakespeare that influenced him were the workers of Mickiewicz and Slowacki, as his father would read to him aloud. He initially preferred Mickiewicz but later preferred Slowacki , as he was considered the soul of all Poland . However in the year 1869, Conrad's father died, when he was just eleven years old . Conrad was now left with his mother's brother Tadeusz Bobrowski. Conrad was not a good student and his health problems would cause economic disgrace to his uncle. At the age of thirteen, Conrad urged to become a sailor, as he was influenced with books by the American, James Fernimore Cooper and the English Captain Frederick Marryat . In October 13 ,1874 , Bobrowski sent fifteen year Conrad to Marseilles, France. Conrad did not complete his secondary school, yet he was a fluent French speaker with some knowledge of Latin, German, and Greek and good knowledge in Geography, History , Physics and Political Romantic literature .

In June 1878 Conrad went to England and became a British citizen . He travelled to the Belgian Congo , Zaire and Africa which inspired much of his writings. From 1896 to 1904, he wrote many novels about the places he explored when he was a merchant marine. He was given many honours during his lifetime including Knighthood which he declined. Conrad passed away due to cardiac related issue in the year 1924 and by that time he was well-established in the literary world as one of the leading modernists. He was buried at Canterbury, England.



LET US KNOW

After his death Conrad was buried at the Canterbury Cemetery in Canterbury. The following lines from Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* which he had chosen as the epigraph to his last complete novel, *The Rover*, are engraved on his headstone as his epitaph:

"Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, doth greatly please."

12.3.2 His Works

Joseph Conrad's first novels were *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), both of which were set in the Malay archipelago and rich in exotic description. This was followed by *The Niger of the Narcissus* (1897), and *Lord Jim* (1900). The sea continued to be the central setting of his novels and short stories, partly influenced by his own experiences out in the sea. His narrative technique is characterised by the presence of a frame narrator, Marlow and also contains breaks in the plots. His richly textured narrative prose shows evidence of influence from Polish and French writings. Around 1899, he also wrote novellas that were published in the *Blackwood Magazine* such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Youth.* His other novels include *Typhoon* (1903) which was followed by one of his major works *Nostromo* (1904) that focused on man's psychology and vulnerability in relation with public actions. In the novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) which was somewhat similar to Dickens' writings, he gives the description of London. *Under Western Eyes* (1911) is set in Switzerland and Russia and is centred around a student called Razumov who is caught up in the treachery and violence of Revolution.

Conrad's other major novels include *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906), *Victory* (1915), *The Shadow Line* (1917), *The Rescue* (1920) and *The Rover* (1923). His autobiography *A Personal Record* came out in book form in 1912 and his unfinished novel *Suspense* was published in 1925.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: When was Lord Jim published?

12.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

J.H. Stape writes that Lord Jim is a novel that "dissects and reassembles the consciousness of a young man" who in his flaws and disappointments "resembles like the rest of us". The novel resembles the tragedies of the past where the hero, even with all his merits and virtues, undergoes a downward spiral and doom due to a tragic flaw in his character. In case of Jim, the tragic flaw is a naive mistake on his part that haunts him for the rest of his life.

For generations, most Westerners had viewed their way of looking at the world as the only one possible, a view evolving out of Christian theology and ultimately based upon absolute truths. Consequently, they saw Western culture's advanced technology and civilisation as validating their world view, with all other ways of looking at the world appearing inferior, backward, and wrong. However, the challenges to such Western views that appeared in the nineteenth century brought into question fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world and the nature of the universe. In this way, the moorings of Western civilisation began to erode, and the very idea of absolute truths came to be scrutinised. The effects of this cultural climate profoundly influenced the world in which Conrad wrote. Conrad is known primarily as a Modernist writer, and he certainly fits in with the movement. In fact, he may be the first Modernist. His works clearly evidence both the Modernist experimentation with form and the Modernist view of the world. Formal experimentation appears as early as his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, with the flash back and flash forward techniques he employs.

This experimentation becomes much more pronounced in many of the works from his middle period on. The shifts in time and space that occur

in *Lord Jim* and even more drastically in *Nostromo* are examples of Conrad's experimentation, as are the multiple narrators he employs in relating the tales told in *Heart of Darkness*, *Typhoon*, and elsewhere. On the other hand, the alienation, solitude, and epistemological uncertainty that so many of his characters experience speaks of Conrad's Modernist world view, as they consistently try to find meaning and order in human existence while recognising that such is never transcendent but merely contingent – merely a means to do away with the chaos, anarchy, and nihilism.

Lord Jim, considered one of the best works of Joseph Conrad, is unique for its narrative style. The novel begins with the omniscient third person voice and is then broken up by Marlow's narration of Jim's story. Marlow has a complete control over the story as he brood over and attempts to find meaning in Jim's story . His language is dense with terms like "inscrutable" and "inexplicable" , words that denote vagueness but which also possess a certain quality of uncertainty in themselves, as words. This uncertainty of language is the key feature of Conrad's writing style. Conrad is known for his high , elegiac language that seems to contain depths of complexity nearly indefinable in words. One of the stylistic devices that Conrad used in the novel is the use of symbolism. The use of symbolism is what makes the novel so amazing. The repeated use of sea imagery represents dark past of Jim, which he was struggling to escape. Conrad wrote many stories and novels with a marine setting that depict the assessment of the human spirit amidst the enigmatic universe. His narrative style and anti-heroic characters influenced numerous authors. Conrad wrote stories and novels based on his own experiences in the French and British merchant naives, that reflects the aspects of European dominated world including imperialism and colonialism and that profoundly explore the human psychology. Conrad's narrative technique in the story is unusual, as the information comes from a variety of sources, a third-person narrator, who relates more than one perspective, as well as letters by crew members.

12.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Lord Jim was first published in the year 1900. It began as a short story based on a true tragic incident, where a steamship called Jeddah, carrying Muslim pilgrims from Singapore to Mecca was drowned. The novel was initially published as a series in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Joseph Conrad spent much of his time between 1883 and 1888 in the area now called as Indonesia. The second part of the novel takes place in a fictional village named Patusan on the Borneo Island. The novel centres around the protagonist, the British seaman Jim who is publicly condemned for abandoning a drowning ship along with its passengers. The plot revolves around his attempts after that incident, to overcome his past and regain his lost honour.

Jim, the son of a English parson, aspires to become a sailor. With his romantic aspirations for the sea, he roams the Asian south seas as a water clerk. After a long injury and stay in the hospital, instead of returning back to England, he accepts the position of chief mate of a local streamer Patna, carrying eight hundred pilgrims to Mecca. The voyage is led by a German captain followed by five white men as crew.

During the journey, the steamer sails through the Arabian sea. One night, Jim and the other crew members senses unusual vibrations disturbing the bottom of the steamer, after the steamer hits something and begins to take on water. Jim suddenly talks to the official inquiry, but with the believe that the ship is on the verge of sinking, panic arises among the crew members . The captain and the two crew members thinks to save themselves and therefore prepare to lower a boat. Jim, however wants to put the passengers on the few boats. But before that can happen, out of panic Jim, unable to decide jumps into the boat, leaving the passengers on the drowning steamer. The Patna and its passengers were saved by the French navy ship. Jim and the members, after reaching the port learns that the ship was rescued. The captain and the other two crew members leave the town, and Jim

only was left to bear witness . All lose their certificates to sail and the Captain commits suicide after losing the reputation as a perfect sailor.

Captain Marlow, attends the trial and meets Jim, who confesses his guilt to Marlow. The narrative is now shifted to Marlow, who is now telling the story of Jim. Marlow befriends Jim and finds him his old friend's place with no family and is the owner of a rice mill. Soon Jim learns that a crew member from the Patna is the manager of the mill, and he leaves as he did not want to be near the unfortunate memory of his past. Jim then finds a job as a water clerk in ports of the East Indies, while he was succeeding in his job, he hastily quits the job when the Patna is mentioned. Marlow worries about Jim's condition and hence consults with his good friend Stein who was a successful writer with both romantic and tragic life history. Both discusses about Jim and Stein offers the former to be his trade representative in Patusan, a village in a remote island. Jim accepts the offer as he finds what he exactly needs, he got an opportunity to move from his past and start a new life.

In the village Patusan, there were the two native communities Malay and the Burgis. After his initial challenge to enter the village, he manages to earn the respect of the natives by freeing them from the depredations of the bandit Sherif Ali and protecting them from the local Malay chief Rajah Tunku Allang. He shared a great bonding with Doramin, Stein's friend and his son Dain Warris. Jim for his bravery was named "tuan Jim" or Lord Jim. Jewel a young woman of mixed race falls in love with Jim. Jewel believes that just like her father left her mother Jim would not stay with her. Her mother who died, was married to Cornelius who is a jealous and lazy person and treats his daughter brutally. He was the trade factor of Stein , who steals supplies for sale, later he is replaced by Jim and decides to seek revenge against Jim. Marlow then visits Patusan and becomes overwhelmed to see Jim's success.

Captain Brown, infamous for his evil ways, arrives in Patusan, as his small crew runs out of food and water. Dain followed by the

local refuge manages to stop the intruders from looting the village and keeps them fixed in place. Jim was away to some other place and after he returns Brown wins Jim's sympathy. Reluctantly, Jim allows them to leave Patusan and reminds Brown of the long passage to the sea will be guarded by refugee. Cornelius takes it as an opportunity to destroy Jim and tells Brown the other side channel that will avoid most of the defenders, Brown then stops the defenders on his way and in the process Dain Warris among some other defenders gets killed. Brown sails on, leaving Cornelius who gets killed by Jim's man TambItam for his duplicity. Jim gets traumatised when he learns the death of Dain Warris. Jewel who wanted Jim to attack Brown and his ship, becomes numb. Jim, taking the responsibility of Dain's death goes to Doramin. Doramin upon learning the news of the death of his only son, ends up shooting Jim with his pistol in the chest .

Marlow arrives at Stein's house a couple of days later after this tragic incident where he finds Itam and Jewel there and tries to relate as to what happened .



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: What is it that haunts Jim's memory?

Q 3: Who is the principal narrator in the novel?

Q 4: What does the word "tuan" mean?

Q 5: Jim is send to Patusan to replace _____.



12.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit provides the learner with an introduction to the author Joseph Conrad with a detailed discussion of his life and works. It has also provided an overall analysis of the novel *Lord Jim*. The discussion of the background of the novel should help you place the novel in its proper historical context and hence follow it better. It highlights a discussion on Modernist Fiction

with special reference to Conrad. This unit shall help in your understanding of the various aspects of the novel that we shall deal in the next unit.



12.7 FURTHER READING

1) Birch, Dinah. (2011). *Oxford Companion to English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2) Peters, John G. (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3) Stape, J.H (Ed.) (2004 rpt.). *The Cambridge Comapnion to Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Lord Jim* was published in the year 1900.

Ans to Q No 2: Jim is haunted by the memory of abandoning the ship Patna.

Ans to Q No 3: Marlow is the principal narrator in the novel.

Ans to Q No 4: The word 'tuan' means lord.

Ans to Q No 5: Cornelius.



12.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1 : Write an essay on the contribution of Joseph Conrad to Modernist Literature.

