PG EG S1 01 (DSC)

TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER - I

ENGLISH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

ENGLISH

Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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DSC1: ENGLISH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

CONTENTS

			Page
Unit 1	:	**Norman Conquest and Feudalism** The Norman Conquest, Consequences of the Norman Conquest: Replacement of the English, English Emigration, The System of Government, Changes in Language and Society, Ideas of Feudalism: Feudalism and Literature, Decline of Feudalism: Black Death, Peasants' Revolt, Other Factors.	**9 - 28**
Unit 2	:	**Growth of English Towns/Urbanisation in London** Growth of English Towns, Urbanisation in London.	**29 - 38**
Unit 3	:	**Christianity, Reformation and Role of the Church** Idea of Christianity, Role of Medieval Church, The Church and Medieval Culture, Theology and Intellectual Activities.	**39 - 54**
Unit 4	:	**Renaissance Humanism** History of the Renaissance, Humanism and Renaissance Thought, The Renaissance Literature, Renaissance and the Exploration of New Worlds**.**	**55 - 69**
Unit 5	:	**Enlightenment I** Ideas of the Enlightenment, Age of Reason, Early Enlightenment Thinkers: Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Voltaire, Montesquieu, John Locke, George Berkeley, English Empiricism, Rationalism	**70 - 86**
Unit 6	:	**Enlightenment II** Aftermath of the Enlightenment, Rise of Democracy: Medieval Developments, The Magna Carta, Role of Church & the State of Learning, Democracy in the 16^{th} and 17^{th} Century, Developments from 18^{th} to 20^{th} Centuries.	**87 - 102**
Unit 7	:	**Industrialism and Its Impact** Understanding Industrialism, Industrial Revolution in England, The Rise of the Working Class, Industrial Revolution and its aftermath.	**103 - 119**
Unit 8	:	**Colonialism and Imperialism** Ideas of Colonialism and Nationalism, Trade and Conflict, Idea of the Empire: The First British Empire, The Second British Empire, Other Four Phases of the British Empire, Imperialism and Expansion.	**120 - 138**

Unit 9 : The Medieval Age **139 - 154**

The Social Context, The Intellectual Context, Major Literary Forms: Poetry, Drama, Prose, Important Writers: Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, John Gower, John Mandeville, Thomas Malory.

Unit 10 : The Renaissance **155 - 171**

The Intellectual Context, Impact of the Renaissance on English Literature, Major Literary Forms: Poetry, Prose, Drama, Reassessment of the term Renaissance in the 20th century.

Unit 11 : Restoration and After **172 - 189**

The Intellectual Context, Major Literary Forms: Poetry, Prose, Drama, Novel, Important Writers: John Dryden, William Congreve, John Bunyan, AphraBehn, Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson, John Milton.

Unit 12 : Neo-classical Age **190 - 204**

Intellectual Context, Features of the Neoclassical Age, Important Writers: John Dryden, Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, Lord Chesterfield, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Edward Gibbon

Unit 13 : The Romantic Age **205 - 221**

Intellectual Context, Major Literary Form: Poetry, Fiction, Literary Criticism, Important Writers: S.T. Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, George Byron, P. B. Shelley, John Keats, Jane Austen, Walter Scott, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb

Unit 14 : The Victorian Age **222 - 233**

Intellectual Context, Victorian Novel: Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, The Bronte Sisters, George Eliot, Victorian Poetry, Victorian Prose

Unit 15 : The Modern Age (Till WW II) **234 - 256**

Intellectual Context: From 1890-1918, & From 1918-1939, Major Literary Forms and Writers, Modern Novel: From 1890-1918 & From 1918-1939, Modern Poetry: From 1890-1918 & From 1918-1939, Modern Drama: From 1890-1918 & From 1918-1939

Unit 16 : The Modern Age (After WW II) **257 – 270**

Novels, Poetry, Drama

Reference **271 - 272**

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the first **Discipline Specific Core (DSC)** Course of the Revised and updated MA English Programme. This Course introduces the learners to English Social, Cultural and Literary history. This Course is thematically arranged into 4 Blocks under 2 Sections for the convenience of reading. Each Block contains four units. The two Sections will roughly cover the period after the Norman Conquest of 1066 until the 20th century in English Social and Cultural history. Thus, the contents of this Course will have to be understood in terms of the ideas, cultural formations and politics, as well as the literary practices, all of which shaped the large gamut of English literature.

Section A: English Social History introduces the learners to the larger social and historical issues related to the emergence of literature so that they can make connections between the works of the authors and their contexts. The Units of this Section, i.e. Unit 1-8, will thus give them an idea of the significant developments in English social and cultural history. The purpose is also to familiarise them with the conditions under which the English authors were constrained to write and publish their works. Learners are strongly advised to familiarise themselves with the significant socio-historical and cultural events as well as the concepts that became instrumental in bringing in certain marked changes in the intellectual and cultural pursuits of England.

Section B: English Literary History, in order to explore how every work has a proper historical context, seeks to discuss how writers at a given period tend to have certain similar concerns and attitudes. An awareness of the historical and social contexts of the writers tells us what we can expect to encounter in a particular literary age or period. The Units of this Section, i.e. Units 9-16 will help the learners to make a brief overview of the different periods of English literary history with references to the important authors and their works.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block 1: Medieval to Renaissance is the first Block of the course and it contains four units, i.e. Units 1-4.

Unit 1: Norman Conquest and Feudalismshall deal with the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, under William the Duke of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings, and the way this event foreshadowed significant changes in the social life, literature and language of the English people, Special mention has been made to Feudalism and its impact on early English literature.

Unit 2: Growth of English Towns and Urbanisation in London deals with the growth of English towns as well as the processes of urbanisation in the economic and cultural developments in England in the medieval age following the decline of Feudalism. This unit shall particularly help the learners to understand how such developments contributed to the emergence of literary practices during that time and in future.

Unit 3: Christianity, Reformation and Role of the Church deals with the idea of Christianity, and the role of the Medieval Church. Christianity, through the Church, became organised and marked its dominance all over Europe by the time of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. This unit intends to tell the learners about the importance of the church in the lives of the people of Medieval England as reflected in the literatures of that period.

Unit 4: Renaissance Humanism deals with the ideas of Renaissance and Humanism, which are perhaps the most important intellectual and cultural developments in the Western World that roughly dates from 1500 to 1660. The learners will read that being a trans-national phenomenon, the Renaissance profoundly affected life and thought in different parts of Europe. This unit shall also help to locate the connections between Renaissance and Humanism, which added great impetus to Renaissance scholarship.

Block 2: **Enlightenment to Imperialism**introduces the learners to concepts and areas like Enlightenment, Industrialism, Imperialism and Colonialism. After completing this Block, learners will be able to see how the Enlightenment finally led to social and economic changes like English Industrialism that further accelerated the process of English Maritime adventures finally leading to Imperialism and Colonialism. The learners are supposed to examine how such developments directly affected the emergence of literature from the 17th to the 20th century. This Block contains four units, i.e. Units 5-8.

Unit 5: Enlightenment I deals with meaning of the term Enlightenment often applied to the literary, cultural and philosophical movements that took place in Europe roughly between 1660 and 1770. However, some ideas of the Enlightenment can be traced in the time of the Renaissance. Emerging through an unprecedented engagement with the idea of 'Reason', the Enlightenment took in different areas in its intellectual ambit like art, religion, philosophy, literature, language, and political theory.

Unit 6: Enlightenment II deals with the developments following the Enlightenment with particular emphasis on the rise of modern democracy. However, the idea of modern democracy is closely linked to the idea of a nation, which shares history with colonialism. This unit shall help the learners to explain how 'modern democracy' evolved in Western European history starting from the Magna Carta, to the idea of 'modernity', in the 18th century Europe. Thus, this unit intends to help the learners to examine how changes brought mainly by the downfall of the earlier feudal order, affected English 'literary' traditions and history.

Unit 7: Industrialism and Its Impact deals with the concept of Industrialism, a phenomenon that contributed immensely to the making of the modern world from the 18th to 19th centuries. This unit shall help he learners to discuss the Industrial revolution and its inception and influence in a different perspective, which shall further help them to learn about man's march towards modernisation.

Unit 8: Colonialism and Imperialism deals withideas of Colonialism and Imperialism. The learners will learn how, gradually, colonialism started to acquire a cultural dimension because European colonial presence was justified on the ground of its 'superiority' to the native culture, and colonial administration as well as education was substituted in place of native culture in the name of development and modernisation. As they finish reading this unit, they will be adequately informed about how British Colonialism was projected as a mechanism to consolidate the foundation of human civilization in the rest of the world, which finally resulted in Imperialism.

Block 3: **Literature: Medieval to Neo classical,** will introduce the learnersto the literatures of the Medieval age, the Renaissance Period, the Restoration and the Neoclassical age. After completing this Block, learners will be able to see how the growth and development of English literature can be stated to have started with Geoffrey Chaucer, and how during the Renaissance period, English literature flourished like never before. The Renaissance period was one in which European arts like painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature reached an eminence not experienced in any age. While the literature during and following the Restoration, mirrors noticeable socio-political transition. During this period, priority was placed on the importance of 'Reason', which was considered a unique human quality that served

as a guide for man. Neoclassical Literature on the other hand, refers to the habit of imitating the great authors of antiquity (notably the poets and dramatists) as a matter of aesthetic principle; and the acceptance of the critical precepts, which emerged to guide that imitation in later times. Subsequently, due to such practice, literary genres like epic, eclogue, elegy, ode, satire, tragedy, comedy, epigram etc. of ancient times started becoming extensively popular in the Neoclassical age.This block shallcontain four units, i.e. Units 9-12.

Unit 9: The Medieval Age deals withthe literature of the Medieval Age. The Medieval Age that started roughly from 1066 (the Norman Conquest) to the end of the 14th century, produced a variety of literature based on the understanding of the concerned writers regarding their society and culture, through an acquaintance with the impact of Feudalism and the role of the Church in various aspects of the life of the people. Therefore, while studying this unit, learners should pay particular attention to the literary and artistic pursuits as well as to the important social changes at a transitional period.

Unit 10: The Renaissance deals literature produced during the Renaissance, a term signifying “rebirth”. This is a period in which European arts like painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature reached an eminence not experienced in any age. The development came late to England in the 16th century, and did not have its flowering until the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Learners will have to examine why great playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare had emerged during this period. John Milton is often described as the last great Renaissance poet. Thus, in this unit, learners will get an idea of how the Renaissance visibly influenced the intellectual and literary activities of the 16th and 17th century England.

Unit 11: Restoration and After deals withthe literary activities during the Restoration that refers to the restoration of monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England in 1660. The literature of this era mirrors noticeable socio-political transition. For example, the importance of ‘Reason’ was considered a unique human quality. The writers of this period were found observing Nature in their attempts to express their beliefs. There was a strong reaction against Puritanism and an atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness replaced the stern morality of the previous ages. Society and Politics gained an upper hand and reflected their influence in the different literary forms.

Unit 12: Neo-classical Age deals with the literature of the Neoclassic Age. Neoclassicism refers to the habit of imitating the great authors of antiquity as a matter of aesthetic principle; and the acceptance of the critical precepts, which emerged to guide that imitation in later times. Thus, the Neoclassical authors started experimenting with literary genres like epic, eclogue, elegy, ode, satire, tragedy, comedy, epigram etc. In the field of poetry, the neo-classical ideals have been best exemplified by the poetry of Dryden and Pope. However, the learners should pay attention to the fact that the changing views of the goal of literary creation based on an extensive use of individual emotions, other than some classical rules, also marks the beginning of Romanticism.

Block 4: **Literature: Romantic to Modern,** which is also the lastBlock of DSC Course 1 of the MA English Programme, shall introduce the learners to the literatures from the Romantic to the Modern age. After completing this Block, the learners will be able to conceptualise the development of English literature of the Romantic age, particularly in the hands of the poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Keats. However, in a more theoretical and intellectual context, Romanticism can be seen as a reaction to some of the Neo-classical doctrines—such as the too much dependence on classical rules and regulations in artistic creations. Because, the adherence to ideas of the ‘Sublime’ and to the role of emotion and imagination in literary creations offered an alternative means of literary creations in the Romantic period. Then, the

learners will be introduced to the different aspects of the Victorian age, which mostly reflect the impact of the Industrialism on the lives of the common people. Subsequently, social issues and themes are seen to be used abundantly by the Victorian writers. After that, the learners will be introduced to Modern Literature to discuss which this Block contains two separate units—one dealing with modern literature till the 1939 when World War II started, and the other dealing with literary activities following World War II. It is important to note that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing. This Blockcontains four units, i.e. Units 13-16.

Unit 13: The Romantic Age deals with theliterature of the Romantic Age. It was an age that witnessed great events like the Independence of the United States of America (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the Reform Bill (1832) – all of which primarily influenced the minds of men shaping the all-round spirit of the age. However, the influence of the French Revolution on the literature of the Romantic Age is quite significant. The slogan of the French Revolution – "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" came to be asserted within the English society in a manner that tremendously influenced English patriotic zeal.

Unit 14: The Victorian Age deals with the literature of the Victorian Age. This age denotes the historical era in England roughly coinciding with the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. This is an age of rapid economic and social changes that had noticeable impact on the minds of writers. Much of the literature of this period dealt with or reflected the pressing social, economic, religious and intellectual issues and problems of that era.

Unit 15: The Modern Age (Till WW II) is the first part ofour discussion on literature of the Modern age. In the Modern age, literature, arts and culture were exposed to several challenges in the wake of a large number of changes affecting every sphere of human life. The conscience of modern man was also torn between the ideas of faith and doubt, hope and despair, which had a direct impact on a host of writers who began experimenting with different forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols.

Unit 16: The Modern Age (After WW II), which is also the last unit of Course I, deals with the second part of our discussion on the literature of the modern age. In the period following World War II, there emerged a host of writers who further began experimenting with the various forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols in genres like Novels, Poetry and Drama. Moreover, this is also the period in which English translations of the works of different continental writers began to be studied like never before.

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. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the "FURTHER READING" list, which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know, the world of literature is too big and so we advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you should read the original texts of the writers as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 1: NORMAN CONQUEST AND FEUDALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 The Norman Conquest

1.4 Consequences of the Norman Conquest

1.5 What is Feudalism?

1.6 Decline of Feudalism

1.7 Let Us Sum Up

1.8 Further Reading

1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

1.10 Possible Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

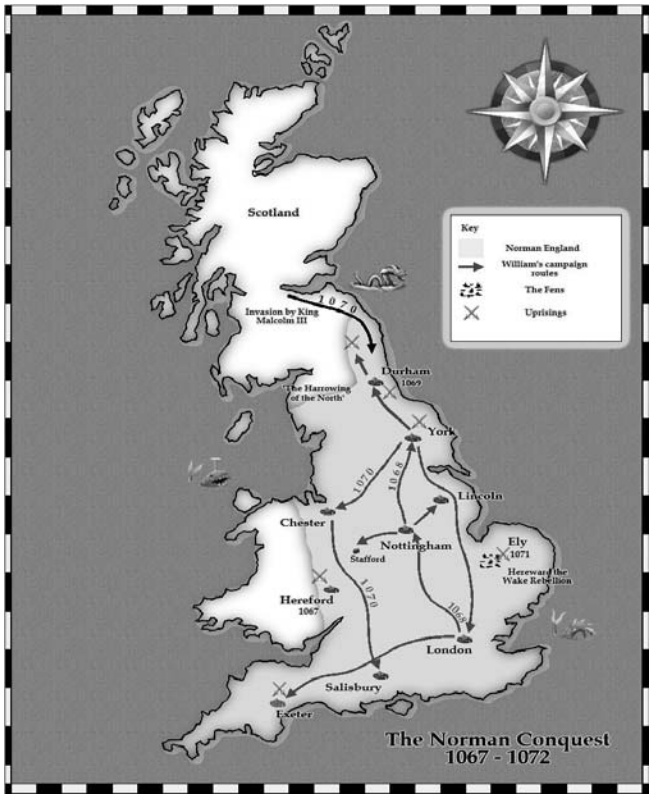
- have some ideas on the Norman Conquest of England
- explain the consequences of the Norman Conquest on the English life and society of the Medieval times
- gain some ideas on Feudalism that refers to a particular social structure in medieval England
- tell how Feudalism had taken a declining trend
- discuss the impact of Feudalism on literature.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this course, and it will familiarise you with some of the important aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Medieval England. In this unit, you will also get to read about the **Norman Conquest of England in 1066,** under William the Duke of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings that foreshadowed not only a change of dynasty, but also a revolution in social life, literature and language of the English people. William's victory led to the fall of the Anglo-Saxon nobility and the

establishment of Feudalism in England of the Norman type. One significant aspect of this conquest is that the Normans brought to England the richness of the French language and literature, which the English absorbed so beautifully. Although, following the Battle of Hastings, French became the language of the upper classes, of courts as well as of schools; the common people adhered to English speech so persistently that finally English absorbed a whole range of French words and became the language of the land. In this unit, an attempt is made to describe the great changes in the life and society of the English people of the Medieval England following the Norman Conquest with special reference made to Feudalism. However, for our present purpose in this unit, we shall mostly stick to our discussion of The Norman Conquest and Feudalism, and their impact on English literature.

1.3 THE NORMAN CONQUEST



Source: http://www.timeref.com/episodes/norman_conquest.htm

The Norman conquest of England commonly refers to the 11th century invasion and occupation of England by a Norman army led by Duke William II of Normandy, who later became popular as the William the Conqueror. William was previously having a familial relationship with the childless Anglo Saxon King Edward or 'Edward the Confessor' and was dreaming to ruling England. However, when he died in January 1066, the succession of his brother-in-law Harold Godwinson might have encouraged William to invade England. Harold's army was defeated by that of William on 14th October in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings. Following this win, the lands of the resisting English elite were confiscated. Some even fled into exile. To control his new kingdom, William granted lands to his followers and built castles commanding military strong points throughout the land. Some of the important effects of the conquest included the establishment of the court and government, the introduction of Norman French as the language of the elites, and changes in the composition of the upper classes and so on. Subsequent changes affected the agricultural classes and village life, while the major change being the formal elimination of bonded slavery. There was little alteration in the structure of government, as the new Norman Government system took over many of the forms of Anglo-Saxon government. The following is a brief description of who the Normans were, what they did and how exactly the Norman Conquest took place.

In around 911, France was ruled by King Charles who as part of the treaty called "Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte" allowed a group of Vikings under the leadership of Rollo to settle in Normandy. In exchange for the land, the Norsemen under Rollo were expected to provide protection along the coast against other Viking invaders. Their settlement proved successful, and they came to be known as the "Northmen" from which the term "Normandy" and "Normans" are derived. The Normans quickly adopted the indigenous culture, renounced Paganism and converted to Christianity. They adopted the language of the land, and also added features from their own Norse language into that.

In 1002, King Alfred II of England married Emma, the sister of Richard II, Duke of Normandy. Their son Edward succeeded to the English throne

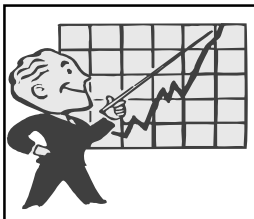
in 1042. This was the beginning of a powerful Norman interest in English politics, as Edward greatly depended on the Normans, brought Norman courtiers, soldiers, and clerics; appointed them to positions of power, particularly in the Church. But, Edward was childless and was often embroiled in conflict with the formidable Harold Godwinson, the Earl of Wessex over the throne of England. When Edward died at the beginning of 1066, the lack of a clear heir led to a disputed succession in which several contenders laying claim over the English throne. Edward's immediate successor was Harold Godwinson, the richest and most powerful of the English aristocrats. However, he was immediately challenged by two powerful neighbouring rulers. One of them was the Duke William who claimed that he had been promised the throne by King Edward and that Harold had sworn agreement to this; the other being King Harald III of Norway. King Herald's claim to the throne was based on an agreement between his predecessor Magnus I of Norway and an early English king, Harthacnut, whereby if either died without heir, the other would inherit both England and Norway. Both William and Harald finally set about assembling troops and ships to invade England.

King Harald of Norway invaded Northern England, leading a fleet of more than 300 ships carrying perhaps 15,000 men. Harald's army was further augmented by the forces of Tostig, the brother-in-law of Harold, who supported the Norwegian king's bid for the throne. In the Battle of Fulford, the Norwegians defeated a northern English army under Edwin and Morcar. The result was that their forces were devastated and unable to participate in the rest of the campaigns of 1066, although the two earls survived the battle. Harald moved on to York, which surrendered to him. King Harold Godwinson probably learned of the Norwegian invasion in mid-September and rushed north, gathering forces as he went. The English then marched onto the invaders and took them by surprise, defeating them in the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Both Harald of Norway and Tostig were killed. But, the English victory too was costly.

Meanwhile, William too assembled a large invasion fleet and an army gathered from Normandy and all over France. His army assembled

during the summer while an invasion fleet in Normandy was constructed. The Normans crossed to England a few days after Harold's victory over the Norwegians at Stamford Bridge on 25 September, following the dispersal of Harold's naval force. They landed in Sussex on 28 September and erected a wooden castle at Hastings from which they raided the surrounding area. This ensured supplies for the army, and as Harold and his family held many of the lands in the area, it weakened William's opponent and made him more likely to attack to put an end to the raiding. Harold, after defeating his brother Tostig and Harald in the north, marched the rest of his army south to deal with the threatened Norman invasion.

The battle between Harold and William began on 14th October 1066. William had both cavalry and infantry, including many archers, while Harold had only foot soldiers and few archers. Although at first the English soldiers succeed in defending, the Norman cavalry soon attacked and killed the pursuing troops. The most decisive event was the death of Harold, which finally inaugurated the Norman rule on the English soil.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the most noticeable effects of the Norman Conquest?

Q 2: Who were the Normans?

Q 3: Who was William the Conqueror? How did he invade England?

1.4 CONSEQUENCES OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The debate over the consequence of the Norman Conquest depends on how changes after 1066 are to be measured. Historians often tend to state that Anglo Saxon England was already evolving before the Norman invasion, with the introduction of Feudalism; castles or other changes in society, then the Conquest, did not represent a radical reform in the English soil. But, the changes were dramatic if measured by the elimination of the English nobility or the abolition of Old English as a literary language. Thus, the Normans seen either as the persecutors of the English or as the rescuers

of the country from a decadent Anglo-Saxon nobility. The following are some of the important consequences of the Norman Conquest.

Replacement of the English:

A direct consequence of the invasion was the almost total elimination of the old English aristocracy and the loss of English control over the Catholic Church in England. William systematically dispossessed the English landowners and conferred their property on his continental followers. ***The Domesday Book*** meticulously documents the impact of this colossal programme of expropriation, revealing that by 1086 only about 5 per cent of land in England was left in the English hands. Natives were also removed from high governmental and ecclesiastical office. After 1075, the Normans held all earldoms, and the Englishmen were only occasionally appointed as sheriffs. Likewise, in the Church, senior English office-holders were either expelled from their positions or kept in place for their lifetimes and replaced by foreigners when they died.

English Emigration:

Following the Conquest, many Anglo-Saxons, including groups of nobles, fled the country for Scotland, Ireland, or Scandinavia. Members of King Harold Godwinson's family sought refuge in Ireland and became involved with unsuccessful invasions of England. The largest single exodus occurred in the 1070s, when a group of Anglo-Saxons in a fleet of 235 ships sailed for the Byzantine Empire, which became a popular destination for many English nobles and soldiers, as the Byzantines were in need of mercenaries. Some of the English migrants settled in Byzantine frontier regions on the Black Sea coast, and established towns with names such as New London and New York.

The System of Government:

Before the Normans arrived, England was divided into administrative units called shires, with subdivisions; the royal court was the centre of government, and a justice system based on local and regional tribunals existed to secure the rights of free men. Officials known as reeves or sheriffs ran shires. Most medieval governments were always on the move, holding court wherever the weather and food or other matters were best at the

moment; England had a permanent treasury at Winchester before William's conquest. One major reason for the strength of the English monarchy was the wealth of the kingdom, built on the English system of taxation that included a land tax, or the gold. English coinage was also superior to most of the other currency in use in North Western Europe, and the ability to mint coins was a royal monopoly. The English kings had also developed the system of issuing writs to their officials, in addition to the normal medieval practice of issuing charters.



Writs were either instructions to an official or group of officials, or notifications of royal actions such as appointments to office or a grant of some sort.

This sophisticated medieval form of government was handed over to the Normans and was the foundation of further developments. By the end of William's reign, most of the officials of Government and the royal household were Normans. The language of official documents also changed from Old English to Latin. The forest laws were introduced, leading to the setting aside of large sections of England as the Royal Forests. The Domesday survey was an administrative catalogue of the landholdings of the kingdom, and was unique to medieval Europe. It is important to note that in the Feudal system, the central authority was the King. But, at the same time, Feudalism provided the local lords with a sense of independence and responsibility. Although feudalism in England was primarily based on the question of economic power, William the Conqueror succeeded in bringing political stability all over the country. Because, the medieval period in Europe, including England, was dominated by regular conflicts between the different warring groups. The Norman King asserted himself as the controller of the nation's wealth, distributed it among the nobles, and made them answerable to the King. This had been an effective strategy in avoiding any threat of revolt against a new administration like his.

Language:

One of the most obvious consequences of the conquest was the introduction of Anglo Norman—a Northern dialect of Old French, as the language of the ruling classes in England that replaced Old English. French words entered the English language, and the names common in France replaced Anglo Saxon names. Male names such as William, Robert, and Richardson soon became common.