Q 2 : Describe the Patna incident. What was its impact on the life of Jim?

Q 3 : Describe the events in the novel that finally lead to the death of Jim.

Q 4 : Write short notes on the following :

a. Background of the Novel.

b. Joseph Conrad as a modern novelist.

Q 5 : Critically summarise the novel *Lord Jim*.

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UNIT 13: JOSEPH CONRAD: *LORD JIM* II

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Reading the Novel
13.3.1 Major Themes
13.3.2 Major Characters
13.3.3 Narrative Style
13.4 Critical Reception
13.5 Let us Sum up
13.6 Further Reading
13.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.8 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the emergent themes of the text
- identity some of the important characters
- discuss the experimental narrative style of Conrad
- critically analyse the novel

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. In the previous unit, we have learnt that Joseph Conrad was an English novelist and short story writer of Polish origin. Conrad was one of the precursors of the Modern age in English literature. The distinctive characteristics of his works are the presence of an underlying tone of existential pessimism and an intense engagement with the psychological world of the characters. By now, you are already familiar with the novel as we have discussed its context and presented the summary. This unit shall provide you critical commentary

on the novel, which includes a discussion of the major themes and characters. You shall be acquainted with the style of Conrad who is known for his experimental narrative style. The unit shall also throw light on the history of the critical reception of the novel.

13.3 READING THE NOVEL

Lord Jim, the novel by Joseph Conrad was originally published as a serial in Blackwood's Magazine from October 1899 to November 1900. Lord Jim was initially conceived by Conrad as a short story named "Tuan Jim–A Sketch" in 1898, based upon the then scandalous episode of the pilgrim ship Jeddah's abandonment by her English crew in August 1880. You should note that much of Conrad's works has an autobiographical element as well as a cosmopolitan character. His experiences at sea often get reflected in the nautical settings of many of his novels. A spirit of pessimism pervades Conrad's novels which depict trials of the human spirit in the midst of an indifferent universe. These basic characteristics of Conrad's writings can be found in *Lord Jim* as well. The following subsections shall enable you to approach the novel in terms of its other aspects like themes, characters, etc.

13.3.1 Major Themes

The following are the important themes implicit in the novel *Lord Jim.*

Theme of the Common Man :

Marlow often in the course of his narration refers to Jim as 'one of us'. Although the phrase could have multiple implications, in one sense it suggests Jim's being just another member of 'us' the groundlings. Conrad's vision was dominated by the characteristic despair of the Victorian period when advances in the spheres of biology, geology, physics and chemistry as well as industrialisation had only come to prove that the universe, after all, was the accidental result of physical processes and not the eternal creation of God's grand design. Neither did man's existence have a divine purpose.

Jim, whose surname is never mentioned throughout the novel, is a representative of man in his ordinary existence, his struggle to survive. He is not a hero, but an ordinary human, unable to always live up to ideals. Conrad's works mostly depict anti-heroic characters.

In the face of this meaninglessness of life and the universe, man's consciousness becomes his biggest curse. The need to find a meaning, some sense in it all becomes man's burden. Jim has an urge to rise above his ordinariness, to find honour and glory as and when he can. This is the reason why Jim has been called a romantic. Jim's choice of a vocation on the sea was based upon "a course of light holiday literature". It is Stein who calls Jim a romantic. Stein is in turn is called a romantic by Marlow. In fact all three of them – Jim, Marlow and Stein are romantics and it is one of the primary foundations of their solidarity.

The story of Jim's pursuit of glory is manifested in the novel through the metaphor of the leap. There are several occasions of leaping in *Lord Jim*. The first leap is the one Jim is too late in taking, thus losing the opportunity to achieve personal glory and respect. The second time Jim does take the leap, but although partially involuntary, it was an act of cowardiceand it only lands him in guilt, shame and lifelong misery. Jim's final leap, however, does fetch Jim his coveted moment of glory. With the figurative leap into Patusan and the literal flying leaps over the Rajah's prison wall and the creek, Jim finally wins his dreams and turns into a hero.

Theme of Isolation :

Lord Jim: A Tale has adopted as its epigraph the following lines by the German Romantic poet Novalis:

"It is certain my Conviction gains infinitely,

The moment another soul will believe in it."

Conrad's novels depict the essential isolation of human beings and the terror involved in that isolation. In *Lord Jim*, it becomes evident in the narrative technique itself. The complex, multi-layered and fragmentary narrative through which Jim's story is told suggests

the rough edges through which any human being must be known. It is significant that nowhere in the novel is Jim's last name revealed. Very little information is provided about Jim's family and he remains cut off from them, although voluntarily in part. The sense of isolation pervading the novel is also a reflection of the Victorian sense of man's essential loneliness and vulnerability in the midst of an indifferent and uncertain universe.

The only respite for man from this engulfing loneliness seems to be in human bonding and companionship. A long list of characters from Chester, Denver, Egström, Stein, Doramin, Dain Waris and Marlow take a liking to him and readily offer him help at various stages. Marlow, who takes up the task of narrating Jim's story, becomes Jim's lifelong friend. Jim is able to find a close friend in Dain Waris and a lover and companion in Jewel. Thus Jim is not completely unfortunate when it comes to finding warmth and sympathy in the world of fellow humans.

Bildungsroman in *Lord Jim :*

The German term 'Bildungsroman' implies a novel of formation, education or culture. Basically, a bildungsroman is a novel of formation, novel of education, or coming-of-age story. It is a literary genre which deals with the process of the protagonist's gradual attainment of psychological and moral maturity. Novels like Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* would fall into this category.

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* too displays characteristics of the bildungsroman. The novel narrates the story of Jim, the sensitive, young boy with romantic dreams stepping into the world in search of adventure and glory. The simple dreams with which he sets out suffer a setback when faced with the real world; experience has a withering impact on Jim's youthful idealism. The novel traces Jim's journey through the process called life, as through vicissitudes of mistakes, failures and occasional moments of success, Jim learns

the ways of life and the world. However, *Lord Jim*'s essentially tragic vision, underlying philosophical engagements and sophisticated symbolism make it more than just a story of growing up.



LET US KNOW

The Bildungsroman has many sub-genres. An *Entwicklungsroman* is a story of general growth rather than self-cultivation. An *Erziehungsroman* focuses on training and formal schooling, while a *Künstlerroman* deals with the life and growth of an artist into maturity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is the theme of the common man explained in the novel *Lord Jim*?

Q 2: What is a Bildungsroman?

13.3.2 Major Characters

The following is a discussion of the chief characters in *Lord Jim* :

Jim :

Lord Jim or Tuan Jim is the protagonist of the novel. As a young boy, Jim was inspired by his readings in romantic literature and adventure stories to pick the seafaring profession. Subsequently he boards a ship *Patna* carrying Malay pilgrims as first officer, abandons it along with the other officers when it shows signs of sinking after some damage in rough weather conditions. The episode turns into a scandal and haunted by his failure and stripped of his officer's certificate, Jim wanders from job to job, finally becoming the manager of a remote trading post. He falls in love with Jewel, a half-caste girl, and, by defeating a local bandit, becomes leader of the people. He meets his death in the hands of Doramin, the local chief, who shoots Jim to avenge the death of his son Dain Waris, who was also Jim's close friend.

Marlow :

Charles Marlow is the chief narrator in the novel and works as a captain on a ship. He takes a liking to Jim the very first time he sets eyes on him, in spite of his knowledge of Jim's disgraceful past and becomes his lifelong friend. He helps Jim find employment first as a water clerk and then as a trading post manager for Stein.

Stein :

Stein is the owner of a large trading post. Stein was forced to flee Europe as a young man after becoming involved in revolutionary activities. He is a thoughtful, analytical man who describes Jim as a 'romantic' to Marlow. He acts as a rescuer for Jim by sending him to Patusan, which gives Jim an opportunity to realise his romantic dreams. Stein collects butterflies and beetles as a hobby.

Gentleman Brown :

An English pirate who comes with his men to plunder Patusan. He is infamous among the locals for his villainy. He and his men are attacked upon arrival in Patusan by Dain Waris and his band, who have had advance warning of their coming. Finding himself outnumbered, he enters into negotiations with Jim and cashing in on his knowledge of Jim's past, manages to retreat safely. However, on his way back to the ship, he surprises Dain Waris and his men and kills Dain Waris, for which Jim is suspected and killed later on. Brown and his men are shipwrecked soon after. Brown is the only survivor, though he dies soon after. Marlow visits him on his deathbed and gets part of the story from him.

Captain Brierly :

Captain Brierly is one of the most decorated and respected ship's captains in the area and acts as one of the two nautical assessors at the official enquiry into the desertion of the *Patna*. He is personally tormented by Jim's humiliating trial. He offers money to Jim to help him leave Singapore and avoid the rest of the enquiry. Brierly kills himself by jumping overboard barely a week after the end of the enquiry.

Jewel :

Jewel is the woman Jim meets in Patusan and falls in love with. Jewel's mother, an educated Dutch-Malay woman, had been married to Cornelius, Jim's predecessor at Stein's trade post. After her mother's death, Jewel is oppressed by her step father Cornelius. Jim sympathises with her and protects her. She becomes his link to the insights needed to manage among Patusan affairs. Towards the end Marlow meets Jewel who provides some information regarding Jim's end. Even before parting with Jim for the last time, Jewel had apprehensions of being left by him and confronts Marlow with her fears. By the end of the novel, Jewel has turned into a muted person and leads a soundless, inert life in Stein's house.

Cornelius :

Cornelius is a Malacca-Portuguese and the previous manager of Stein's Patusan post before Jim's arrival. He is Jewel's step father and treats her abusively. He conspires with Gentleman Brown which triggers the events leading to Jim's death.

Doramin :

Doramin is Chief of the Bugis, a group of traders from Celebes who had immigrated to Patusan and a wise, kind old man. Jim gets introduced to him through Stein. Doramin saves Jim after his escape from the Rajah Allang, who had been holding him prisoner. When Dain Waris, Doramin's son gets killed by Brown, Doramin mistakes Jim to be the killer and avenges his son's death by shooting Jim. Jim lets him do so.

Dain Waris :

Dain Waris is Doramin's son and Jim's best friend. He and Jim turn out to be soul mates, and Dain Waris serves as Jim's second-in-command. He is killed when Cornelius leads Brown down the river channel behind his camp, after Jim foolishly frees Brown and his men. Later Jim is wrongly blamed for his death and killed by Doramin.

Tamb'Itam :

A Malay who had been enslaved by the Rajah Allang and rescued by Doramin. He becomes Jim's loyal servant and adviser. He gives Marlow the complete account of Jim's final days.

Rajah Allang :

Raja Allang or Tunku Allang is the corrupt, unofficial ruler of Patusan. He is the uncle of the legitimate but underage and incompetent Sultan. He tries to enforce a monopoly on trade in the area. Allang captures Jim upon his arrival in Patusan. He also secretly conspires with Gentleman Brown against Jim.

Sherif Ali :

Sherif Ali is a Muslim bandit who terrorises Patusan from a stronghold in the hills. Jim becomes a hero in Patusan after defeating Ali.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Who is the chief narrator of the novel?

Q 4: Give a brief character sketch of Jewel.

13.3.3 Narrative Style

One of the striking features of Conrad's works is his experimental narrative styles, which do not follow the conventional linear style of narration found in English fiction till the Victorian period. *Lord Jim* has a sophisticated narrative framework. Although it begins through omniscient narration, a major part of the novel is narrated in third person by one of the characters in the novel, Charles Marlow, who has been used as a narrator in two other novels and a short story authored by Conrad. Marlow narrates Jim's story to a group of listeners. Marlow's tale is also interspersed by the individual stories by other characters in the novel. The conclusion of the novel is presented in the form of a letter by Marlow received by one "privileged reader". The narration does not always follow a linear chronological

order but travels back and forth through time, providing fragmentary and often inconclusive glimpses into the events and the characters' lives. Hence, the overall picture is pieced together through a collage of accounts, observations, statements, conjectures, and rumours.

The unreliability of the narrative reflects the unreliability of human reason and the limits of his knowledge. Thus, by subverting omniscient narrative techniques often employed in works of classic realism, *Lord Jim* is making a comment on the mediated nature of reality, truth and human knowledge. By complicating the narrative structure in this manner, Conrad also seems to be questioning the pretensions to omniscience and 'reality' of a writer; it provides a glimpse into the practicalities of the storymaker's process of composition.



LET US KNOW

Sometimes a work of fiction employs an 'omniscient narrator' in its narration. This narrator is never physically present in the plot but only exists as a narrating voice. The omniscient narrator has full access to the events, dialogues, characters' lives including their past and even the mental world of the characters, jumps from scene to scene, following characters throughout a story and assessing the progress of the narrative. An example would be the narrative voice in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

13.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Lord Jim has had a long history of critical reception. Different critics have different things to say about *Lord Jim*, which is generally influenced by their point of view or sometimes by the school of criticism that they belong to. Critics applying the method called 'Deconstruction' generally contend

that it is impossible for the reader to form an absolute impression of Jim's psychological state from the multiple points of view through which his story is narrated, in short, Jim must forever remain an enigma. However, critics who have studied the novel from the point of the 'Reader-response school', which focuses on the reader and their experience of the text, argue that there is an absolute reality which exists and can be perceived through the reader's experience of the novel. Critics belonging to the school of 'Postcolonialism' read the story as a 'heroic adventure' at the height of the British Empire. These critics often read within Conrad's novels an expression of the growing suspicion that 'a primitive and demoralising other' is present within the governing order, rather than the other way round.

Raymond Williams argues in his paper "Joseph Conrad" (1970) against the general tendency to study the novel in symbolic, abstract, metaphysical terms and lays emphasis on its social and historical contexts. Reading from a Feminist perspective, Padmini Mongia in "Ghosts of the Gothic: Spectral Women and Colonised Spaces in *Lord Jim*" (1993) sees the ambivalences in Lord Jim as indicative of the gender anxieties at the ***turn of the century***, the period around which Conrad wrote. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper* (1991) argues that the book offers an account of "an active if desperate" attempt to defeat "the spiritual and ethical malaise of modernity" by "a regression to a mythical mode of discourse". Robert Hampton's *Cross Cultural Encounters in Conrad's Malay Fictions* examines the role of gossip and other oral forms in the development of the novel's narrative. Allan Simmons and John Stape gather a number of contemporary perspectives on the novel in their collection *Lord Jim: Centennial Essays* (2010).



LET US KNOW

The phrase 'turn of the century' or *fin de siécle*, in its broadest sense, refers to the transition from one century to another. The term generally refers to a distinctive time period either before or after the beginning of a century or both before and after.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What does the unreliability of the narrative in *Lord Jim* suggest?

Q 6: What, according to critics of Postcolonialism, does the novel reflect?



13.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through the unit, the learner is familiarised with certain important aspects of the novel. The themes that are reflected through the novel include theme of common man, isolation, etc. The discussion of the major themes shall lend you multiple insights into the novel. You are now acquainted with the term 'Bildungsroman' and can discuss how the novel displays characteristics of the 'Bildungsroman' which is basically referred to as a novel of formation, education or culture. Apart from these, the unit also highlighted the narrative style of Conrad. Brief discussions of the important characters in the novel were also included for a better understanding of the novel. A general overview of the history of the critical reception of the novel is intended to improve your skills of critical engagement.



13.6 FURTHER READING

1) Allan Simmons & John Henry Stape. (eds). (2000). *Lord Jim: Centennial Essays.*

2) Andrew Michael Roberts. (2014). *Lord Jim*.

3) Gail Fraser. (1988). *Interweaving Patterns in the Works of Joseph Conrad.*

4) Harold Bloom. (2010). *Joseph Conrad*.

5) Ian Watt. (1981). *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century.*

6) Ian Watt. (2000). *Essays on Conrad.*

7) J. H. Stape. (ed). (1996). *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad.*

8) John Batchelor. (1988). *Lord Jim.*

9) John G. Peters. (ed). (2010). *A Historical Guide to Joseph Conrad.*

10) Keith Carabine. (ed). (1992). *Joseph Conrad: Critical Assessments.*

11) Miller, J. Hillis. "Lord Jim: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form". *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels*.

12) R. W. Stallman. (ed). (1960). *The Art of Joseph Conrad.*

13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Marlow refers to Jim as 'one of us'. Conrad's vision was dominated by the characteristic despair of the Victorian period resulting out of scientific processes versus the universe being the creation of God's grand design. Jim is a representative of man in his ordinary existence, his struggle to survive. He is not a hero, but an ordinary human, unable to always live up to ideals. Thus, in the face of this meaninglessness of life and the universe, man's consciousness becomes his biggest curse.

Ans to Q No 2: The German term 'bildungsroman' implies a novel of formation, education or culture. Basically, a bildungsroman is a novel of formation, novel of education, or coming-of-age story. It is a literary genre which deals with the process of the protagonist's gradual attainment of psychological and moral maturity. Novels like Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* fall into this category.

Ans to Q No 3: Charles Marlow is the chief narrator in the novel and works as a captain on a ship.

Ans to Q No 4: Jewel is the woman Jim meets in Patusan and falls in love with. After her mother's death, Jewel is oppressed by her step father Cornelius. Jim sympathises with her and protects her. She becomes his link to the insights needed to manage among Patusan affairs. Even before parting with Jim for the last time, Jewel had apprehensions of being left by him and confronts Marlow with her

fears. By the end of the novel, Jewel has turned into a muted person and leads a soundless, inert life in Stein's house.

Ans to Q No 5: The unreliability of the narrative reflects the unreliability of human reason and the limits of his knowledge. By subverting omniscient narrative techniques often employed in works of classic realism, *Lord Jim* is making a comment on the mediated nature of reality, truth and human knowledge.

Ans to Q No 6: Critics belonging to the school of 'Postcolonialism' read the story as a 'heroic adventure' at the height of the British Empire. These critics often read within Conrad's novels an expression of the growing suspicion that 'a primitive and demoralising other' is present within the governing order, rather than the other way round.



13.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a character sketch of Jim. Do you see characteristics of the common man in Jim? Explain.

Q 2: Is Jim a completely lonely person? Make a list of the characters which provide him with help and companionship.

Q 3: Analyse the relationship between Jim and Marlow.

Q 4: Who is the narrator of the novel *Lord Jim*? Comment on the narrative technique used by Conrad in the novel *Lord Jim*.

Q 5: Discuss the important themes in the novel *Lord Jim*.

Q 6: Attempt a critical reception of the novel *Lord Jim*.

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UNIT 14 : VIRGINIA WOOLF: *MRS DALLOWAY* I

UNIT STRUCTURE:

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Virginia Woolf: The Novelist

14.3.1 Her Life

14.3.2 Her Works

14.4 Context of the Novel

14.5 Summary of the Novel

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Further Reading

14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.9 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- identify Virginia Woolf as an important writer of the 20th century
- discuss the life and works of Virginia Woolf
- situate the novel *Mrs Dalloway* in a specific literary context of the early twentieth century
- narrate the story of the novel in brief
- explain the overall significance of the novel *Mrs Dalloway* as a modern novel

14.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals mostly with the life and works of Virginia Woolf, one of the greatest modernist writers of recent times. The novel *Mrs Dalloway*, like the other novels prescribed for you in this course, is significant for a number of reasons. This unit will not only help you to consider the life-history of Virginia Woolf, but will also introduce you to the works she produced. Attempts have also been made to place *Mrs Dalloway* in a specific literary

and socio-historical background of the twentieth century of which Woolf was a part. This unit will hopefully enable you to understand the story of the novel in brief so that you find it easier to understand the various complex themes and issues implicit in the novel about which you will read in the next unit.



Virginia Woolf : She grew up with her two brothers and a sister. However, both Virginia and her sister was left to the care of several governesses.

14.3 VIRGINIA WOOLF: THE NOVELIST

This section deals with the life and works of Virginia Woolf. You are advised to read them thoroughly so that you can get a better grasp of the development of Virginia Woolf as a modernist writer.

14.3.1 Her Life

Virginia Woolf was born on January 25, 1882 to Leslie Stephen. Virginia proved her inclination towards a culture of learning by reflecting an early interest in languages, history and literature at a tender age. Her home in Hyde Park Gate in the Kensington section of London was known for its upper-class taboos and gossips. But, Virginia was fully aware of her neighbours and shared the same community feeling. From her childhood days Virginia had a deep liking for her brother Thoby and sister Vanessa. But, she also vied with Vanessa for the affection of Thoby. However, the intensity of her relation with Vanessa lasted throughout their whole lives. Vanessa later in her Notes on Virginia's Childhood wrote about the ability of producing sarcasm in Virginia Woolf from an early age.

Virginia was very conscious about people and relationships. The first combined literary effort of the Stephen brothers and sisters was their The Hyde Park Gate News, a small serial news paper in which they covered daily events, occasional announcements, caricatures and so on. Virginia and Thoby presented most of the writings while Vanessa did the illustrations. This paper also contained serial love stories which were of particular delight for Virginia. However, it was not their days spent at Hyde Park Gate but the summers spent at Talland House by the sea in Cornwall that Virginia

later remembered most.

However, the happiness of childhood met with an abrupt ending when her mother died on May 5, 1895. Subsequently, the fear of death was to haunt her throughout the whole life. After the demise of the mother, their half-sister Stella began to play the role of mother by tending to the household and taking care of the children. But Stella also died soon. In-between 1899-1904, Virginia found the opportunity to read voraciously. During that time, she read Macaulay, Pepys, Montaigne, Lamb's *Essays of Elia*, Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, Washington Irving, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Adam Bede*, *Felix Holt* and many more.

Leslie Stephen, Virginia's father also passed away on February 22, 1904. After his death, the depressed and grief-stricken children decided to move to Bloomsbury. Then Virginia exchanged several letters with her friends Emma and Violet whom she had met on her journey to Italy and Paris. The impression she gave of herself through those letters proved later to be of great help for her biographers. In those letters she was desperate and confused regarding her love for her father, as she was living a tragic life surrounded by the death of both her parents. Actually, it was also the beginning of her mental ill-health or 'madness' following which she tried many times to kill herself. Later, Vanessa called her back to their newly-built house at Gordon Square. During that time, Violet introduced her to Kathleen Lyttleton, the editor of the 'Women's Supplement' of the Guardian. Virginia began her work as a regular reviewer and writer of articles.