Immigration and Intermarriage:

An estimated 8000 Normans and other continentals settled in England because of the conquest, although the exact figures cannot be established. Some of these new residents intermarried with the native English women. However, most Normans continued to contract marriages with other Normans or other continental families rather than with the English. Within a century of the invasion, intermarriage between the native English and the Norman immigrants had become common.

Change in Society:

The major change that occurred following the Norman Conquest was the elimination of slavery in England which almost disappeared by the middle of the 12th century. There were about 28,000 slaves listed in *The Domesday Book* in 1086, fewer than had been enumerated for 1066. The main reasons for the decline in slaveholding appear to have been the disapproval of the Church and the cost of supporting slaves, who unlike the serfs, had to be maintained entirely by their owners. Many of the 'free' peasants of Anglo-Saxon society appear to have lost status and become indistinguishable from the non-free serfs. Whether this change was due entirely to the conquest is unclear, but the invasion and its after-effects probably accelerated a process already under way.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: How did the Norman Conquest 'replace' the English?

Q 5: Who were the people in New London?

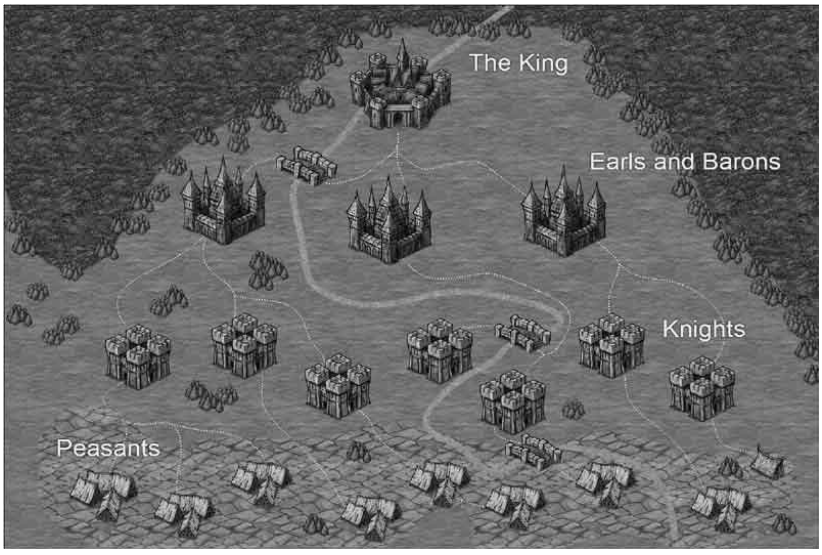
Q 6: How was the system of Government in England before and after the Conquest?

Q 7: Why did the custom of slave holding decline due to the Conquest?

1.5 WHAT IS FEUDALISM?

Feudalism has its origin in the Latin word 'feodum' meaning simply an 'Estate in land'. It is described as a political and economic system in

Europe from the 9th to about the 15th century, based on the holding of land in *fief* or *fee* and the resulting relation of lord to vassal characterised by homage, legal and military service of tenants, and forfeiture. It also meant a contract where two parties exchanged service for some form of material value. This material value could be land, or revenue collected in various ways through taxation, or an annual amount given in return for service rendered. However, Feudalism does not connote a single way of perceiving a definite structure of a society, but suggests a variety of social, political, cultural, and economic structures at work. During the early middle Ages, the tribes, which invaded the Roman Empire, seized a large part of its territory. Though, in the beginning, land was a common property, gradually the tribal chieftains acquired these properties and gave birth to a monarchical form of government. Large part of the land also went to the hands of the church, which became staunch supporters of monarchy. The King distributed the land among the retinue only on the ground that they would render military services to the King. Individual serfs, who became dependent on their new masters, cultivated the land. The land held on these conditions were called 'feuds' and their owners were called 'feudal', hence the name 'Feudalism'.



Source: http://www.timeref.com/life/socialrank.htm

Therefore, the feudal society was strictly divided into classes, i.e. nobility, clergy and peasantry. The King was the absolute 'owner' of land. Immediately below him were the vassals—nobles, knights and other tenants, a hierarchy of nobles, who held land directly from the king and were called the tenants-in-chief. Thus, the most important nobles used to hold land directly from the king, and the lesser lords from the vassals down to the seigneur who held a single manor. The Peasants or the Serfs were placed in the lowest rank in the feudal pyramid. They worked for the seigneur, who permitted them to use his land in return of which they had to secure his protection and provide necessary help on demand. Feudalism, thus, had brought a hierarchical order into existence in society.

Feudalism and feudal practice did not extend uniformly throughout Europe. Northern France and the Low Countries were the most thoroughly feudalised areas. Following the Norman Conquest in 1066, William's strategic devise to survey the land of England in the form of *Domesday Book* came handy to give him full details of the land, the people and the amount of taxes and dues to be paid to the Normans. William claimed all the land in England and divided the land between him (about 20%), the church (about 25%) and the remainder was given to Norman soldiers and nobles (barons). William's adoption of the feudal structure for the English society was meant to dissolve the potential rivalries among his own lords. The feudal structure rendered him a viable measure to make strategic deals with his compatriots through land resources that pacified the lords and gave him the power to distribute. Initially, the nobles' feudal relation with the king was based on military function. Under the Feudal system, the vassals who were awarded land swore an 'Oath of Fealty' to their lord, and provided fully equipped soldiers under the Feudal Levy. You should note that many of the nobles who came with William from Normandy were fully conversant with the functioning of the feudal system, as Feudalism was a flourishing social and political system in Normandy. Thus, you might very well understand that the people, who introduced the feudal system in England, were well aware of its functioning. The only difference was that in England they had to deal with a new people and culture.



LET US KNOW

Domes Day Book:

The Domes day Book is the name of the primary record of the English property conducted during William's reign in 1086. William commissioned surveys with seven panels of commissioners functioning in different counties to gather information about the estates of the nobility and property, which technically belonged to the king. The commissioners finally compiled and submitted the accounts to the king. The summary of these accounts, compiled by the royal clerks as a book of records, is known as the *Domesday Book*.

The Medieval Church also played prominent role in shaping the feudal structure. The church hierarchy paralleled the feudal hierarchy. The church owned much land, held by monasteries, church dignitaries and by the church themselves. Most of the land that was given by nobles as a bequest or gift carried feudal benefits. The English bishops and abbots, who possessed landed property, were allocated free knight service allowance for their assets. Thus, William involved all sections of society from whom he could have potential resistance towards his kingship. William and his lords felt the importance of securing the support of the church to gain the confidence and allegiance of the people. Hence, a huge portion of the land was given to the church as gifts. Though, as an institution, the church was free from the control of the monarchy, the officials of the clergy was connected to the King in the same way, as the vassals were if he had fief under him. This was extremely beneficial for the church also to grow, gain and have control over land property. In this way, King William very strategically devised the English version of Feudalism. The monarchical system for the next four centuries after the Norman Conquest was more or less based on Feudalism.

The feudal system in England, although had an underlying political motive, rendered heavy influence on the life and society of the English people. The first impact was that it brought a discernible order to a chaotic society. The feudal structure was such that all the stakeholders of the 'feudal-pyramid' like the serfs, villeins, vassals and their lords were contracted to

one another. The contract was based on the notion of return for the service rendered. A close relationship and bonding developed between them although this was not there in the original design. This bonding further helped the king to centrally control the land at a time when the administration was mostly controlled by independent lords. Most of the lords were extremely powerful, yet they held their allegiance to the king. Thus, you can understand that King William's Feudal system provided a feeling of independence to the nobles, while also maintaining the supremacy of the monarch.

Feudalism and Literature

The Feudal system had considerable impact on the literature of the time. It encouraged courtly writing that favoured the king and the feudal lords, which were reflected in many of the verses of the era. The Medieval romances idealise the hero-knight and his noble deeds. Medieval romances typically recount the marvellous adventures of a chivalrous, heroic knight often of super-human ability, who abides by the strict codes of honour and demeanour, embarks upon a quest and defeats monsters, thereby winning the favour of a woman. As you may note that, an important element of the medieval romance is the knight's love for his woman. Thus, the Medieval romances focus not on love and sentiment (as the term "romance" implies today), but on chivalry and adventure. Such literary endeavour valorised the feudal pyramid where the lord or knight always had a privileged status compared to that of the common masses.

You have read that the church too gained a respectable position in the feudal system. Therefore, devotional writing under the patronage of various religious groups also developed during this era. Thus, the literature of medieval England was occupied by both a religious concern and the need to deal with the contemporary developments. The religious lyrics, allegories with Christian undertones were written and made popular. The religious lyric was the commonest of all types of religious poems, which gained popularity in an age where clerics were in charge of preservation of the records. The Medieval religious lyric ranges from moral to the devotional and even mystical. However, the most celebrated among them were the ones dedicated to Virgin Mary. The other type of poetry was mainly allegorical.

Allegorical interpretations of parts of the Scripture were always integral to the Christian Biblical Commentaries. Gradually, Christianity also encouraged contemporary writers to objectify their mental and spiritual struggles by personifying their desires and aims, the appetites and qualities.

However, encouraged by the development of towns and a change in life style a third kind of writing also developed. This kind of writing often called 'The fabliau' that developed subsequently, protested against the nobles, and greedy tax collecting rulers. 'The fabliau' that came from France became popular side by side with the romances. It is associated with the new middle class who slowly grew in importance as the feudal system took a declining trend. The newly emerged town folk sponsored this kind of humorous and satirical verses that were the antitype of the idealising vision of courtly knight or pious churchmen. The best example of a writer's response to feudalism is evident in the writings of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. His preference for the London dialect of English rather than Norman-French language is to be seen as a political act challenging Norman predominance. Many of the tales in *The Canterbury Tales* demonstrate Chaucer's recognition of the inherent social structuring that characterised the English Middle Ages. In this long poem, Chaucer makes use of this verse form in the stories of the Miller, Reeve, Merchant and the Shipman—classes of people that emerged. Several variations of this genre emerged in the Medieval England that dealt with indecent stories of town life, satirical account of contemporary life, and moralistically inclined exempla. The social structure that can be seen in "The Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales,* exemplifies the influences of religion and social hierarchy on society. However, you will note that Chaucer was writing at a time when feudalism was declining.

The feudal experience was not just evident in the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Langland but also in works such as John Mandeville's *Travels*. Mandeville referred to faraway lands, which had societies very different from the feudalised structure that the English people were familiar with. By offering such an account of cultural difference, Mandeville opened up a new world before the English people.



LET US KNOW

1. You should note that Feudalism did not occur in England suddenly. What is known as feudalism in England was largely influenced by similar social structures already a part of medieval life in different parts of Europe. Feudalism was a phenomenon that affected the life, society and culture in different parts of Europe, and its impact can be seen in various developments in arts and culture both inside and outside of England.

2. You will find that most of the literary compositions during the early years of the Norman reign are marked by imitations of models available in French or by the attempts to come to terms with the growing impact of Christianity. Therefore, one can find many versions of similar narratives in the Middle English period. One of the examples is Reynard the Fox, which appears in Chaucer's "The Nun Priest's Tale". Such examples were experimented across the Continent, including England.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What do you mean by the term Feudalism?

Q 9: In what ways, did William tackle the rivalry among his own Lords?

Q 10: How did William maintain his good relationship with the Church?

Q 11: What was the impact of Feudalism on the social structure of England?

Q 12: Mention the types of Medieval literature that developed under the feudal system?

1.6 DECLINE OF FEUDALISM

The Medieval feudal system worked well for four centuries when finally it started to take a declining trend. The decline of Feudalism occurred due to a number of events and change that took place during the Medieval era as well as in the wake of the Renaissance. As you know, land was the

main source of economy and it was dependent on the peasant who worked on the land. However, gradually England started to move from land-based economy to a money-based economy. This transformation came due to the new trade options that became available. The 'Crusades' and travel during the Middle Age opened new avenues for trade and commerce in England. With the development of new trades, there could be found a mushroom growth of towns. The Peasants started moving from the country to the towns, and eventually were allowed to get their freedom from bondage. You might understand that Feudalism was rooted in 'natural economy', which was gradually thwarted by the growth of trade and financial dealings. These dealings caused labour services to be commuted to money rent. The same labour services encouraged commodity production for a wide market. Thus, there appeared a gradual shift from 'natural economy' to 'money economy'.

Black Death:

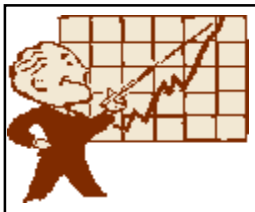
One of the main factors of the decline of Feudalism was 'Black Death', a bubonic plague that occurred in the middle of the 14th century at around 1348. The immediate consequence was depopulation. It reduced the population of England by one third. Labour became a valuable commodity. Because of 'Black Death' there was a change in the demographic pattern as well. The people had to leave their native villages or towns, as they were the worst affected areas. As the agricultural products were badly affected due to paucity of labourers, the market value increased manifold. They started demanding more wages. On the other hand, the villeins tried to set themselves free from the clutches of the feudal system. Villages were deserted and there was no one to work on the fields. Hence, the agricultural land turned to pasture lands, and the interest of the landowners too changed. They started using their land for sheep pasturing which gave them a boost to opt for trade of woollen materials. As a result, cloth and woollen industries flourished. But, in the process, the feudal structure got affected immensely. As peasants moved to look for better job opportunities, there developed the urban centres equipped with new economic possibilities. All these finally led to a loosening of the grip of the feudal structure.