Once, her friend Violet took Virginia to her house at Burnham Wood where she tried to commit suicide by throwing herself out of the window. Although Virginia was not seriously hurt, her friend and relatives were now clear about her conditions.

The new house at Gordon Square proved to be a freedom from family constraints and the old patriarchy under which they had lived. In or about 1905 a group of friends, writers, artists and intellectuals began to meet at the Bloomsbury house of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf. Its members included Woolf herself, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, G. E. Moore, Desmond MacCarthy, David Garnett, and Lady Ottoline

Morrell. The Bloomsbury Group provided new scope to ponder over new materials. On Thursday evenings, several topics were offered and discussed. It had a life-changing impact on Virginia.

On November 20, 1906, Virginia's brother Thoby died of typhoid. Thoby was her intellectual mentor after her father. The character of her brother comes alive as Jacob of *Jacob's Room* (1922). For several weeks after his demise, Virginia kept him alive still further through letters to her friend Violet who was also seriously ill.

In February, 1907, Clive and Vanessa got married. Since then Virginia led a more secluded life. She then started to write *Reminiscences*, an account of her sister Vanessa, which is part memoir, part biography, part paean. In some ways, it was her other attempt to recreate her sister as a full-grown fictional character. At the same time she was working on her novel, *The Voyage Out*. By 1910, the Bloomsbury Group could make its presence felt nationally. At the same time, Roger Fry astonished London audiences with the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Gallery.

In January, 1912, Leonard Woolf proposed marriage to Virginia. Their intimate friendship finally resulted in their marriage on August 12, 1912. Subsequently, Virginia's health started to deteriorate rapidly. Virginia made another attempt to commit suicide by taking more than 100 grains of Veronal, used as sleeping tablets. But, fortunately she was once again saved. After recovery, Virginia again started reading and writing her diary. Then in 1915, the couple decided to buy Hogarth House and a printing press that was to play a crucial role in the times to come. Moreover, the revelation of the doctors that she would not be able to become a mother further triggered more illness. On April 24, 1917, Virginia and Leonard's dream of owning a press became a reality. As Leonard had believed, it could give her something to concentrate on.

She made another suicidal attempt by drowning in the river Ouse, but escaped death. Finally, on March 28, 1941, Virginia left a suicide note for Vanessa and Leonard, put on her fur coat, took her

walking-stick, left towards the river, added stones to her pockets and drowned herself. Her dead body could not be found until on April 18, of the next month.



LET US KNOW

There are various views regarding her death. Some people suggest that Woolf's suicide resulted from an old madness which started to show its effect, and the terrified Woolf decided to commit suicide rather than suffer the same tortures of her former experience with mental illness. Some also opine that she failed to cope with contemporary war-ridden England with its terror of bombing as a part of World War II. Other still suggest that she was not willing to further burden her husband with her madness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: How was Virginia Woolf in her childhood?

Q2: Name the persons who influenced Virginia Woolf intellectually.

14.3.2 Her Works

In the previous section, you have read about the life of Virginia Woolf. This section will deal with some of her important fictional works.

Woolf completed her first novel *The Voyage Out* in 1912 but delaying publication until 1915. Her career continued with *Night and Day* (1919). She finished her third novel *Jacob's Room* by November, 2021. In 1922, she brought out the novel in which she claimed: "I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice." This novel is based on the life and death of her brother Thoby, and broke away from the realistic mode of her early writing. Like *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), it very well fulfils the purpose of fiction expressed

in her essay "Modern Fiction" (1919): "Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semitransparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." However, it is with *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931) that she finally established herself as a leading exponent of modernism.

Her next novel *Orlando* (1928) is a fantastic biography of an androgynous protagonist through her four centuries. This novel was dedicated to her friend Vita Sackville West. Following the success of the book Woolf was invited for lectures at Cambridge University. The papers that she delivered were compiled in *Women and Fiction*, later became *"A Room of One's Own"* which is today considered a famous feminist treatise. It was to address issues related to the position of a woman in a patriarchal society, her status in the family, her sexual life and so on.

Another biography *Flush* (1933) revolves around the pet spaniel of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Then, to free herself from depression, she turned to *The Years* (1937) in which she worked steadily on the role of the women and their sexual lives. Her last novel *was Between the Acts* published posthumously in 1941. This novel was completed just before the final attack of mental illness which drove her to suicide.

Virginia Woolf is now recognised as one of the major innovative novelists of the 20th century. She is best known for her use of Stream of Consciousness. Her works “A Room of One's Own” (1929), and “Three Guineas” (1938), are now established as feminist classics.



LET US KNOW

Virginia's career and sensibility as a writer and her attitude to modern fictions were also shaped by the World War I. Since, she also happened to be a part of the Bloomsbury Group, the literary and intellectual activities of the Group shaped her thinking mind to a great extent.

Bloomsbury for her was not just an intellectual community, but also an attitude to life and values, an intimacy amongst friends, marriages and much more.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Name some of the fictional works of Virginia Woolf.

Q 4: What is the significance of the “A Room of One's Own”?

14.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

The novel *Mrs Dalloway*, originally began as a short story entitled Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street. It was completed in October 1922, and published in 1923 in the American magazine *The Dial*. However, Virginia Woolf was also thinking of expanding it into a complete novel. This novel played an important role in British fictional modernism by exploring and asserting the relevance of certain very crucial and essential states of human sensitivity and intensity. In her essay “Modern Fiction” (1919), she stated that modern novelists should not choose to create plots, comedy, tragedy or catastrophe in the traditional sense. Again, in another essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1924) she insisted that the modern novel was a novel of character and she very whimsically claimed that by 1910, human nature had changed. It is against such intellectual contexts that a novel like *Mrs Dalloway* should be studied. *Mrs Dalloway* is 'modern' because of its sense of life, which can be experienced aesthetically. Perhaps this was also the dominant idea which she was trying to express through her other fictional works. This novel became well-known for its departure from earlier representations of reality and was never meant to be complete like the other realist novels. It can be placed in an age of changed relations and fractured connections.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: In what way is *Mrs Dalloway* a 'modern' novel? (60 words)

14.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Clarissa Dalloway decided to buy the flowers for the party that evening herself. Lucy had so much other work to do and the morning air was fresh which always reminded her of a morning when she had been eighteen years old. Peter Walsh used to sit beside her and comment on vegetables. He still writes boring letters to her and would be returning from India someday. Clarissa thought of the noise that she heard over Westminster just before the clock Big Ben rang. She looked at the people around living their moments in London. It was June and the Great War (World War I) was over. Entering the park, she meets Hugh Whitbread, an old friend, who assures that he would attend the party even though his wife, Evelyn, was ill. The Whitbreads always came to London to see doctors. Though she adored Hugh Whitbread, he had a way of making Clarissa feel underdressed. Richard, her husband, could not stand Hugh and Peter also hated him.

Thinking of Peter again, she looked around and felt that he would have been lovely to walk with at this moment. She could not stop such thoughts and memories reminded her of Peter. Clarissa found herself (through memory again) arguing with Peter about why she could not marry him. She knew she was right about her decision, as he would not have given her any independence. But, his marriage with flimsy Indian woman also angered her greatly.

Clarissa knew not to define or label anyone because she felt at one with the world. She simply wanted to know people. Most of all, she loved living in the moment and was not irked by the thought of death. Clarissa felt that pieces of herself existed wherever she had ever been. Bond Street fascinated her a lot. Her daughter Elizabeth was not fascinated by any of the delicate gloves in the shops. Elizabeth was fascinated with Miss Kilman, a callous Communist who made one feel small because she was privately starving.

Clarissa was enraptured by the various smells and colours of the many flowers. Suddenly a pistol shot is heard in the street. The loud noise of a motorcar is also heard. Passers-by claimed to have seen the Prince or Queen through the window. The disturbance created by the car still remained

even after it had passed away. The street came to a stop and Septimus Warren Smith, a man of thirty, mentally and emotionally devastated by his experience in World War I, imagined that he was the cause of the stop and anticipated horror. His wife, Lucrezia (Rezia) could not help.

The people on Bond Street took a few moments to return to normal life. The car continued through Piccadilly. Meanwhile, a crowd formed at Buckingham's gates. Suddenly, Emily Coates, a woman watching the events, noticed an airplane making letters out of smoke. Roaming across London's sky, the plane's trail mystified its observers.

In Regent's Park, Rezia tried to show Septimus the letters in the sky since the doctor had suggested distracting him with things outside of himself. The beauty of the letters brought tears to his eyes. She walked to the fountain with a view to distract herself. She could tell no one about his state and felt alone. He was not the same man she had married. The doctor said nothing about what was wrong with him. Septimus sat, hearing the sparrows singing in Greek and babbling aloud. When Rezia returned, he jumped up, moving them away from the people and ignoring her.

Maisie Johnson, a girl from Edinburgh, asked the couple directions to the subway. Rezia replied abruptly, hoping Maisie would not notice Septimus' madness. Maisie was unnerved by both and would remember them for years. Mrs Carrie Dempster, an older woman in the park, noticed Maisie and was reminded of her younger days. She imagined Maisie getting married, asserting that she (Carrie) would have done things differently if she had a second chance. The plane continued aimlessly, and letters pouring from its looping motion.

Returning home, Clarissa felt as if she were a nun returning to her daily habit. She breathed in happily while Lucy stood by, hesitant. Noticing a note that read that Lady Bruton had requested Richard's company for lunch, Clarissa felt annoyed. Clarissa felt alone. She withdrew to the solitary attic room upstairs that she had occupied ever since her illness. There, she liked to read Baron Marbot's Memoirs. The room was cool with a white sheet stretched tightly across the narrow bed. She wondered if she had failed Richard and thought about her close connections with women, namely her old best

friend, Sally Seton. She knew what men feel toward the women with Sally.

She remembered Sally Saton and the way they had kissed one night. A moment later, Peter Walsh and Joseph, an old family friend, had intruded, perhaps purposefully, since Peter was prone to jealousy. Clarissa was horrified at the intrusion. Thinking of Peter, Clarissa (at present) wondered if he would think her older when he returned from India. She thought herself to be a good woman even if Lady Bruton had not invited her but Richard. Clarissa found her loveliest green dress and took it downstairs to mend. The doorbell rang and she heard the voice of a man demanding to see her. Abruptly, her door opened and she turned to hide her dress, as if she guarded her modesty.

Peter Walsh entered. Clarissa asked him if he remembered Bourton. But it reminded him of Clarissa's refusal to marry him. Clarissa too was caught in the wave of emotion. The memories brought Peter close to tears. He did not want to tell her about his new love Daisy because Clarissa would think him to be a failure. He felt that Clarissa had changed for the worse ever since marrying Richard. Clarissa asked about his life. There was too much to tell her, but he mentioned that he was in love with a girl in India who was still married to a Major in the Indian Army. He had come to London to see about a divorce.

Suddenly, Elizabeth entered. Clarissa said, "Here is my Elizabeth" Peter greeted her and rushed out of the door. Clarissa reminded him to not forget her party. Peter again thought of Elizabeth, thinking that she was a peculiar looking girl and probably did not get along with her mother. Smoking a cigar, he curled the smoke from his lips and decided to try to speak with Elizabeth alone that night. Then he fell into a deep sleep to dream of the gray nurse knitting beside Peter. As Peter dreams, the narrator reveals the symbolic story of a solitary traveler.

Clarissa approached Peter to introduce him to Richard. Peter retorted that she was the perfect hostess. After that the young people decided to go boating in the moonlight and they left Peter standing in the drawing room. Clarissa ran back inside to find Peter. He was suddenly happy. They walked down to the docks talking and, when the boat reached an island, they sat on the grass together.

Rezia realised that it was time to take Septimus to see Sir William Bradshaw, who might be able to help her. Septimus usually talks to himself, or to his friend Evans, who had died in the War. There were times when the couple was happy but then Septimus would mention killing himself, because, he explained, people were wicked. Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him. Holmes said that one was responsible for one's own health. Peter Walsh saw the unhappy couple. In the five years between 1918-1923, London had changed drastically. Respectable newspapers could write about bathrooms. Single women could put on make-up in public. Of all of Clarissa's old friends, Peter had always liked Sally best because she could see through the artificiality of the Whitbreads and Dalloways.

Then we are told about Septimus who had been one of the first volunteers for the army in World War I. He became friends with his officer, Evans, who died just before the war ended. Septimus was glad that he felt no grief over the death, until he realised that he had lost the ability to feel. In a panic, he married a young Italian girl, Lucrezia who liked his studiousness. The couple moved to London and Septimus returned to his post. He wondered if life lacked meaning. He read Shakespeare again and understood now that Shakespeare had despised love between man and woman. After five years of marriage, Lucrezia wanted to have a baby. Septimus, however, could not think of bringing a child into the world. Rezia became increasingly unhappy. But, Septimus too felt nothing when she wept. He wondered if he would go mad and, progressively, he did surrender to madness.

Septimus knew nothing was physically wrong with him. He felt nothing; he had married without love. The third time Holmes came to see him, Septimus refused him. Even though Septimus had talked of suicide, Holmes told him to shake off his depression. Septimus felt that Holmes, representative of human nature, was always after him. He hated Holmes and Rezia could not understand the reason. Without Rezia's support, Septimus felt deserted. He heard the world telling him to kill himself. One moment, he saw Evans, and cried out to him. Rezia entered his room, panicked, and called for Holmes. Upon seeing Holmes, Septimus screamed in horror. The doctor, annoyed, advised that they see Dr. Bradshaw.

The Warren Smiths went to visit Sir William Bradshaw. Rezia guessed his home because of the prestigious gray motorcar in front of the house. Bradshaw would often have to travel long distances to see rich country patients. Bradshaw earned his prestige through hard work. As Septimus walked in, Bradshaw knew immediately that Septimus had suffered a mental breakdown. He also recognised the great mistakes Dr. Holmes had made. In the short conversation Bradshaw had with Septimus, he learned that Septimus placed great importance on symbols. It did not detail the crimes to humanity that Septimus pictured he had committed. Bradshaw took Mrs Smith to a room nearby and asked if Septimus had spoken of killing himself. Embarrassed, she replied that he had. Bradshaw reassured her that Septimus needed a long rest in a country house to regain a sense of proportion.

When they returned to Septimus, Rezia burst out that he was ill and needed to go to a home. Septimus asked if it was a home of Dr. Holmes. Though slightly annoyed, Bradshaw assured him that it was his home. Septimus equated Bradshaw with Holmes and with the evil of human nature. Septimus wondered if he confessed his crimes, would they let him go. But, he could not remember his crimes. As the couple left, Bradshaw told Rezia he would take care of everything. Rezia felt angry and deserted. Bradshaw had given them his three-quarters of an hour and he had prescribed 'proportion' to straighten out Septimus. Yet, as the narrator explains, there is another side to 'proportion', termed conversion.



LET US KNOW

An inherent satire on the characters of Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw can be seen underlying in this novel. The doctors talking of reviving a necessary 'proportion' in society actually failed in curing Septimus.

The Smiths traveled up Harley Street. Around the same time, Hugh Whitbread passed a nearby clock. The narrator jumps to Hugh. Hugh was the type to delve into matters superficially. Still, he had been an honorable

member of high society for years. He was always impeccably dressed and maintained the best manners. Lady Bruton preferred Richard Dalloway to Hugh. She had invited both to lunch to ask for their services. Richard had a great respect for Lady Bruton, as she was the great grand-daughter of a General. Lady Bruton abruptly asked about Clarissa. Clarissa doubted that the Lady liked her, and it may have been true. Lady Bruton cared more for politics than people, and thought women caused their husbands to discard military posts. Suddenly, Lady Bruton mentioned that Peter Walsh was back in town. She was interested in seeing Richard's response. Richard thought that, when he returned home, he would tell Clarissa he loved her.

Richard and Hugh stood at a street corner, hoping to part but frozen in place. Finally, they decided to enter a shop. Richard had not cared about Canada and he did not care about the necklaces Hugh saw in the shop. He then remembered Clarissa and Peter and thought of buying Clarissa a gift. He bought Clarissa roses and rushed home to tell her that he loved her. He had not said it for years. Truly, he thought, it was a miracle that he had married her. Clarissa had told him that she had been right refusing Peter. She wanted support from him. He rushed through parks and past homeless women. He rushed by Buckingham Palace, full of prestige and tradition. Richard felt very happy, rushing home to profess his love for Clarissa.

Clarissa had purposely decided not to invite Ellie to the party as she was a bore. She was also annoyed that Elizabeth was praying with Miss Kilman. The clock struck three and Richard walked in, holding flowers. He could not bring himself to say he loved her, but she understood. Clarissa thanked him. Richard told her about Hugh being at lunch and being an ass, and Clarissa mentioned Peter's visit. Richard held her hand and then hurried off to some committee meeting. Before leaving, Richard told Clarissa to rest, as he always did, because a doctor once had suggested that she rest after lunch. Elizabeth and Miss Kilman were about to leave.

Desperate, Clarissa yelled after Elizabeth to remember her party, but Elizabeth did not hear. Clarissa hated how Miss Kilman wanted to convert everyone, and made others feel small. Clarissa simply wanted people to be themselves. She pondered over love and religion, feeling that the combination of the two had the power to destroy. She thought of Peter, who was filled with

knowledge of the world, but who loved flimsy women. Big Ben struck three-thirty. Clarissa noticed the old woman whom she could view in the house adjacent through her window. It seemed to Clarissa that the ringing of the bell forced the lady to move away from her window. All was connected. One needed neither religion nor love to make the connections. Another clock, which always rang slightly after Big Ben, reminded Clarissa to prepare for her party.

As Elizabeth looked for her gloves in the market, Miss Kilman desperately hoped the girl would stay with her longer. But, Elizabeth wanted to go. Miss Kilman detained her by saying that she had not finished eating. She asked Elizabeth if she would go to her mother's party. Elizabeth responded that she would probably have to, though she did not like parties. Miss Kilman replied that she never went to parties because she was never invited. She continued talking, feeling sorry for herself and driving a small wedge between herself and Elizabeth. Elizabeth then paid her bill and left. She had lost her Elizabeth. Clarissa had won, after all.

Elizabeth enjoyed the niceness of the day and decided to take a bus ride. Her life was changing. Already men were falling in love with her. She sat on the bus and enjoyed the fresh air. Meditating on Miss Kilman, she wondered if Miss Kilman's idea about the poor was correct. She paid another penny so that she could continue riding the bus onto the Strand, a working quarter of London. Miss Kilman had said that all professions were open to women of Elizabeth's generation, and so Elizabeth thought she might become a doctor, politician, or farmer. She was a lazy child, but the ride motivated her. The people in the Strand rushed about with such importance. Nearing St. Paul's cathedral, she knew it was getting late and she turned for home.

Septimus looked out his window and Rezia was tensed to see Septimus smile as he often did. Sometimes he would demand that she record his thoughts. Lately, he would suddenly cry out about truth and seeing his old friend, Evans. The doctors had said he should not get excited. He would speak of Holmes in terms of the evil of human nature. To Septimus, all this was true. This day, Rezia sat sewing a hat for Mrs Peters, a woman she did not like but who had been nice to them. Septimus watched Rezia's form and found it perfect. Septimus fell asleep, slowly slipping from reality. When he awoke, Rezia had gone out. Rezia burst in, still happy. She felt

that things had returned to normal.

Septimus believed that he could feel Rezia's mind, but he also remembered that Bradshaw had said that he would need to separate himself. It bothered him that Bradshaw had seemed so demanding. Rezia told him it was because he had wanted to kill himself. He inquired where his writings were and she brought them to him. He wanted them burnt but she promised to keep them from the doctors. She also promised that the doctors would not separate her from him. Septimus imagined his wife triumphing over the doctors. Rezia heard the voice of Dr. Holmes and ran to stop him from seeing Septimus. Holmes pushed by her. Rezia, Septimus knew, was on his side. Holmes continued up the stairs toward Septimus. Septimus tried to think of ways to escape. The window was the only option he could fathom. He waited to the last minute, enjoying the sun, and then threw himself onto the fence below. Slowly, she realised that Septimus was dead. People outside carried the body away.

Peter appreciated the ambulance that sped past him as a sign of civility and communal empathy. He thought back to a time when he and Clarissa rode on top of a bus, and she came up with a transcendental theory for how she knew people simply by living in a society. Peter did notice that her theory worked for their relationship. Memories of Clarissa would pop up anywhere. He would always feel bitterly that Clarissa had refused him, though he knew that their marriage would have failed. He thought of Daisy. Daisy was only twenty-four and had two young children. He decided that he would attend Clarissa's party, in order to ask Richard what the English government was planning to do in India.

Lucy and the other servants ran around for the final preparation for the party. They had heard that the Prime Minister too was coming. The invited guests were already arriving and the ladies began to move upstairs. Lucy reported to the others how lovely Elizabeth looked. A few servants were hired for Clarissa's parties every year. As the guests entered, they were each announced and Clarissa would say to each, "How delightful to see you!" Peter felt that Clarissa was insincere and wished he had gone somewhere else for the evening. Clarissa noticed Peter and felt ashamed. His presence made her judge herself. It angered Clarissa that Peter came

to criticise. And, yet, she thought her parties did matter.

Richard was kind enough to say hello. A moment later, Peter greeted Richard and they walked off. Clarissa continued greeting all who entered. Sally Saton was passing through London and came to the party, uninvited. Clarissa was overjoyed to see her. She noticed that Sally looked older; Sally told her that she had five boys. The presence of the The Prime Minister was announced and Clarissa had to attend to him. Surprisingly, he was an ordinary looking man. He walked about with Clarissa, then Richard, acting as a symbol of the English society. Peter thought the English were snobs. Soon, Peter spotted Hugh Whitbread, another reminder of the aristocratic society. Lady Bruton met privately with the Prime Minister. Then, Clarissa continued to lead the Prime Minister around, making him feel at ease.