Peasants' Revolt:

The other main factor was the emergence of the 'Peasants' Revolt' of 1381. The Peasants realised their worth and demanded changes. As there was a dearth of peasants, the landowners had to take resort to hired labourers. As the hired labourers were at a demanding position, there was a big hike in the wages. The landowners felt a threat, as they could not cope with this situation. Therefore, they sought the help of the Parliament to solve this crisis. As a result, the 'Statute of Labourers' was passed in 1351, which introduced oppressive measures to control the labourers. Many taxes were levied on the labourers and their condition worsened. As a reaction to this, 'Peasants' Revolt' for the abolition of the villeinage system started. The revolt had a far-reaching effect as the peasants became aware of their own worth and position and it was difficult for the landlords to re-install them in the folds of the feudal structure.

Other Factors:

Another factor for the decline of Feudalism was that the rich nobles were allowed to pay for soldiers rather than to fight themselves. This brought immense change as mercenaries were hired from all over Europe. These mercenaries had little loyalty, except to money, and these paid army men were feared throughout Europe. This threat of the mercenaries led to deploy professional, trained soldiers-the Standing Armies, and finally, it brought a decline to the feudal order. Again gradually, the Feudal Levy was getting unpopular, and as time went by, the nobles preferred to pay the king rather than to fight and raise troops. Armed men were paid a wage and Medieval warfare was financed by taxes and loans. Since the allegiance of the nobles to the king gradually waned off, and as they denied military service to the king, it affected the whole feudal structure. Land was rented and the rights of the lords over their labour also decreased. After the 'Black Death' and 'Peasants' Revolt', the nobles became weaker which made the king to reclaim their lands and power. You should note that in the process, a centralised government was established and this had resulted in weakening the feudal form of governance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: State some of the main reasons for the decline of Feudalism. (50 words)

Q 14: How were 'Black Death' and 'Peasants' Revolt' responsible for the decline of Feudalism? (100 words)



1.7 LET US SUM UP

By now, you must have had a good idea about the Medieval society of England and how a marked change emerged following the William the Conqueror's invasion of England. But, the most significant aspect of the Medieval English society was the emergence of the feudal system into the English society. You have learnt that, because of Feudalism a hierarchical system came up where all the land was owned by the king. You must be aware that life lived under Feudalism demanded that everyone owed allegiance to the king and their immediate superior. However, gradually, Feudalism took a declining trend as the land economy was replaced by money economy. Moreover, the Black Death and the subsequent Peasants' Revolt had adverse affect on Feudalism. Further, we learnt about the growth of London as the significant urban centre of Medieval England. You will be able to have more ideas about social and cultural life of Medieval London when you will read the unit dealing with Medieval Literature in Block III of this course in the light of what we have learnt from this unit.



1.8 FURTHER READING

Brown, Peter. (ed). (2007). *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture. 1350–1500.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Choudhury, Bibhash. (2005). *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary.* New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Sanders, Andrew. (2000). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scanlon, Larry. (ed). (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100–1500.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trevelyan, G. M. (1994). English *Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries.* Hyderabad, Orient Longman.



1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The establishment of court government… …introduction of Norman French as the language of the elites… …changes in agricultural class set-up and village life… …formal elimination of bonded slavery etc.

Ans to Q 2: King Charles of France in around 911, allowed a group of Vikings under the leadership of Rollo to settle in Normandy… …in exchange for the land, these people were expected to provide protection along the coast against other Viking invaders… … they became known as the "Northmen" from which the term Normans are derived.

Ans to Q 3: William the Conqueror was actually the Duke William who claimed that he had been promised the throne by King Edward as he was childless… …but King Harald of Norway invaded Northern England as part of his claim over the English throne… …both met with a battle on 14th October 1066… …the defeat of Harald finally inaugurated the Norman rule on the English soil.

Ans to Q 4: William dispossessed the English landowners and conferred their property on his followers… …Natives were removed from high governmental and ecclesiastical office… …senior English office-holders in the Church were either expelled from their positions.

Ans to Q 5: Following the Conquest, many Anglo-Saxons fled to other countries… …in the 1070s, a very large group of Anglo-Saxons sailed for the Byzantine Empire… …those English migrants who settled in Byzantine frontier regions on the Black Sea coast, came to be known as the New Londoners.

Ans to Q 6: Before the Conquest, England was divided into administrative units called shires and the royal court was the centre of government… …by the end of William's reign, most of the officials of Government and the royal household were Normans… …the official language also changed from Old English to Latin.

Ans to Q 7: As mentioned in *Domesday Book,* there were about 28,000 slaves… …but slave trade declined due to the disapproval of the Church and the cost of supporting slave.

Ans to Q 8: A political and economic system in Europe from the 9th to about the 15th century… … mainly based on the holding of land in *fief… …*also based on the resulting relation of lords and vassals characterised by homage, legal and military service of tenants, and forfeiture… … The king is the absolute owner of land… Nobles, Knights, Tenants held land from the king.

Ans to Q 9: William's feudal structure enabled him to make strategic deals with his compatriots through land resources that pacified the lords and gave him the power to distribute… …the nobles' feudal relation with the king was based on military function… … the vassals had to swear an 'Oath of Fealty' to their lord to avoid any sort of feuds or rivalry.

Ans to Q 10: The church hierarchy paralleled the feudal hierarchy… …The church owned much land, held by monasteries, church dignitaries and by the church themselves… …William gave a huge portion of the land to the church as gifts, maintained good relationship and avoided any potential resistance towards his kingship.

Ans to Q 11: Feudalism brought a discernible order to a chaotic society… … the 'feudal-pyramid' was based on the notion of return for the service rendered… …A close relationship and bonding, previously unavailable, developed among them which helped the king to centrally control the land… …Feudalism provided a feeling of independence to the nobles, while also maintaining the supremacy of the monarch.

Ans to Q 12: Medieval romances idealising the Knights and Barons… …courtly writings favouring the king and the feudal lords… …devotional writing in the form of religious lyrics and allegories under the patronage

of the church… …fabliau written against the nobles, greedy tax collecting rulers etc.

Ans to Q 13: A shift from 'land-based' economy to 'money economy'… …the Crusades and travels during the Middle Ages… …the growth of towns… …peasants migrating from countries to towns… …the consequent scarcity of man power… …The Black Death… …The Peasants' Revolt.

Ans to Q 14: Because of Black Death English country sides were depopulated… …changes occurred in demographic patterns… …peasants moved to look for better earning opportunities… …there was a change in the social structure… …peasants revolted realising their worth and demanded change against unwanted taxes.

1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: How did the Norman Conquest take place? What was the effect of the Norman Conquest on the life and society of Medieval England?

Q 2: Trace the consequences of the Norman Conquest in light of the social and political changes started by William.

Q 3: Why is feudalism also considered a system determined by relationships of power? In what ways, did King William devise the English version of Feudalism?

Q 4: Why did feudalism succeed as an economic and social structure in medieval English society?

Q 5: What do you understand by the term Feudalism? Describe the feudal system in England during the medieval period.

Q 6: Discuss the causes of the decline of Feudalism.

Q 7: Trace the development of literature under the feudal set up in England.

Q 8: How did feudalism and religion dominate literary activities of that time?

Q 9: How did the feudal system contribute to the maintenance of balance in medieval English society? In what ways, was the King the absolute ruler of the land?

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UNIT 2: GROWTH OF ENGLISH TOWNS/ URBANISATION IN LONDON

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Growth of English Towns

2.4 Urbanisation in London

2.5 Let us Sum up

2.6 Further Reading

2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

2.8 Possible Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the nature of an English town in the early stages of its development.
- explain the reasons behind the growth of the English towns
- have some ideas on the processes of urbanisation in London
- describe how an urbanised London brought in noticeable changes in socio-cultural parameters of the society

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the second unit of this Block. We hope that from this unit, which should be read along with previous unit on Feudalism, you will be able to understand the significance of the growth of English towns as well as the processes of urbanisation in the economic and cultural developments in England in the medieval age. You will find that such developments were gradually contributing to the emergence of literary practices during that time and in future.

2.3 GROWTH OF ENGLISH TOWNS

The English society of the Medieval era was mainly agrarian. Hence, the English townsmen were still rural communities. However, during the middle Ages, a new class called-the middle class emerged. Following the Norman Conquest, there could be seen a surge of towns as the new King encouraged an urbanised life style. Besides, with the establishment of monarchy, a stable condition prevailed which helped the rise of English towns. The towns in turn helped to create condition that is even more peaceful in the social set up with far-reaching effects. There was a commercial hub at the centre of the town, which was usually a market place, and where common people could make economic and political transaction. Towns were built on trade-transactions, and the elites of the towns were the usually the merchants. A successful town attracted many merchants who dominated the commercial activities in the towns. They even influenced the popular and administrative opinions. You will be surprised to know that a lord owned many towns, and he ensured that his town was popular among the merchants as they were the ones who used to pay taxes. The increased order would encourage more towns, which would generate more taxes for the king, and upper nobles, who could impose even more law and order. The merchant guilds were responsible for the trade and commerce of a town. However, these merchant guilds faced stiff competition from the craft guilds. As the towns generated taxes in the form of money, a new and more fluid kind of wealth, vastly superior to land, came into being. All these led to two things: the rise of a class of townsmen and a money-based economy, both of which would indirectly help lead to the rise of kings.

From the discussion done above, it must be clear to you that medieval towns developed around areas where people could easily come and meet, such as crossroads or riverbanks. Thus, towns sprang up along the sides of the roads on the trading routes. These towns needed water, and hence, the towns grew near the rivers as they provided them water for drinking, washing and to dispose of all the sewage. Village people used to come to the towns for trade, and hence the people who were in charge of a

town had to ensure safety to all those people who came to their towns. Many towns had large fences built around them, and usually the gates were locked at night. Inside the walls, there were many narrow zigzag roads and horse drawn carts loaded with goods to trade. There were small shops alongside the narrow roads. In the early days, the towns used to be less congested as there could be seen more of groupings of traders, each with a permanent shop or traders who came together to protect themselves from the outside attackers. Inns for the travellers and stables for the horses were also set up. Although initially, the towns used to be small, with more and more people thronging the towns, they grew bigger in size; gradually they began to stink with the garbage and sewage. Much of the garbage was strewn in the streets until it got rotten. People got sick every now and then, which had finally culminated into the 'Black Death'.

An important aspect of the medieval towns was the boroughs (administrative divisions of a large city), which were sites where burgage tenures (Tenure by which houses or lands were held of the king or lord of a borough or city, at a certain yearly rent, or by services relating to trade or handicraft) determined the holding of lands. This land holding was free as it involved a fixed money rent and the tenants had the right to deal with it in the way that suited them best. This transactional system was conducive for the development of trade and commerce. You must know that all the newly emerged towns were not equally advanced in its trade and commerce as well. Towns like Birmingham were hardly larger than a village, though it was important for its cloth industry, tanned leather, and fish trade. Thus, around seven hundred towns flourished during 14th century. On the other hand, urbanisation in England can be traced to centuries prior to Medieval period, though the emergence of the mercantile class was significant during the Medieval era for the growth of towns. Towns gained prominence and its widespread growth was natural fallout of the changes that occurred during that time. Towards the later part of the middle Ages, there emerged different types of towns based on the extent, population, trade and cultural prominence. At the top of the hierarchy was London town, which was followed by towns like Bristol, York, Norwich, Exeter and Shrewsbury.

After conquering England in the battle of Hastings, William and his army turned to London. However, they could not cross the London Bridge at Southwark. William's army made a clockwise march around London and waited at Berkhamsted for the opportunity to penetrate. However, realising that a resistance would be futile, a delegation from London arrived to surrender the city and recognised William as the King. William soon granted a charter for London, which upheld previous Saxon rights, privileges and laws. Thus, London gained a special place in the history of England. It was also one of the prominent cities of Medieval Europe, and was regarded as a hub for trade and commerce. London exhibits the rapid expansion of the towns that the King William proposed after the Norman Conquest. William was crowned King at Westminster Abbey. Then he brought unprecedented development to London by erecting new constructions. The most remarkable construction was the castle built in the Southeast which was later transformed to 'The Tower of London'. This 'Tower of London' served as the residence of the king. The importance of the Tower lies in the fact that it was a multipurpose building housing the royal mint, treasury and even a zoo in its early stage.