Though intoxicated with the energy of her party, Clarissa retained a hollow feeling. As she grew older, parties were somewhat less fulfilling. She wished she could dance for the young people. Spotting her aunt, Clarissa went to old Helena Parry. She had gotten along so well with Peter, so Clarissa brought Peter to her. Clarissa promised Peter that they would speak later. Sally noticed Peter with Miss Parry. Clarissa hoped they would wait until she had time. She remembered Sally's vigor from youth, her insatiable vivacity. Sally could not illuminate a room as she once had. Settling down to a normal marriage was not expected of her, Clarissa thought. Sally sat with Peter. Clarissa saw them as the link to her past.

The Bradshaws entered and Clarissa hurried to greet them. Clarissa and Richard had never liked the couple. They were so late because, as Sir William had received a call about a young man who had killed himself. Clarissa was appalled that the Bradshaws were bringing 'death' into the party. Distraught, Clarissa wandered into a little room but no one was there. The thought of death overwhelmed her. She could feel for the man, who had been Septimus. She thought of her past, Peter, and Sally, and she wondered if the man had been happy.

Clarissa realised why she despised Sir Bradshaw; he made the life of his patients intolerable. The death seemed her disgrace, a fate into which she might have slipped if it had not been for Richard. He made her life happy, she thought. Clarissa looked out the window and noticed that the old woman

across was looking back toward her. Clarissa felt revived by the knowledge that Septimus had thrown his life away. She returned to the party, to find Peter and Sally. Richard stood talking to the Bradshaws before they left. Elizabeth caught his eye and wandered over to him. Richard was amazed how grown up she looked. Sally could tell that Elizabeth and Richard shared a special bond. Almost everyone had left the party now. Sally rose to speak with Richard. Peter waited a minute, soon overcome by great elation. He realised that he was happy because Clarissa had finally come.

Thus, the story of the novel Mrs Dalloway ends like this. It is one of the most complete, and ambiguous fictional representations of modern life. It is also Woolf's thorough experiment with the new technique of interior monologue. The novel plays subtly with the problem of identity which is both multiple and singular, both public and private, and more generally with human relationship. The meaning of the story lies in its complexity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Do you think that there is a clear cut story in this novel?

Q 7: What is the novel *Mrs Dalloway* all about?



14.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through the unit, the learner is familiarised with Virginia Woolf who to her credit wrote nine novels, several feminist essays, the critical books, and the biography of Roger Fry, several periodical articles, the diaries, and the letters, most of which were published posthumously. All of them seem central to her time, her intellectual world, and modern artistic ideas. She is known mostly for her central position in the Bloomsbury Group, her feminist undertakings, her troubled married life, her lesbian tendencies, her essays on various contemporary topics, her ancestry and her beauty, her place and function in the Hogarth Press, her radicalism in terms of narrative forms and finally her contribution to literary modernism at the

beginning of the twentieth century. It was to cope with her pain of loss caused by the death of her parents, her aunt, and many of her family friends at a young stage, that she sought recourse to writing at an early age. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a representative novel of literary modernism and displays a sense of life, which can be experienced aesthetically.



14.7 FURTHER READING

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Websites :

www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes/titles/dalloway/fullsumm.html.



14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR ROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Virginia proved her inclination towards a culture of learning since her childhood. She was fully aware of their neighbours and shared the same community feeling. She had a deep liking for her brother Thoby and sister Vanessa the intensity of which lasted throughout their entire lives.

Ans to Q No 2: Woolf herself, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, G. E. Moore, Desmond MacCarthy,

David Garnett, and Lady Ottoline Morrell.

Ans to Q No 3: *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931), *Orlando* (1928) and so on.

Ans to Q No 4: "A Room of One's Own" is today considered a famous feminist treatise. It was to address issues related to the position of a woman in a patriarchal society, her status in the family, her sexual life and so on.

Ans to Q No 5: *Mrs Dalloway* is 'modern' because of its sense of life, which can be experienced aesthetically. It explores and asserts the relevance of certain very crucial and essential states of human sensitivity and intensity. It can be placed in an age of changed relations and fractured connections.

Ans to Q No 6: No, there is not a single story as such. Woolf did not divide the novel into chapters. This is common in other 'stream-of-consciousness' novels which deviate from the conventional norms of realism. This is a novel about 'psychological realism'. Hence, any division in terms of chapters and episodes was necessarily sought to be rejected.

Ans to Q No 7: The novel *Mrs Dalloway* is an experiment with the new technique of interior monologue. The novel plays subtly with the problem of identity which is both multiple and singular, public and private. It is a novel about the complexities in human relationship.



14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. Try to connect the various incidents in the life of Virginia Woolf and discuss how they helped in the formation of her novels?

Q 2. Do you think that a modern novel like *Mrs Dalloway* do not usually contain any clear-cut story? Discuss.

Q 3. Do you think that various incidents at home caused the mental illness of Virginia throughout her life?

Q 4. What idea do you receive regarding the characters presented through the novel?

Q 5. How are the little details of day-to-day life provided in the novel *Mrs Dalloway* ? Explain in your own words.

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UNIT 15 : VIRGINIA WOOLF: *MRS DALLOWAY* II

UNIT STRUCTURE:

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Reading the Novel

- 15.3.1 Major Themes
- 15.3.2 Major Characters
- 15.3.3 Narrative Style

15.4 Critical Reception

15.5 Let us Sum up

15.6 Further Reading

15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.8 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the various possible themes of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*
- describe the different characters and place them in the context of the novel
- explain Woolf's narrative style which refers mostly to the stream of consciousness technique
- discuss the significance of the novel in its own time as well as in the later periods.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have discussed the life and works of Virginia Woolf with particular reference to her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In this unit, you will find an opportunity to read more about the themes, characters and narrative technique used by Woolf in the novel. You will note that *Mrs Dalloway* is a novel about the flow of consciousness and awareness, of the life of

existence. Although the sense of consciousness is very strong in this book, one must also consider it to be the result of a sense of solitude, an acute sense of loneliness, an existential sense of boredom and separation and a lack of communication. Woolf clearly understood that a sense of crisis and extremity had engulf the great modern writings.

15.3 READING THE NOVEL

The following subsections will enable you to approach the novel in terms of its various aspects.

15.3.1 Major Themes

While going through the novel, you will find the following themes to be very significant in the novel.

Oppression of Patriarchy :

An underlying theme of the novel is the oppression of patriarchy which leaves not only the women but also the men victimized. Both Clarissa and Septimus are linked by their marginal status in a highly patriarchal English society. Although the thoughts of each are disjointed, they are actually associative. The only difference is that Clarissa has the ability to draw her fragments together which Septimus does not. While doing this, Woolf is actually referring to her own mental breakdown following the death of her parents, and provides her own definition of madness or trauma. In society, it is necessary for the individuals to answer for themselves and their action as responsible and stable identities. That is why perhaps, the social dimension, the 'party' bringing different identities together, gains significance at the climax of the novel.

Following the contemporary feminist debates regarding the position and the status of a woman in a patriarchal society, Woolf has enabled Clarissa to understand herself for herself, and to distinguish 'what is herself' from 'what is not herself' in a chaotic conglomeration of sense-perceptions and images. Clarissa enters

the patriarchal London world which for Woolf is a gendered male and assembles them into a concentrated single image. But most often she withdraws from the masculine world, and seeks support in her own 'attic room'- a room of one's own in which Woolf laid tremendous importance. In this 'attic room', Clarissa is resented as sexually innocent figure without any desire for Richard. However, the idea of an 'attic room' might also be read as an example of characters free from the male world and withdrawn into the female world.

Although Woolf did not consider patriarchy as the source of all evil or believe that evil was gender-related, it was that patriarchy in which one could find the source of injustice, suffering and oppression in society. Her own experience of life made her understand that it is the force of patriarchal authority, which she understood to be the root of social injustice and brutality as well as of individual or domestic unhappiness. Her aesthetic attempts as well as the content of her thought helped her to undermine patriarchal domination and subvert all forms of authoritarianism.



LET US KNOW

Virginia Woolf wrote a good deal about women's writing influencing much of modern feminist criticism. Although she never adopted a feminist stance, her continual examination of the problems women writers were facing helped her fellow writers and critics working for the empowerment of the women. She believed that women had always faced social and economic obstacles in their literary ambitions. She herself was well aware of the restricted education she received. By adopting 'Androgyny', she withdrew from the struggle between male and female sexuality. Her repeated attacks of madness and eventual suicidal attempts suggest that the struggle in her to transcend sexuality actually failed.

The Idea of Androgyny :

In her work “A Room of One's Own” Virginia Woolf refers to the notion of 'Androgyny'. Woolf thought if there are two sexes both male and female in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, or if they are required to be united to derive complete satisfaction and happiness. You should later read that the famous feminist critic Elaine Showalter further defined the idea of androgyny as 'full balance and command of an emotional range that includes male and female elements'. Woolf's strategy however was to fuse them to make room for a hybrid identity. *Mrs Dalloway* offers an interesting analysis of the androgynous nature of Clarissa by presenting a number of sexual possibilities situated in the past. Clarissa repeatedly returns to her youth at Bourton and her choice of either Sally Seton, or Peter Walsh, or Richard Dalloway. This helps to explore the possibilities of Clarissa in love with another woman (Sally), with a man (Peter Walsh) who is not 'manly', and another man who epitomises masculinity (Richard). Similarly, in Septimus' admiration of Evans can be seen as an erotic homosexual love resulting in the apparent sexual impotence with his wife Lucrezia. Woolf indirectly affirms that Clarissa has a 'manly' side just as Septimus has a 'womanly' side.

Use of 'Spatial' Aspects :

The 'spatial' character of modernist fiction is perhaps given the most detailed treatment in *Mrs Dalloway*. The inclination of modernist literature towards spatial form means that the readers are supposed to apprehend the works spatially, that means in a moment of time rather than in a sequence. Looking at London in *Mrs Dalloway* we can say that the city plays a major role in the setting of the novel. The Dalloways have a unique place in the London scene. Clarissa's promenade in the city has a profound meaning as a part of her fascination with the city, leading her to mystically communicate herself with the 'locale'-the space at a particular time in one morning. The following lines from the text makes everything clear:

"For having lived in Westminster- how many years now? over

twenty-one feels even in the, midst of the traffic, or walking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity: an indescribable pause: a suspense.. before Big Ben strikes...." However, this social quality of Clarissa's character does not fully explain the other side of the story.

Idea of the Double :

There is another darker side of Clarissa, often exemplified by her sense of boredom and a feeling of futility and occasional thoughts of suicide. This side of Clarissa 's character come to the forefront at her party when Sir William Bradshaw informs of Septimus' suicide-the death of the non-conformist Septimus who failed to secure a place for himself in the vast multitudes of London and who ended his life by jumping out of his window of his Bloomsbury apartments. Preoccupied with the thoughts of Septimus she walks to the window, she too could feel an ***'epiphany'*** on the futility of life: "Clarissa felt somehow very like him-the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it: thrown it away. The clock was striking." But she had to move back to the party as she could not but conform to the social conduct of which she was a part. Many critics even feel that Clarissa is Septimus' double. But she does not act like Septimus only because her social life does not allow her to become a non-conformist like Septimus.