Another important feature of the Medieval London was the prevalence of monasteries, which had bequeathed a legacy of place names such as Grey Friars, White Friars and Black Friars. A new passageway developed with the construction of the London Bridge in 1176. The houses in Medieval London were made of half-timber or wattle and daub. A lime white wash was common for the houses. The Lord Mayor and a Council elected from the members of the Merchant Guilds, which became highly powerful administrative and economic bodies, did policy making in the town. Their own halls and coat of arms distinguished the guilds from one another. The Guildhall functioned as the meeting place of the representative of the different merchant guilds. However, one serious problem of the Medieval London was its lack of sanitation facilities. There were as many as 16 plague attacks upon London since the Black Death of 1348 to the Great Plague of 1665.

Guilds:

During the Medieval era, merchants, artists, bankers, artisan and other professionals grouped themselves together in some business association. They were called Guilds. The bankers belonged to the Bankers Guild, the merchants to the Merchants Guild, and so on.

Merchant Guilds: They controlled and determined the policies of the trade in a town. Merchant guilds regulated prices, quality, weights and measures, and business practices. The power of the guilds was absolute in their domain, and to be expelled from a guild made it impossible to earn a living. Each guild had a patron saint; celebrated religious festivals together, put on religious plays, and looked after the health and welfare of the members and their families.

Craft Guilds: Separate from the Merchant Guilds were the Craft Guilds, which regulated the quality, working hours and conditions of its members. There were three levels of craftsmen; masters, journeymen, and apprentices. Parents paid a fee to place a boy with a master craftsman as an apprentice. There he received food, lodging (often sleeping under the counter in the shop itself), clothes, and instruction in the craft.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did the towns emerge in the medieval age?

Q 2: Where did the towns usually spring up?

Q 3: Why did the towns gain prominence? Which are some of the important towns that sprang up?

Q 4: Briefly describe the significance of London as a medieval town.

2.4 URBANISATION IN LONDON

Usually the term Urbanisation refers to the population shift from the rural to urban areas. It also means the “the gradual increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas”, and the ways in which each society adapts to the change. It is predominantly the process by which towns and cities are formed and become larger as more people start living and working in central areas.

Along with the growth of towns, urbanisation is considered one of the most important aspects of the life and society in medieval England. You will note that urbanisation was the result of economic growth and development of the cities, which was broadly evident in the movement of people from one trade-centre like London to the other. Thus, apart from London, the other towns also functioned as key centres of human and commercial mobility. People from other countries in Europe came to England just as there was a corresponding movement from English towns to other cities. It was already clear at the time of the Norman Conquest that London was to become the seat of financial, military and political power. William the Conqueror built the 'White Tower' of the Tower of London. The Tower displays architectural styles of many periods because virtually every reign added to its establishment, and because it was even used as a royal residence. London also became a major city where urban culture developed rapidly. This city was greatly instrumental in the rise of a new individualism and social freedom. It is important to note that the city dwellers learnt to regulate time by clocks, space by precise measurements and value by money – all that can be seen as the direct rise of the new economy.

However, you should pay heed to the fact that the rapid urbanisation of London can be partly attributed to William the Conqueror, known for his urbane lifestyle. Westminster was situated on one side of London, and the Tower of London on the other. The Westminster Hall, the Abbey and the Tower were recognised centres of royal administration and political activities during the Medieval Age. By the end of the 15th century, London had a population of 60,000, while Paris had a population of nearly 200,000. Norwich in England had a meagre population of 12,000 and Bristol only 10,000. However, in the field of textile industry, the English towns, particularly the cloth centres of East Anglia and Yorkshire, achieved a great success. By the 15th century, England had become an exporter of manufactured woollen cloth rather than of raw wool.

The medieval towns and cities of England witnessed frequent civic strife, both internal and external. The disputes of the big merchants with

small ones, the burghers with the outsiders, or with such officials as the kings' sheriff , lord's or bishop's bailiff or the monks, always made the socio-political atmosphere rife with legal battles and open riot. The various towns specialised in diverse trade fields like cloth, wool and coal. The towns were surrounded by stonewalls or earth mounds. The roofing of the houses was usually of thatch. But, after a major fire broke out in 1087 in London, causing devastation to many straw-roofed houses with wooden walls, red-tiles and stones were also used as preferable substitutes for thatch-roofing. The cities and towns were comparatively less sanitised particularly in the absence of a proper garbage-disposal and drainage-system. The frequent occurrence of plagues in the cities can be attributed to the absence of such civic amenities of life in the medieval English towns.

It will be wrong to assume that the activities of the medieval English town were only economic in character. The town guilds organised, and its members acted, in Miracle-play cycles, which also marks the beginning of English drama. The market places were the centres for the community's festive celebrations. Medieval English plays were presented in the form of cycles and were connected to the town guilds. A town like Coventry was known not merely for its flourishing wool and cloth trade but for its association with the performance of a cycle of play, now known as the 'Coventry cycle'. You will learn about them in detail when we discuss growth and development of English drama later.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is urbanisation? What caused urbanisation in London?

Q 6: Explain briefly William's contributions to urbanisation in London.

Q 7: Mention some of the common problems of urbanisation in London?

Q 8: What was the position of London in the medieval period?



2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt that the English society of the medieval era was previously an agrarian society. However, there emerged a new middle class people following the Norman Conquest, which could be seen in the rise of the towns as the new rulers encouraged an urbanised life style. Soon, the towns became commercial hubs, where common people had economic and political transaction. Towns were built on trade, and the elites of the towns were the merchants. Usually, a successful town attracted many merchants who dominated the commercial activities in the towns. They even influenced the popular and administrative opinions of the towns. The merchant guilds were responsible for the trade and commerce of a town. Along the growing importance of the towns, there began the processes of urbanisation because more towns and cities meant a new economy for the people in Medieval England. Subsequently, many people started migrating to the cities from the countryside giving rise to urbanisation of London.



2.6 FURTHER READING

Brown, Peter. (ed). (2007). *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture. 1350–1500.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

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2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The towns helped to create a peaceful condition in the social set up… …there was a commercial hub at the centre of the town… …towns were built on trade-transactions… …a successful town attracted many merchants… …such transactions even influenced the popular and administrative opinions.

Ans to Q 2: Towns sprang up alongside the roads on the trading routes… …towns grew near the rivers… …towns had large fences built around them, and usually the gates were locked at night… …inns for the travellers and stables for the horses too sprang up.

Ans to Q 3: Towns gained prominence and due to the social and economic changes that occurred during that time… …based on the extent, population, trade and cultural prominence, there emerged different types of towns… …London, Bristol, York, Norwich, Exeter, Shrewsbury etc. were the most important towns.

Ans to Q 4: London gained a special place as a town… …it was considered a hub for trade and commerce… …London exhibits the rapid expansion of the towns that the King William proposed after the Norman Conquest.

Ans to Q 5: Urbanisation refers to the population shift from the rural to urban areas… …urbanisation occurred due to economic growth and development of the cities… …it occurred in London mostly due to the movement of people from one trade-centre like London to the other.

Ans to Q 6: William the Conqueror showcased an urbane lifestyle… …The Westminster Hall, situated in London and the London Tower became centre of William's administration.

Ans to Q 7: Frequent civic strife… …disputes of the big merchants with small ones, the burghers with the outsiders, lord's or bishop's bailiff or the monks… …problem of sanitation in the absence of a proper garbage-disposal and drainage-system… …frequent occurrence of plagues and so on.

Ans to Q 8: construction of Castle/The Tower of London… …importance of monasteries in London and their role… …the layout of the city, houses and living condition of the people were visibly different… …Merchant Guilds played important role in the economic and political life of London.



2.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How did the emergence of the English towns lead to urbanisation in Medieval England?

Q 2: What role did London play as an important town in the Medieval period? Discuss with adequate references.

Q 3: Trace the growth of towns in Medieval England with special reference to London.

Q 4: Discuss the relationship of interdependence between the rise of a new economic order and the growth of cities and towns during medieval England.

Q 5: Give a brief outline of the nature of commercial activities and administration in the late Medieval English towns and cities.

Q 6: The towns and the cities played a major role in the collapse of the feudal order and the beginning of a capitalist economy. Substantiate.

Q 7: Narrate in your own words the position of London in the Medieval period.

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UNIT 3: CHRISTIANITY, REFORMATION AND ROLE OF THE CHURCH

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Idea of Christianity

3.4 Role of Medieval Church

3.5 The Church and Medieval Culture

3.6 Theology and Intellectual Activities

3.7 Let us Sum up

3.8 Further Reading

3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

3.10 Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the society of the Medieval England
- trace the history of Christianity in Medieval times
- explain the role played by the Medieval Church
- trace the relationship between Church and Medieval culture
- grasp the socio-religious history of the Medieval England

3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to another important aspect of the Social and Religious history of Medieval England i.e. the role of the Medieval Church. You might probably know that Christianity started about 2000 years ago in Judea (present-day Israel) with Jesus Christ and His faithful group of disciples. It is important that Christianity has its root in scriptures related to the life of Jesus and the teachings of His Apostles, which were later documented in the Bible. Initially, Christianity was considered a threat to

the Roman Empire as the Christians refused to worship the Roman Gods or follow the dictates of the Emperor. During the reign of Emperor Constantine (AD285-AD337), Christianity was legalised. Gradually, it became the official religion of the Roman Empire replacing the polytheism (the belief of multiple deities along with their own mythologies and rituals) of the earlier Roman religion. Christianity, through the Church, became organised and marked its dominance all over Europe by the time of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. By taking into consideration the different aspects of the Medieval church, this unit intends to tell you the importance of the church in the lives of the people of Medieval England. In fact, the church had tremendous significance in the sense that the Medieval world offered very limited scope for individual and social development. Thus, in this unit, you will gain an overall knowledge of the Christian religion of the Medieval period, which will help you to understand the literature of that period better.

3.3 IDEA OF CHRISTIANITY

You are already informed that Christianity started about 2000 years ago in Judea with Jesus Christ and His faithful group of disciples. During this period, Judea was a cross-cultural hub of bustling cities and farms. The Emperor of Rome was the ruler. The Jews at that time hated the Roman rule as they faced oppression in the hands of the Roman Emperor. The polytheistic cultural beliefs of Rome were also pagan and intrusive to Jewish life. Some Jews saw that their only hope was to conform to this change. Others became religious extremists who resisted against the Roman oppression. Still, others withdrew themselves into the Judean wilderness to study the Jewish law and wait for the eventual coming of their promised Messiah (saviour). With this background, the religious journey of Jesus began.

Now read the interesting story related to the life of Jesus. Jesus was a Jew. He observed the Jewish faith and was well acquainted with the Jewish Law. In His early thirties, Jesus travelled from village to village, teaching in the synagogues and healing those who were suffering. Jesus' teaching was revolutionary. He challenged the established religious authorities to repent from their self-righteousness and hypocrisy and realise

that the Kingdom of God is rooted in service and love. Jesus' teachings stirred the hearts of people and created instability, something the Jewish religious authorities feared.

Soon, a faithful group of men began to follow Jesus and call him their teacher. These men began to be called His disciples. Jesus taught them about the will of God and about the "new covenant" God will bring to humanity through Him. Jesus helped them to see that humankind is bound to the pain and futility of life as a result of 'original' sin. Due to sin, mankind lost its relationship with God. The purpose of this "new covenant" was to restore those who accept it into a renewed fellowship of forgiveness and love with God. Jesus proclaimed that He himself would pay for the sins of all humanity by being crucified unjustly on a Roman cross. Three days later, He would rise to life, having conquered death, to give hope to a hopeless world. Well, it happened just as Jesus taught, and His disciples were witnesses to an amazing miracle. Their teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, died and three days later rose again to become their Messiah. Compelled by a great commission to share the love that the God of this universe had imparted upon them, the disciples began to proclaim this gospel of hope throughout the territory. Thus, from a small group of ordinary men that lived in a small province in Judea about 2000 years ago, the history of the Christian Church began, and the Christian Faith has since spread to the rest of the world.

Initially, Christianity was regarded as a threat to the Roman Empire as the Christians refused to worship the Roman Gods or follow the Emperor. This resulted in the persecution of the early Christians, many of whom were killed and thus they became the martyrs of Christian religion. This persecution came to an end during the reign of Emperor Constantine (285-337) who legalised Christianity. Constantine the Great had proclaimed himself as the "Emperor of the Christian People". However, most of the emperors who came after Constantine were also Christians. Gradually, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire instead of the polytheism of earlier Roman religion.

In the post-Roman period, Christianity had transformed itself from a persecuted, unorganised group of believers into a hierarchical, dominating

religious order over the course of seven centuries. The development of the institution of the Catholic Church and the spread of Christianity throughout Europe during these seven centuries directly affected every aspect of late-antiquity and early-Medieval life, especially politics and the relationship between kings and religion. During this period, the Church rejected its domination by the Roman and Byzantine emperors, in turn exerting its own type of spiritual dominance over the rulers of post-Roman Europe. Christianity, through the Church, became organised and marked its dominance all over Europe by the time of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066.

The Crusades:

The 'Crusades' were a series of Holy Wars launched by the Christian states of Europe against the Saracens. The term "Saracen" was the word used to describe a Moslem during the time of Crusade. The Crusades started in 1095 when Pope Claremont preached the First Crusade at the Council of Claremont. The Pope's preaching led to thousands immediately affixing the cross to their garments. The name Crusade, given to the Holy Wars, came from old French word 'crois' meaning 'cross'. The 'Crusades' are thus great military expeditions undertaken by the Christian nations of Europe for the purpose of rescuing the holy places of Palestine from the hands of the Mohameddans. They were eight in number, the first four being sometimes called the Principal Crusades, and the remaining four the Minor Crusades.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In what ways, were Jesus' teachings revolutionary?

Q 2: How did Christianity become the official religion of the Roman Empire?

Q 3: How would you explain the concept of Christianity? Briefly trace the history of Christianity.

Q 4: What did Jesus teach His disciple?

3.4 ROLE OF MEDIEVAL CHURCH

You have learnt that in the Medieval Period, the Church occupied an important place. The authority and order of the Church were regarded as final, and it was deemed necessary for an ordered society. The institution of the Church not only influenced everyday life, it also acquired importance amidst the intense and complicated power struggle that existed during the Medieval period. The need for establishing a proper structuring of the society heightened its significance as it provided a viable alternative for the establishment of a stable society. People had taken the authority of the church as a given reality. The church was an ever present factor of the average person's life. From Baptism to marriage and finally to death it supported, structured, and at times, even hurt every single person in the Medieval community life. The leaders of the church used to play a significant role in Medieval politics. The church was believed to have derived its power from God and hence the people were more inclined to follow its laws. You would like to know that, at some point of time, the Archbishop of Canterbury was also the Chancellor of England.

One important facet of the Medieval church organisation was the secular interests of the Clergy. In the days of the reign of Norman Kings, there was a close connection between the king and the Church. It provided opportunities to the learned priests who could become good ministers of the king to rule a chaotic nation. The best positions of the Church were rewarded to the favourites of the Pope, in turn of which, the king gained freedom to appoint the bishops. Bishops like Sudbury, and William of Wykeham occupied high posts in the Government. However, the bishops paid little heed to their diocese (The territorial jurisdiction of a bishop) and made unscrupulous bargains. Another important duty that the Ecclesiastical Courts performed was to punish the sinners of sexual incontinence.

But, the habit of pardoning such sinners on payment of money was also in practice. Many monetary scams were prevalent as the summoners, whose duty was to summon the offenders to the courts of the Bishop, made money by threatening the people of reporting their cases (both real

and imaginary) to the Archdeacon. The pardoners who used to bestow papal pardon to sinners had also made money similarly. Thus, the church officials had started neglecting their spiritual duty and got involved in more earthly matters. All these had played a significant role in the lives of the people who accepted the dictum and authority of the church without any question.

The Parish priest enjoyed a privileged status as he reigned in his Church. He used to address the congregation of the common villagers and give them knowledge about Christianity. The Parish priest would say the prayers in Latin, which the simple villagers would not understand. Yet they had to take part in the religious activities, which surrounded their lives. These villagers thus became blind followers of these priests who gave them the knowledge of religion and the way to a righteous life. Another important aspect of the medieval church was the emergence of the wandering priests called Friars. During the 13th century, there were all kinds of travelling priests. Of these, the friars were the most important. The Black Friars of St. Dominic and the Grey Friars of St. Frances had been the most important and true Christian force in the 13th century. In the 14th, they did most of the missionary works of the church. Apart from the beneficed priests who lived in the Church, there were a huge number of priests, deacons and clerks who were employed in different capacities. They were the 'clerks' who wrote papers and kept accounts for men of affairs, or private chaplains in castle or manor houses. They lived an intrigued life with full of sins. However, they could escape any punishment as they claimed the benefit of clergy.



LET US KNOW

One important development during the 14th century was the foundation of a grammar school at Winchester by William of Wykeham. This school meant for the education of clerks in reading and writing Latin. However, a certain proportion of the scholars were the sons of noble and powerful persons. Thus, the church authority had started the education of the common people also, although such scholars belonged to the upper strata of society.

Medieval monastic life consisted of a regular round of worship, reading and manual labour. Each day was divided into eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with services in the monastery church. The abbey was under the authority of an abbot. Abbeys often owed some form of feudal obligation to a lord or higher organisation. They are normally self-contained. However, the Medieval monastery had the same power structure like the feudal pyramid. In the time of Chaucer, the monks were worldly and well to do. They lived comfortably in the monasteries or roamed around disguised as laymen. The monasteries and abbeys had accumulated vast wealth. The abbots used the church as a means of social advancement. However, the monasteries played an important role in the general life of people who vowed to take a religious life as vocation.

Thus, you can see that the church played a very crucial role during the Medieval period in shaping the social order of the time. The control of the church over the people was total. It provided a sense of order through a belief system that encouraged people to work for its development. It gave the people a structure to work within an order. It exercised its power that attracted reverence as well as awe from the masses. The wide ranging influence of the church can be seen in its various functions where it involved activities like preaching and scriptural reading, group reading exercises in households and monasteries, story-telling and psalm reading activities during feast and festival days, enactment of chosen episodes from the Bible, permeation of saints' lives and so on. There was a stark difference that was shown in Medieval literatures regarding the worldly and heavenly issues where the privilege was always bestowed on heavenly considerations. A life of spirituality and virtuosity was always valorised.

You should mark that the Roman Church and the English rulers were always involved in conflicts. This was mainly because the English monarchy took Pope under its jurisdiction, while Pope saw the monarch as a member of the church, therefore subject to the rule of God through the Popes. On the other hand, the bishops too gained political privileges from the king, and consequently, they were interested less in the spiritual awakening of the masses. Gradually, there began movements in the 10th

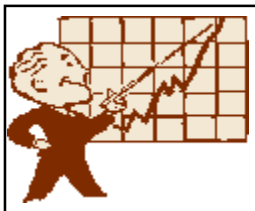
and 11th centuries proclaiming the freedom of the church from state control. However, the church could not enjoy full papal authority. It was mainly because the rise of the European nation-state, following the fall of the Holy Roman Empire posited great threats to the church authority. You will like to know that this conflict between the state and the church, on the other hand, remained unabated even until the 16th century. However, the Reformation compelled the church to stick to its purely spiritual tasks and placed the legal powers of the church leadership in the hands of the princes.

The Lollard Movement:

It was a political and religious movement existing between the mid-14th century to the English Reformation. The term "Lollard" refers to the followers of John Wycliffe who was a prominent theologian dismissed from the University of Oxford in 1381 for criticising the Church. Its demands were to bring noticeable reforms in Western Christianity and save the church ideals from degradation under the church authorities. A position in the church was a lucrative option. To be a part of the economically resourceful clergy was considered a profitable business and this led to such corrupt practices as obtaining a position in the church by bribing. You should note that Chaucer and Langland have occasionally referred to the rampant corruption in the church in their writings.

For centuries, the Monarchs ruled over their kingdom by the notion of 'divine right', which said that the king ruled both the Crown and the Church. On the Catholic Church, however, the belief was that the Pope was the representative of Christ on earth, and thus he should be the ultimate authority over the state and the crown. This relation between the church and the state during the Medieval period came to be based in terms of hierarchies between the kingship and the papal authority. Real power was not always in the hands of these figures, but the power they did exercise enjoyed a theoretical support, and therefore carried an aura of legitimacy. Let me tell you that the power of kings was not understood in secular terms as we understand it today, mainly because it had religious connotations. During

the 12th and 13th centuries, papal power greatly increased. In the 13th century, the great scholar Saint Thomas Aquinas, borrowing ideas from Aristotle, played a positive role in raising the dignity of the civil power by declaring that the state is also a perfect society, the other perfect society being the church. Though the conflict between the church and the state was continuing, yet it did not deter the importance of religious culture in England until the 14th century.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss the role of the Medieval Church in human life and society.

Q 6: Mention some of the ill practices of the Medieval Church organisation.

Q 7: What kind of relationship prevailed between the Roman Church and the English rulers?

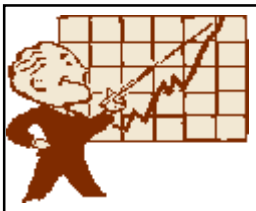
3.5 THE CHURCH AND MEDIEVAL CULTURE

By now, you must have realised that a God-centric perspective dominated the worldview of the Medieval period. Christianity reigned supreme in this regard, as the church was the single most influential and powerful institution of Medieval England. The church played a significant role in spreading a religious culture among the masses. The people were expected to maintain religious conduct which was crucial for their domestic life as well. Such religious conduct was marked by the performance of ceremonies in almost all the social as well as cultural institutions. The church made people believe that such conduct was of great importance for their social existence. The practice of such rituals proclaimed not only the importance of the church but also other religious agencies like the monasteries, nunneries, abbeys and so on. Conduct was very important and was associated with supernatural sanction and belief system. The church provided order, stability and a framework for the Medieval mindset. The most important foundation of Medieval life was salvation, and the ultimate goal of all people was to obtain salvation.

Thus, the church played a very important role in moulding the lives of the people and in spreading spirituality and religious preaching. The church used the Biblical stories and the legends based on the lives of saints, doctrines of the Trinity and other scriptural materials to attract the attention of the masses. Apart from the scriptural teachings, the faith and the daily conduct of the people were directed by the sacraments. The body of beliefs known as holy sacraments provided the direction to men in his domestic life. People believed in the authenticity of such sacraments. Thus, the church enforced discipline on the people through a well-regulated mechanism, which was controlled by the ecclesiastical courts. Let me tell you that the sacraments were an integral part of a Christian's life. Thus, you can understand that the Medieval religious culture pervaded through the church.

The Medieval theatrical performances played a crucial role to spread the doctrines of Christianity. You must know that the form of the Medieval drama was religious in its fervour. The three dominant forms were the Mystery Plays that dealt with the Biblical stories; the Miracle Plays that dealt with the dramatised accounts of the lives or the episodes from the life of saints, and the Morality Plays that were based on the dramatisation of abstract condition. The morality plays dramatised the conflict between Good and Evil, spirituality and corruption, salvation and damnation and were presented in an allegorical mode where the God, spirituality, salvation etc. gained victory over Evil, damnation, corruption and so on. Thus, you can see that even the theatrical forms indirectly helped in spreading Christian values and belief systems.

All these had pervaded the Medieval culture which in turn possessed the religious values of Christianity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What role did the Church play in promoting a religious culture in Medieval England?

Q 9: What are the three major dramatic forms that developed under the rubrics of the Church?

3.6 THEOLOGY AND INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITIES

No aspect of Medieval Christianity has been more influential than the Medieval thought, especially the philosophy and theology of Scholasticism, whose outstanding exponent was Sir Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274). The word Scholasticism came from the Latin word 'Schola' meaning 'school'. It refers to the methods of thinking and speaking which were the legacies of the Medieval schools. These schools taught three main subjects: grammar, logic and rhetoric. Grammar taught the students to speak and write correctly, logic taught them how to present a reasoned argument and rhetoric provided them with the techniques they needed to win their case. However, Scholasticism was more than simply a method of education. The Scholastics sought to integrate the philosophy of Aristotle with the theology of the church, so that the Christian faith could be systematised into a logical and rationally coherent body of thought. Their stress was scientific and objective. The theology of Scholasticism was an effort to harmonise the doctrinal tradition inherited from the Fathers of the early church and to relate these traditions to the intellectual achievements of classical antiquity.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

It was seen that many of the early Church Fathers, both in the East and the West, had developed their theologies under the influence of the Platonic modes of thought. The reinterpretation of these theologies by the Scholastics required that the doctrinal content of the tradition be disengaged from the metaphysical assumptions of Platonism. For this purpose, the recovery of Aristotle, first through the influence of Aristotelian philosophers and theologians and then through the translation and the study of the authentic texts of Aristotle himself seemed providential to the Scholastic theologians.

This shift towards the thought and philosophy of Aristotle helped the theologians manage to combine a fidelity to scripture and tradition with a positive, but critical, attitude towards the 'natural' mind. Thus, scholasticism

is regarded as a landmark both in the history of Christianity as well as of Western culture as a symbol of the Christianisation of the society and culture. Thus, you can see that the aim of the Scholastic theologians was to reconcile Christian doctrine and human reason and to arrange the teachings of the church in an orderly system.