LET US KNOW

Epiphany **:** The term originally denotes the festival commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi. The feast is observed on January 6th 'Twelfth Night', the Festival of the three kings. More generally the term denotes the presence of God in the world. It was however, James Joyce who gave this word a particular literary meaning in his novel *Stephen Hero* which later became his most acclaimed novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* published in 1916.

Use of Time and Space :

The fact is that retrospect and anticipation constitute the very essence of consciousness at any specific time. In other words, the relation of consciousness to time is not the one of events to time, but are independent of any chronological sequence. Moreover, the quality of an experience of any new phenomenon is conditioned by a group of similar experiences scattered through past time, the association of which with the present experience is what makes the present experience what it is. The modern writers, to avoid the clumsiness of this method, were opting out for a more fluid technique which will enable them to utilise constantly those ever resent contacts with the past constituting the very stuff of consciousness. It was the result of such a realisation that the Stream of Consciousness technique was introduced into fictions.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, if we are to judge it by its chronological time scheme, is a story of one day in the life of a middle-aged woman. But it is not exactly that. The story embraces much of Clarissa's or Mrs. Dalloway's past as well as the present making it easier for us to look at the story as more than just a day's activity. Thus, the inclusion of so much of Clarissa's past life is made possible by the way in which her ever-changing state of mind is described. The time sequence is marked by the most common devises as the striking of the clock. Fixing her character physically at a given point of time and space, Woolf is free to follow the character's 'Stream of Consciousness' up and down the line of thought. The greatness of a novel like *Mrs Dalloway* can be explained more successfully by a metaphor that its significance lies in the tributaries explored rather than in the mainstream.



LET US KNOW

You should note that in her essay entitled "Modern Fiction" (1919) Woolf decried the

'materialists' for writing on 'the unimportant things' making the transitory appear everlasting and significant. Going against the mass of facts presented by the realists, Woolf said that the interests for modernist authors 'lie very likely in the dark places of psychology'. She further added thus, "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions-trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all side they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms."

Woolf's another key essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924) read like this- 'in or about December, 1910, human nature changed'. Woolf believed that the purpose of the novel was to represent character. She further added that with the coming of the new novelists there will be revolutionary change: "The literary convention of the time is so artificial…that, naturally, the feeble are tempted to outrage, and the strong are led to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society. Signs of this are everywhere apparent. Grammar is violated, syntax disintegrated." Such ideas were to tremendously affect Woolf's writings.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Discuss the theme of patriarchal pressure explicit in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*.

Q 2: How does time function in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*?

Q 3: How did Virginia Woolf influence modern feminist writings?

15.3.2 Major Characters

Virginia Woolf realised that a psychologically accurate account of what a man/woman is at a given moment cannot be provided through the traditional methods. Subsequently, she became interested in those aspects of consciousness which cannot be viewed as a progression of individual and self-existing moments but which

are essentially dynamic rather than static in nature independent of any given time. Thus, the problem of character portrayal became very central to Stream of Consciousness fiction like *Mrs Dalloway*. The following are the most important characters in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*.

Clarissa Dalloway :

The central character in the novel is perhaps Clarissa Dalloway herself. She is 52 years of age and has been seriously weakened by influenza as the novel opens. She has been at a loss throughout her life. But she is also the hostess of an upper middle class English life, herself being the wife of an Imperial Officer Richard Dalloway. However, the affairs of the husband do not interest her. But her social life does make sense as it gives meaning to her existence. Peter Walsh, who wanted to marry her thirty years ago, reappears. In fact, Clarissa rediscovers herself and her unifying wholeness while walking through London. But her sense of wholeness is never complete as the evening party is interrupted by death. Throughout the book she is conscious of the confined spaces of her life. In her recollection of the past through her presence the moments of choosing between Peter Walsh and Richard Dalloway come to the forefront. She sleeps alone in an attic room of her house which frequently reminds her of some wholeness lost. Her relationship with Sally Saton with whom she had half fallen in love also goes unfulfilled. Clarissa does not have any alternative and she is compelled to be tied to the world of power and government, and simply remains to be the wife of Richard Dalloway. To Peter she was a snob and to Richard she was childish.

Richard Dalloway :

Richard Dalloway is the husband of Clarissa. He is an important Conservative Member of the Parliament who is always busy with public affairs and having little concern for his wife. Since the beginning of their married life, both of them are living a life of freedom and Clarissa never felt it necessary to ask her husband whether he was in a committee or conducting a meeting somewhere even if she had needed him beside her.

Peter Walsh :

Peter Walsh is another significant character of the novel. Once he was in love with Clarissa. He is coming to the party Clarissa has organised in the evening. It was by no means an accident that he had been in India for twenty years and has now arrived at London after a lapse of five years. His long absence has intensified his impressions on the people and more generally on London. For him now people look different, and unlike the pre-war London, there is a new a sense of freedom and tolerance. He feels that now, just like in India, he could fall in love with every woman in London. But, the post war London also makes Peter aware of his failure, as at the age of fifty three he has returned to London to look for a job. But although Peter Walsh was a failure he had a unique power of seeing through the shallowness and snobbery of the London upper class people. After meeting Clarissa in the morning, Peter goes to Regent's Park where he falls asleep on a bench. Waking up he remembers his unhappy days when he was hopelessly in love with Clarissa who callously rejected him.

Sir William Bradshaw :

Bradshaw is the doctor to whom Rezia brings Septimus for consulting the reasons of his eccentric and strange behaviour. Overconfident of his own vision of life, Bradshaw diagnoses Septimus as having lost the sense of 'proportion' and advises "rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books; without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stones six comes out weighing twelve." What could be funnier than this for a doctor to deny the validity of the tormented experience and to impose his own will upon those who suffer. Woolf chose the character of Bradshaw from her own experience of the doctors who had treated her during the time of her mental breakdown. The idea was perhaps to satirise those doctors she herself experienced. Bradshaw turned out to be a failure as Septimus rather than to surrender to Bradshaw "had thrown himself from a window".

Septimus :

Introduction of Septimus Warren Smith helped Woolf in creating a story of two worlds connected indirectly. Unlike Clarissa who extolled the contemporary public life of London, Septimus became the embodiment of another London wracked and devastated by the World War. This is one of the most significant aspects of the novel. Like many representative figures of the postwar generation, Septimus belongs to what we can call the 'tragic generation' which the novel wants to explore. Being a figure of fragmented consciousness in a different way from Clarissa, Septimus represents a world of violent forces and defeat.

The disturbance of Septimus's consciousness is also linked with his sexuality as he represses his desire for his officer Evans and cannot even contemplate sex with his wife who constantly dreams of having children. It is quite ironical that Septimus who is presented as a coward fearing death, takes his own life. Although he never wanted to die, suicide was the only resort for defeating the world represented by the so-called psychiatrist William Bradshaw who always proclaimed that 'health is proportion'. The world which Septimus represents also demands his death. It is a masculine culture surrounding him in war memories, doctors, capitalists and politicians. So, suffering from the ***shell-shock***, Septimus is obsessed with the thoughts of death and suicide. His Italian wife Rezia, following the doctor's advice, is constantly trying to make Septimus feel interested in the immediate surroundings and London with its variety.



LET US KNOW

***Shell-Shock* :** Shell-shock became a pertinent issue in British Psychiatry during 1920s. It is 'a condition of alternate moods of apathy and high excitement, with very quick reaction to sudden happenings and emergencies but without any capacity for thinking. It thus refers to the brutal realities of the World War I. Shell-shock, for many

physicians, meant cowardice or disobedience. And it was actually because of Shell-shock that the Freudian analysis through neurosis and the unconscious gained popularity.

Lucrezia :

Lucrezia is the Italian wife of Septimus Warren Smith. She is also referred to as Rezia in this novel. It is quite natural for Rezia to feel alienated in a strange city like London with a mentally disturbed husband. She begins comparing her Italy with London. Unlike in Italy where in the evening the streets are always crowded with people talking and merry-making, here in London, she is frequently confronted with the lonely and ordinary everyday life tortured and bulled by "this malignant torturer"- her demented husband. She is hopelessly seen trying to come to live in this awful city of London. We cannot but sympathise with her for the miseries she has undergone. She is left helpless once again by the death of her husband Septimus.

Sally Saton :

The usual image of Sally can be seen as someone sitting on the floor, smoking, saying she was descended from Marie Antoinette and so on. She happened to be so utterly crude that Clarissa's family could not accept her and thought her untidy. Sally taught Clarissa about life, sex, men, and politics, things from which she was shielded at Bourton, her home before marriage. She had spent a considerable time with Clarissa before her marriage. Clarissa's feelings for Sally were protective and pure. Sally brought excitements into Clarissa's life. In several nights, Sally dined with them. Sally went out with Clarissa for walking, stopped to pick a flower and kissed Clarissa on the lips. In another sense, Sally could make her forget the need for a man to a great extent. Sally Saton had unexpectedly married a rich man and lived in a big house. She makes her presence felt once again in the evening party of Clarissa.

Elizabeth :

Elizabeth, the seventeen year old daughter of the Dalloways, has her own way of living life. She spends much of the time with Miss Kilman. She likes freedom. Boarding a bus and taking a seat on top she was "delighted to be free". She enjoys going out to the remote parts of London and finds it surprising to see the city people preoccupied with trivial chattering, with thoughts of ships, business, law, administration and so on. She knows that her mother would not like her to walk by herself in strange parts of London, but then, at this moment, her mother seemed to Elizabeth "extremely immature, like a child, attached to dolls, to old slippers." Elizabeth's adventure throughout London is regarded as a radical step towards her maturity and that gets reflected in the way she appears at the evening party making everyone mesmerized as even her father failed to recognise her changed appearance at first.

Miss Kilman :

Miss Kilman is presented as the tutor of Elizabeth. But she is not only her teacher but also her best companion and mentor. She takes Elizabeth to shopping, to the remote places of London as Elizabeth likes to roam about. This arouses much concern in Mrs Dalloway as this has further alienated Elizabeth from the parents. Also found in her a kind of resentment of wealth and class comfort of a family like that of the Dalloways. Her religious enthusiasm serves as the vehicle for both expressing and containing her overwhelming sense of embittered self pity and resentment. Mrs Dalloway is always repelled by Miss Kilman not because of her baleful influence on Elizabeth but also because of her attitude, her gait and her dress codes. She is gracious and self-effacing with a sense that the personal is always better than the doctrinal. Miss Kilman, for Clarissa is one who 'had taken her daughter from her'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4: What kind of a character is Mrs Dalloway?

Q5: What is so specific about characterisation in Virginia Woolf?

Q 6: Explain the significance of the character of Septimus in the novel.

15.3.3 Narrative Style

You have read that Virginia Woolf made it customary to maintain diaries since 1915 which continued up to the time of her death in 1941. Actually, it was through her diaries, letters, and notebooks that she tried to explain her writing methods. Even the accounts she presents in her diaries about the composition of the novel provides a clear idea regarding the genealogy of the novel.

"Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges: Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning-fresh as if issued to children on a beach."