There is no doubt about the fact that the Church shaped the worldview of the Medieval men. The monks and priests were the only literate people who imparted learning in the churches and monasteries. During that period, almost three to four hundred grammar schools were spread all over England for the education of the clerks. The subjects that they taught were grammar, arithmetic, logic and theology. Many universities were started in Italy and France. In England, philosophy and theology were taught in Latin in Cambridge and Oxford Universities. In Chaucer's times, Oxford was the intellectual centre of England. Wycliffe's influence was a prominent factor in Oxford, until he was driven out by the interference of the Bishops and King with the independent nature of University. In Oxford, there were two academic groups, The Regular Clergy and The Secular Clergy. The Regular were the monks and friars, whose convents were attached to the university. On the other hand, the Secular, who regarded themselves as part of the University proper, consisted of secular clergy, priests, deacons and clerks in lower order. This group was first organised by academicians and then by the clergies. Learning had been rendered by hand copied books and few libraries. However, the church had narrowed down the possibilities of advancement in learning. The church education made students narrow-minded and they were fit to become only monks. Scientific reasoning was discouraged and belief in magic, superstition and witch-craft became common. Any attempt to question the Church brought severe punishment. The university students had no access to laboratories or well stocked libraries. Subjects like History, Literature and Science were ignored. Studies of Classical Latin were available only to the Churchmen.

A common Medieval student had got very little opportunity to read books. Most of the time, they left education without acquiring a degree. A student lived a much undisciplined life. The authorities of the universities,

on the other hand, under the influence of the follies of Church authority and the State, forbade athletic exercises among the youths. However, these evils had got the much awaited remedy through the establishment of colleges. In the late 13th century, several colleges had been founded at Oxford and Cambridge. The college system gradually struck root in England and flourished in an unprecedented manner. The Medieval church played an important role in the evolution of European civilization. Thus, the Medieval church provided considerable provision for education in Latin. It created the base of the Western system of education through the schools, monasteries, cathedrals and convents. The church was also responsible for the system of schools even after the Reformation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Reflect on the term 'Scholasticism'? What role did it play in society?

Q 11: Discuss the conditions of learning prevalent during the Medieval period.

Q 12: What were the constraints faced by a common student?



3.7 LET US SUM UP

By now, you must have gained enough ideas about the history and role of the church in shaping the worldview of the Medieval society. You have read that Christianity emerged with the religious preaching of Jesus, the testimony of the scriptures as interpreted by the life of Jesus and the teachings of His Apostles, which were documented in the Bible. Through the Church system, Christianity got organised and marked its dominion all over Europe by the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066. Gradually, the church occupied the most important place as it was believed to have derived its power from God and hence, the people were more inclined to follow its power and authenticity. The church provided a sense of order through a

belief system that encouraged people to work for its development. It gave the people a structure to work from within. It exercised its power that attracted reverence as well as awe from the common mass. A religious culture was finally established through the institution of the church. The philosophy and theology of Scholasticism was very much influential during the Medieval period. The Scholastics sought to integrate the philosophy of Aristotle with the theology of the church, so that the Christian faith could be systematised into a logical and rationally coherent body of thought.



3.8 FURTHER READING

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Jesus challenged the established religious authorities to repent from their self-righteousness and hypocrisy… …the Kingdom of God is rooted in service and love… …His teachings stirred the hearts of people and created instability which the Jewish religious authorities feared.

Ans to Q 2: Initially, Christianity was seen as a threat to the Roman Empire… …this resulted in the persecution of the early Christians… …Emperor

Constantine's legalisation of Christianity… …his successors too were Christians… …so Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Ans to Q 3: Jesus challenged strict religious doctrines with the service and love of men… …after him, His disciples spread his teachings… …early Christians were persecuted... ...Constantine legalised Christianity… …it became organized by the time of the Norman Conquest of 1066.

Ans to Q 4: Jesus taught about the will of God… ….the 'new covenant' of forgiveness and love… …to see that men suffer the pain and futility of life due to the sin… …he proclaimed his sacrifice for the humankind.

Ans to Q 5: The Medieval church provided a sense of order through a belief system… …it was an important factor of the average man's life… …it was responsible for the spread of education during the Medieval period… …it spread the religious culture among the masses.

Ans to Q 6: The secular interest of the clergy… …Neglect of the Spiritual Courts… …the supremacy of the Parish Priest… …The Wandering Friars… …corruption in the monasteries etc.

Ans to Q 7: The Roman Church and the English rulers were always involved in conflicts… …this was mainly because the English monarchy took Pope under its jurisdiction, while Pope saw the monarch as a member of the church, therefore subject to the rule of God through the Popes…. … there emerged movements that proclaimed the freedom of the church from state control.

Ans to Q 8: The Church made people maintain religious conduct crucial for domestic life… …the faith and the daily conduct of the people were directed by the sacraments... ...Medieval dramatic performances led the common people towards the life of Jesus and saints.

Ans to Q 9: Mystery Plays… …Miracle Plays… …Morality Plays.

Ans to Q 10: The term is derived from the Latin word 'Schola'… …refers to the methods of thought by the Medieval schools… …grammar, logic and rhetoric were the three main areas… …Scholasticism

christianised contemporary society and culture… …it sought to reconcile Christian doctrines with human reason.

Ans to Q 11: Monks and priests were the only literate people who imparted learning in churches and monasteries… …in Oxford, there were two academic groups—The Regular Clergy and The Secular Clergy… …however, the church had narrowed down the possibilities of advancement in learning.

Ans to Q 12: They got little opportunity to read books… …university authorities under the influence of the Church authority and the State forbade athletic exercises among the youths… …most of the time, a students left his education without acquiring a degree.



3.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the history of Christianity with special emphasis on its emergence in England during the Medieval period.

Q 2: Trace the role of the church on the life and faith of the Medieval men.

Q 3: Describe the intellectual activities that are found during the Medieval period.

Q 4: What do you mean by the term ‘Scholasticism’? How did it influence the theological and intellectual activities of Medieval England?

Q 5: Do you think that whatever the church did was good for the Medieval society? If not, mention some of the corrupt and ill practices under the system of the church.

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UNIT 4: RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 History of the Renaissance

4.4 Humanism and Renaissance Thought

4.5 The Renaissance Literature

4.6 Renaissance and the Exploration of New Worlds

4.7 Let us Sum up

4.8 Further Reading

4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

4.10 Possible Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- deliberate on the idea of the Renaissance
- trace the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy
- discuss Humanism and its association with the Renaissance
- explain the spirit of the English Renaissance
- locate the elements of colonisation in the geographical discovery made during the Renaissance period

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of this Block. In this unit, you will be introduced to the concept of Renaissance and Renaissance Humanism. The term Renaissance (meaning rebirth) is broadly understood to denote a new era in the history of Western civilization at the end of the Medieval Ages. It is supposed to be characterised by a great "revival" of learning or of the arts. The concept of a new age derives mainly from the writings of 19th century writers like Jules Michelet, J.A. Symonds and above all Jacob Burckhardt whose classic essay "The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy" (1860)

continues to exercise a lot of influence in the subsequent discussions of the term Renaissance. The term Humanism, on the other hand, is derived from the 16th century phenomenon that emerged out of the word 'humanist' or 'humanities'—which included the study of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. This study was sought to be distinguished from that of fields like mathematics, natural philosophy, and theology, which were less concerned about the moral and imaginative aspects, and activities of man. Humanism added a great impetus to Renaissance scholarship as the humanists scholars edited and expounded many ancient Greek and Latin texts, which intellectually contributed to the development of materials and ideas in European Renaissance. In this unit, we shall discuss some of the important issues related to the Renaissance and Humanism in general.

4.3 HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE

What is meant by the term "Renaissance"? The famous nineteenth-century historian of the Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt in his book *The Discovery of the World and of Man* describes the essential spirit of the movement like the following:

"To the discovery of the outward world the Renaissance added a still greater achievement, by first discerning and bringing to light the full, whole nature of man. This period, as we have seen, first gave the highest development to individuality, and then led the individual to the most zealous and thorough study of himself in all forms and under all conditions. Indeed, the development of personality is essentially involved in the recognition of it in oneself and in others. Between these two great processes, our narrative has placed the influence of ancient literature because the mode of conceiving and representing both the individual and human nature in general was defined and coloured by that influence. But, the power of conception and representation lay in the age and in the people."

However, the Renaissance is often described as the 'rebirth' of man from the darkness of the Middle Ages. It is believed to have emerged in Italy during the 14th century and it continued to exert its influence in Western Europe throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. The nature of the 'rebirth'

has been variously described. It is often said that Renaissance means 'rebirth' of man as an earthly being. The dominance of the church in the Middle Ages led to a denigration of man's earthly existence. There was more emphasis on the 'after-life', which a man has to prepare through a life of piety and devotion to the teachings of the scriptures. With the so-called rediscovery of the works of classical antiquity, there was a change in this attitude in the later Middle Ages. People began to believe, as did the ancient Greeks and Romans, that man's life on earth has an importance of its own, that he should fulfil himself on earth and let the hereafter take care of itself. Secular and worldly interests gradually began to predominate over religious and otherworldly preoccupations. The church in the preceding age had stressed the social obligations of man. However, following the Renaissance, the spirit of individualism also began to prevail.

Italy is often considered the birthplace of the Renaissance. There is much speculation as to why the Renaissance began in Italy and not elsewhere. The Renaissance was almost exclusively an urban phenomenon with its leaders springing from the bourgeoisie background with enough money to be able to afford a life of leisure and cultivate a taste for literature and the arts. Northern Italy, during the high Middle Ages, had developed numerous centres of urban life, which were self-governing. Several other European cities existed around the same time. However, at no time, did the sense of individualism run so high as in the Italian cities. Again, these European cities lacked the stimulus that was very strong in Italy—the desire to emulate the achievements of the Romans, their personal ancestors. From Italy, the Renaissance spread to other cities of Europe. When travellers from the North visited Italy, it was impossible for them not to be influenced by the culture of the Italian cities. The new learning made its way into the Universities, which were the main seats of learning in Germany and elsewhere. However, the Renaissance spirit was never the same elsewhere as in Italy. Everywhere the native genius of the people allowed the new culture to stimulate them to new efforts in keeping with their own culture and traditions. German and French painting for instance, retained their own distinctive characteristics while making use of Italian technical inventions. Thus, it is interesting to study, country by country, the use made by the

native writers and artists of the lead offered by Italy. You must remember that the period of the Renaissance is also one of great painters and sculptors.

The Renaissance in Europe is remembered for the great development in the sphere of the various arts and sciences. Architecture, sculpture, and painting flourished greatly contributing to the general celebration of life. Painting was particularly famous. The period saw the emergence of some of the greatest painters of all times like Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Raphael. Da Vinci's 'The Last Supper' and 'Monalisa' are quite well known throughout the world. Raphael was known for his 'Madonna' paintings and the angels. Most of the painters chose their subjects from religion. They grappled with many problems, which concern painters of the modern age: how to create a painting, which is an artistic and satisfying whole as a picture, how, to give the illusion of three-dimension in a two-dimension medium. They created masterpieces, which, with the Medieval cathedral, constitute some of the chief artistic glories of the Western civilization.

So far as sculpture is concerned, there was a renewed interest in and appreciation of the human body whose inherent beauty could not be stressed in the Medieval age as it was the age of contempt for the body and all its attributes. The ancient taboos, which required the human form to be fully clothed, lost their urgency during the Renaissance. Many were the patrons who desired that their own form and features should be perpetuated in bronze or stone as a contribution to their eternal fame. There was also opportunity for sculpture in the great Renaissance churches, which had plenty of space available for all kinds of decoration. The greatest sculptor of the time was Michael Angelo, one of the universal geniuses of the Renaissance skilled in architecture, painting, poetry as well as sculpture. Angelo's magnificent sculptural paintings are seen in the Sistine Chapel. His great figures show his understanding of human life—its joys and sorrows, its exaltations and depressions. In the field of literature, the renewed interest in classical models stimulated the intellect and imagination of contemporary writers and scholars. Wonderful artistic works in poetry, drama and lyrics mark the significance of the Renaissance ideals.

The foundations of modern science were also laid during the Renaissance. The universities of Italy were far ahead of all other universities,

and it is from Italy that many of the great physicians and teachers of medicine and anatomy went out to the rest of Europe. Leonardo da Vinci is by far the greatest scientific name of the Renaissance. He was interested in everything pertaining to human beings and their world. He pondered over how the knowledge available could be put to use, and how certain remarkable theories could be practically useful. During this period, England made direct contributions to experimental science with Gilbert's work on magnetism in 1600 and William Harvey's work on the circulation of blood in 1618. It may be mentioned here that the impulse during the Renaissance was to master nature. Among the technological achievements of the period, the most important was the invention of printing, with movable types, around the mid-15th century by Johann Gutenberg in Germany. Soon this invention reached out to other countries of Europe including England. By 1500, the presses of Europe had produced some 6,000,000 books. It was the printing press, which gave wide circulation to the ideas, associated with the Renaissance, and prepared the ground for the Reformation. The Scientific Revolution, which was a collaborative effort of the international community, would never have happened at all without the printing press. The invention of printing ushered in a communication revolution and transformed the conditions of life.



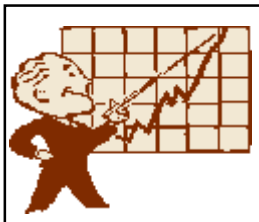
LET US KNOW

From the examples and references in this section, it is actually possible on our part to identify a number of events and discoveries, which visibly affected radical and distinctive changes in the beliefs, productions and manners of human life in Europe during the time of the Renaissance.