This is how the novel begins. This makes it clear that although Mrs Dalloway is about to go out, she is also thinking. But the style in which her thoughts are reported puts them and her at an ironic distance-"Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself", the first sentence of the novel as well as that of the authorial narrator, does not clearly explain who Mrs Dalloway is or why she needed to buy flowers. The sudden plunge of the readers into the middle of an ongoing city life typifies the presentation of the consciousness as a 'stream'. The very next sentence "For Lucy had her work cut out for her", moves the focus of the narrative into the character's mind by adopting a free indirect style, omitting the intrusive authorial voice. The exclamations like, "What a lark! What a plunge!" look more like interior monologue, but they are not the character's response to the

Westminster morning; rather Clarissa is actually remembering, how at the age of eighteen she had remembered herself as a child. Or we can look at it in a different way. The image "fresh as if issued to children on a beach", reminds her of how the metaphors of children larking in the sea would come to her mind as she 'plunged' into the fresh air of the summer morning at Burton where she is supposed to meet someone called Peter Walsh. Hence, the actual and the metaphorical, time present and time past both interact and interweave in the sentences each thought or memory insisting the next. But realistically enough, Clarissa cannot always trust her memory as she said, "'Musing among the vegetables?'- was that it? - 'I prefer men to cauliflowers'- was that it?"). This is what makes the style of the novel playful adding to its strength as a modernist novel.

In 1919, came out Virginia Woolf's essay “Modern Fiction” in which Woolf appealed her contemporary writers for a more inward kind of action, a kind of novel which should not conform to the norms of old conventions and chronologies. However, to understand the works of Woolf, we must try to conceptualise the term "Stream of Consciousness" which was originally used by the psychologist William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), to describe the chaotic, ceaseless and multileveled flow that characterises human mind. Its manifestations in the world of fictions can be perceived by the presence of interior monologues which help in capturing the exact nature of the flow. She wrote in her essay:

"If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style…Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged: but a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. It is not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumcised spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it might display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible."

This technique is made much more complex by Woolf's peculiar handling of the notion of time. It is seen that throughout the novel she contrasts public time with private time. In the external public time only a minute may have passed but in internal private time of the characters, it might have passed several minutes. Hence, Woolf's technique distinguished between temporal duration in the mind and chronological common time in the world once again asserting the significance of the individual against the social.

Her claim-"I substantiate, willfully to some extent, distrusting reality-its cheapness" clearly explains her distrust in materialism and more specifically fictional realism. And it was finally in the essay - “Mr. Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1924) where she made the proclamation that reality is not a matter of fact but an aesthetic and metaphysical question. Such an understanding of realism made it possible for her to put some newness in her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In October, 1923 she also noted, " I took a year's groping to discover what I call my tunneling process, by which I tell the past in installments, as I have need of it…". There is no denying the fact that Woolf's method of narrating through consciousness owes much to her contemporary James Joyce. But she also differs from Joyce in presenting the flow of consciousness as the author's own sense of aesthetic creation.

Use of Images and Symbols :

It has been unanimously accepted by the critics that the city or the 'locale' bears a specific significance in modernist novels. Because the identity of the city is also related to the identity of the people inhabiting that city. On the basis of this fact, the city of London plays a very significant role. Clarissa Dalloway's promenade through the London streets on a specific June morning, in a way defines her social character. The various associations and reminiscences which we find during her walk determine her status as one belonging to the English upper class of the city of London, known for its industrial growth and cultural superiority. She is actually going to buy flowers in Bond street which became the most expensive shopping centre of London at that time.

London, just like a character, looms large in the novel. The novel is set in a great imperial city which survived after the war. It was Clarissa's social London as well as the London which “swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith." London is a city with its legendary past and history. It is a city that both defeats and destroys. It is also a city of great parks, military parades, of royalty power and pride. "A splendid achievement on its own way, after all, London: the season: civilisation,' thinks Peter Walsh as he walks through it, following a girl who has caught his attention in the crowd. It is also a city of dull buildings and basement railings that swallows up people like Septimus Warren Smith. Although the two central characters Clarissa and Septimus never meet each other, the city, the streets, the ringing of the Big Ben connect them together.

In the story line of the novel the clock Big Ben is equally significant. Big Ben as a symbol of eternal time as well as of imperial power mark out the seventeen hours in which the story begins and ends. The clock in a way also links the characters in a common time. Woolf here presents instances of both exterior time and interior time-the exterior represented by the Big Ben and the interior by the consciousness of the characters as the present flows into the past. In this novel, the notion of time is superficially structured around the division of the clock. Yet, time connects the different characters by forming links across different spaces.

The aeroplane flying over the city reminds us of the recent World War as well as the modern technological growth. The car on the streets reassures the presence of the rich crowds, and the voices of authority. The World War in fact haunts the novel in different ways as Septimus imagines the world as a battle field. The other basic images and symbols include the flowers, Peter's pen-knife, the tolling of clocks, the ominous bedclothes in Clarissa's attic room and so on. But underlying all these is the strong sense of a world changed by modernity itself.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What is meant by the term 'Stream of Consciousness'?

Q 8: What does Woolf write about the flow of consciousness in her essay "Modern Fiction"?

Q 9: What role does the city of London play in the novel?

15.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION

With the publication of *Mrs Dalloway* and the other novels that followed, Woolf became the most representative woman writer of fictional modernism in the first half of the 20th century. She was a writer who could be compared with Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Andre Gide or William Faulkner and their experimental endeavours. Her contemporary friend E. M. Forster clearly summarises her fictional attempts like this: "She is always stretching out from her enchanted tree and snatching bits from the flux of daily life as they float past, and out of these bits she builds novels." By the time of the World War II, her works came to be recognised as a dominant strand in the modernist movement. However, 1940s and 1950s demanded another chronicle of historical change, and a tendency to return to social realism in contemporary novel writings sent Woolf's reputation into the sideline. There was a reaction against the entire Bloomsbury Group. To them Woolf was not only the representative writer of what they had dismissively called the 'experimental novels' which were more concerned with private affairs of the elite class, but also of the dominance of a social caste in the British literary scenario and claimed the rights of aesthetic understanding to itself.

However, the most constructive feminist attack on Virginia Woolf came in the form of Elaine Showalter's rejection of Woolf in her “Virginia Woolf and the Flight to Androgyny”. Showalter claims that Woolf's concept of androgyny in her “A Room of One's Own” was a 'myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition.' She further claimed 'Woolf's

wish for experience was really a wish to forget experience.' Replying to the charges brought by Showalter, Toril Moi seeks to rescue Woolf's status as a modern writer by showing how Woolf succeeds in producing something which we can call a 'deconstructive' form of writing. Moi writes that in her own textual practice "Woolf exposes the way in which language refuses to be pinned down to an underlying essential meaning.[For this you can refer and read Toril Moi's essay “Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf? Feminist Readings of Woolf”, in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics*.]

Later popular reception of Woolf resulted in the film version of *Mrs Dalloway* made in 1997 by Dutch feminist film director Marleen Gorris. After that, number of film versions of the novels of Woolf began to increase.



15.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the novel *Mrs Dalloway* in terms of its different aspects like themes, characters and narrative techniques. Although one cannot find any story in the conventional sense, the novel presents an extraordinary example of modern fiction by exploring and asserting the relevance of certain very crucial and essential states of human sensitivity and intensity. Besides, having some discussions of the various important themes of the novel, we have also tried to explore the various characters to know how they behave and react in the novel. You have also learnt that the novels of Virginia Woolf should be studied in the context of the 'Stream of Consciousness' which is a techniques to explain the flow of consciousness as reflected in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*.



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15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The oppression of patriarchy victimises women and men alike. Both Clarissa and Septimus are linked by their marginal status in a highly patriarchal English society. Although the thoughts of each are disjointed, their experiences are actually associative. Following the contemporary feminist debates regarding the position and the status of a woman in a patriarchal society, Woolf has enabled Clarissa to understand herself for herself, and to distinguish 'what is herself' from 'what is not herself' in a patriarchal society.

Ans to Q No 2: In *Mrs Dalloway*, if we are to judge it by its chronological time scheme, is a story of one day in the life of a middle-aged woman. But it is not exactly that. The story embraces much of Clarissa's or Mrs Dalloway's past as well as the present making it easier for us to look at the story as more than just a day's activity. Thus, the inclusion of so much of Clarissa'a past life is made possible by the way in which her ever-changing state of mind is described. The time sequence is marked by the most common devises as the striking of the clock.

Ans to Q No 3: Virginia Woolf wrote a good deal about women's writing influencing much of modern feminist criticism. Although she never adopted a feminist stance, her continual examination of the problems women writers were facing helped her fellow writers and critics working for the empowerment of the women. By adopting 'Androgyny', she withdrew from the struggle between male and female sexuality. Her

repeated attacks of madness and eventual suicidal attempts suggest that the struggle in her to transcend sexuality actually failed.

Ans to Q No 4: Mrs Dalloway or Clarissa Dalloway is the central character of the novel. She is 52 years of age and has been seriously weakened by influenza when the novel opens. She has been at a loss throughout her life. But she is also the hostess of an upper middle class English life. But her social life does make sense as it gives meaning to her existence.

Ans to Q No 5: Virginia Woolf realised that a psychologically accurate account of what a man/woman is at a given moment cannot be provided through the traditional methods. She became interested in those aspects of consciousness which cannot be viewed as a progression of individual and self-existing moments but which are essentially dynamic rather than static in nature independent of any given time.

Ans to Q No 6: Unlike Clarissa who extolled the contemporary public life of London, Septimus became the embodiment of another London wracked and devastated by the World War. Septimus belongs to what we can call the 'tragic generation'. Being a figure of fragmented consciousness in a different way from Clarissa's, Septimus represents a world of violent forces and defeat.

Ans to Q No 7: The term "Stream of Consciousness" was originally used by the psychologist William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), to describe the chaotic, ceaseless and multi-leveled flow that characterises human mind. Its manifestations in the world of fictions can be perceived by the presence of interior monologues which help in capturing the exact nature of the flow.

Ans to Q No 8: "If a writer were a free man and not a slave , if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style…Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged: but a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."

Ans to Q No 9: The city of London plays a very significant role. Clarissa Dalloway's promenade through the London Streets on a specific June morning, in a way defines her social character. She is buying flowers in Bond Street which became the most expensive shopping center of London at that time. Thus, post war London, just like a character, looms large in the novel. But, it is also a city of dull buildings and basement railings that swallows up people like Septimus Warren Smith.



15.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. How does Virginia Woolf expose the patriarchal character of the society in which she lived in terms of the various male characters in the novel?

Q 2. Do you think that a 'character' is so important in modernist fiction?

Q 3. *Mrs Dalloway* is not 'being' but 'becoming'. Comment from your reading of the novel.

Q 4. Comment on the narrative techniques used by Virginia Woolf in writing the novel.

Q 5. What, according to you, is the significance of what Woolf said in her essay "Modern Fiction"? Discuss with reference to the novel *Mrs Dalloway*.

Q 6. Why do you think that a character is so important in modernist novels?

Q 7. What are the similarities in the characters of Clarissa and Septimus?

Q 8. What ideas of narrative techniques do you find significant in *Mrs Dalloway*?

****

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