We should always feel indebted to Caxton's contribution to printing in England. William Caxton (1422-1491), who had understood the significance of vernacular culture, established the press in Westminster in 1476. He was a merchant of repute of the London Mercers' company. However, he was known to the world for his missionary zeal for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge through the medium of good and useful books. The first English book printed by Caxton in Bruges was

"The Raquel of the Histories of Troy" in 1475. Caxton also printed Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* in the initial years itself.

Printing helped to change the whole world of letters and thus of human thought. While printing, by itself does not strike a major note, it is the capacity to produce books and documents on a large-scale which has to be seen as a greatly shaping force behind new thought. We also have to understand how printing changes the social functions of languages and how such a change affects the way the world is conceived.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you mean by the term 'Renaissance'?

Q 2: How did the Renaissance begin in Italy?

Q 3: What were the influences of the Renaissance on the arts?

Q 4: Name some of the scientific inventions of the Renaissance period.

Q 5: What kind of views did the Renaissance painters uphold?

Q 6: What role did Caxton's Printing Press play during the Renaissance?

4.4 HUMANISM AND RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

"Humanism" refers back to the culture of the 14th century, extending beyond 16th-century Europe which was based on Greek and Roman learning. Etymologically, the word comes from the Latin word "Humanus" signifying "centred on human beings". So, in the context of the 15th and 16th century post-medieval Europe, 'humanism' means the rise of a new learning in which the central area of interest is 'man' and his relationship with the Universe. Humanism in a broader perspective means the cultivation of the human personality to the fullest sense possible, the regarding of humans as earthly creatures and not exclusively as candidates for salvation. The Greeks in this sense were humanists, and some of the better-educated Romans like Cicero who were influenced by the Greek culture. In a narrow perspective, it means cultivation of the classics or the humanities. Scholars

who studied the work of the Greek and Latin poets, dramatists, philosophers, historians, and rhetoricians were known as the humanists. The Greek texts contained the elements of spiritual freedom and intellectual culture, which the ancient Greeks and Romans believed in and which were revived during the Renaissance. Humanism instituted a new and distinctively modern notion of human individuality. Most of the humanists were travellers who went from place to place spreading their ideas. Printing helped them to give their ideas wider circulation.

The humanist curriculum laid a lot of stress on public speaking; it was believed that knowledge is inert unless it is shared. "Language shows a man. Speak that I may see thee" said Ben Jonson. The notion of a private self was alien to humanist thinking. Man was considered a speaking animal, existing in the commonality of linguistic exchange, not in the interiority of private thought. The humanist devotion to dialogue is seen in Thomas More's *Utopia* and Castiglione's *The Courtier* which weaves a fictional dialogue around actual people and events. Humanism is overall a secular and worldly philosophy. It sought to dignify and ennoble man. Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is a manifesto of Renaissance Humanism. Apart from Mirandola, some of the other outstanding humanists were Erasmus, Thomas More and Montaigne.



LET US KNOW

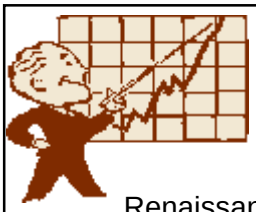
Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration* gave fine expression to the ideal of man's latent, powers and his ability to create himself in whatever mould he would: "Restrained by no narrow bounds, according to thy own free will…thou, thy own free maker and molder, mayest fashion thyself in whatever manner thou likest best…. To man, at his birth, the Father gave seeds of all variety and germs of every form of life."

In their more extreme forms, Humanism regarded man as the crown of creation, a sentiment voiced by Hamlet in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet:* "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an

angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

During the Renaissance, there was a challenge to Aristotle's authority and a desire to arrive at scientific truth through an exercise of human intellect on which the Renaissance scholars reposed supreme confidence. Besides the mathematical theorists of science, there emerged during the Renaissance numerous medical men, navigators, land surveyors, and mining engineers, whose learning mingled as in case of Dr. Faustus (in Marlowe's play) with his belief in astrology and alchemy, in magic and witchcraft. Belief in magic and witchcraft is amply borne out by the plays of Shakespeare. Francis Bacon during this period attempted to extricate science from its philosophical entanglements and elaborated a scientific method comprising of generalisations founded on experiment.

Therefore, Renaissance Humanism mostly assumed the central position of human beings in the universe, always emphasised the study of the morally rich classical, imaginative and speculative literature and often took side with human 'Reason' in place of passion and 'animal' instincts. Many so-called humanists even stressed the need for the developments of the individual's physical, mental, artistic and moral powers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Mention the common assumptions of Renaissance Humanism.

Q 8: Mention some of the humanist works of the Renaissance?

Q 9: What, according to you, was the main assumption of Humanism?

4.5 THE RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

The Renaissance in England coincided with the reign of Queen Elizabeth. You have already read that the humanist ideals reached England partly from the classics, partly from Italy. Roger Ascham's *Schoolmaster*

(1570) and Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) were two very formative books for Shakespeare's generation. Ascham despised scholasticism and urged that Englishmen should strive for 'praise unto themselves, and…profit to others' by joining action with learning like Julius Caesar and he proposed his programme of classical studies in *The Schoolmaster* to produce a learned preacher or a civil gentleman. North praised Plutarch for reproducing the lives of 'the best persons, of the famous nations of the world.' A new set of values began to enter the society with this veneration of classical antiquity. Other books, which influenced the Elizabethans, are Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* and Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* which tried to work out techniques for the individual to master fortune. Machiavelli's influence can be traced through Marlowe's play *Jew of Malta*, which opens with a prologue, put into the mouth of Machiavelli.

In the Medieval age, emphasis was laid on the group or the community as a whole. Assertion of the self, the seeking of wealth, worldly success, and love of women were frowned upon by the clerics. The titles of many of the plays written during the Medieval times emphasise the man in general or abstract attributes, for instance *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*. During the Renaissance, however, the individual became important. A number of handbooks on individual psychology came to be written culminating in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). The tragedies of Shakespeare are based on individuals—Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello. Thus, the central theme of Elizabethan literature is derived from the clash between individuals and the traditional sense of a moral and social order. Human beings came to be viewed as creatures in which the 'bodily fluids' (humours) could break into disease and unruly passion if not tempered by the faculties of the soul. Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour was* based on the theory of 'Humours'.

The Renaissance manifested itself in England mainly as the efflorescence of literature—drama, lyrics, prose. Drama is the chief glory of the period as the Elizabethan public was more accustomed to seeing and listening than to reading; more used to group-life than to privacy. The

Queen patronised the theatre and other arts, and the leading writers of the period dedicated their works to her. The new literature of the age was thus centred on the Crown. Drama became filled with pomp and pageantry. The Queen could, in spite of the factionalism and dissensions of the period, confer some stability on the nation. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 at the hands of the English forces filled the Englishmen with patriotic pride, which manifested itself in renewed interest in the history of the nation and the writing of a long series of national chronicle plays which embodied the strongest unifying sentiment for the London public. Shakespeare who wrote around nine history plays based on the patriotic chronicles of Holinshed was the greatest contributor to the genre.

The influence of Italy on England is seen in the writing of sonnets during the period after the great Italian humanist Petrarch. In his sonnets, Petrarch celebrated his love for Laura. Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, Sir Thomas Wyatt all became famous for their sonnets which were either written on the Petrarchan mould of eight lines (known as the octet) and six lines (the sestet) or on the English variation of three quatrains (three four lined stanzas) and a concluding couplet. This celebration of love for a woman was quite unthinkable in the preceding age. A number of other lyrics often based on the theme of love were also written during the period. These lyrics were set to music, and it has often been remarked that the Elizabethan age was a cage of singing birds. The national love for music found expression in Thomas Campion's songs, in stately poems of ceremony like Spenser's 'Spousal Verse', *Prothalamion*, and Davies' *Orchestra, A Poem of Dancing* (1596). Music also figures in Shakespearean drama, which has an opera-like quality.

You should also note that the classical influence is seen in all the major literary genres, which were popular during the period. For example, Seneca's tragedies were translated during the Elizabethan age. These tragedies of passion and bloodshed were to influence the tragedies of Shakespeare as well those of the Jacobean period. As far as prose was concerned, Seneca and Cicero became the models. Perhaps, following the Senecan style of writing, pithy and packed with meaning, Bacon wrote

essays on a variety of topics like truth, friendship, revenge etc. and are intended to give practical advice to men and women in the conduct of their day to day affairs. The Ciceronian style used by Hooker is verbose, full of subordinate clauses with the sense rounded off at the end. As I have already mentioned, the Elizabethan culture was greatly influenced by the pull of the active, public life. In the universities and in literature, it gave prominence to the study of public speaking, which became one of the primary aims in the education of a gentleman. The rhetorical training of humanism and the ideal of ordered display were woven into the texture of common life signs of which were seen in the lavish costume of the gentry and their elaborate country houses with chimneys and extensive panes of glass. Though the Elizabethans did not show much interest in paintings (apart from miniatures) they took great pains over their houses and gardens and their family monuments. Therefore, you will do well if you consider all such developments while studying the Renaissance period and the literary works produced during that time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: How did the patronage of Queen Elizabeth mark an unprecedented development in Renaissance literature?

Q 11: Assess the importance of Roger Ascham's *Schoolmaster* and Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives.*

4.6 RENAISSANCE AND THE EXPLORATION OF NEW WORLDS

The Renaissance has also been described as the renascence of wonder. It was during the Renaissance that adventurous men from several nations like Spain and Portugal besides England felt the urge to explore the world. Their efforts led to the discovery of sea routes to different lands hitherto unknown to the Europeans. Perhaps, we can make the first reference to Christopher Columbus who in 1492 sailed towards the West to find a

new commercial route to the East and discovered a new continent called America. Such explorations of new continents, its native populations and subsequent settlement by Europeans gave new raw materials to literary imagination as displayed in Shakespearean play *The Tempest*. In 1498, Vasco da Gama discovered a new sea route to India. As far as England was concerned, Queen Elizabeth patronized explorers, those men who dared to venture out into the uncharted waters to discover new worlds and explore business avenues. Encouraged by the Queen, Drake, Magellan, Hawkins, and Raleigh opened a new era of England's commerce with many different parts of the world.



LET US KNOW

You will later learn that in the Renaissance zeal to explore new worlds lie the seeds of colonialism. The desire to have a share in the lucrative trade with the East finally led to the settlement and exploitation by European people in later times.

A number of companies were formed during Queen Elizabeth's reign namely—The Virginia Company, The Russia Company, The East India Company etc. to further England's trade with other parts of the world. The East India Company, for instance, became famous for its operations in India, which became a source for various raw materials for English industries and a market for its finished products. Though no colonies were set up during this period, yet the first seeds of colonisation were definitely sown. The companies, which were set up primarily for the purposes of trade, went on to interfere in the politics of the land thus jeopardising the sovereignty of different parts of the world. Hawkins in his trip to Africa brought back a few hundred slaves who worked as servants in English households. The period marked England's and Europe's contact with the non-Europeans who were seen as the 'other'. A number of books were written on the fascinating voyages made as well as the newly discovered lands, the principal being Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*. The imagination of the Gughman was fired by the reports of strange peoples and the fabulous wealth of the newly discovered lands. The fascination with new lands is testified by the foreign settings of many of Shakespeare's

plays like *Hamlet* which is set in Denmark. The protagonist of Shakespeare's *Othello* is a Moor. So, you find that the newly explored lands found mentioning in many of the great literary works of the Renaissance.



4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read that the Renaissance marks the beginning of the modern period in western civilization in a number of ways. The humanistic ideals, on the other hand, are mainly derived from the study of classical literature that revolutionised different aspects of the lives of the people throughout Europe and led to an unprecedented development in the arts and the sciences the impact of which is seen until this date. From the different sections of this unit, you have now learnt to discuss the idea of the Renaissance and Humanism. You have also traced the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy and should be by now able to discuss how the spirit associated with the Renaissance saw its manifestation in England in various ways. This is also the period in which you can locate elements of colonialism with the many voyages of geographical discovery that also enabled the spread of the ideas of the Renaissance across the whole of Europe.



4.8 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H. (2003). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Singapore: Thomson Asia Pte Ltd.

Briggs, Asa. (1999). *A Social History of England.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Trevelyan, G. M. (1994). English *Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries.* Hyderabad, Orient Longman.



4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Mainly a 16th century phenomenon characterised by a 'rebirth' from darkness… …rediscovery of classical works… …predominance

of secular interests over religious matters… …birth of individual spirit… …birth of scientific temperament… …geographical exploration.

Ans to Q 2: The Italians desired to emulate the achievements of the Great Romans… …it was an urbane phenomenon… …newly rich class had time and money to cultivate a taste for the arts and literature… …renaissance spirit was further enhanced by the concept of 'individualism.'

Ans to Q 3: The Renaissance helped the developments in architecture, sculpture and painting…great painters grappled with the problems of 'modern' age… …sculptors emphasised the innermost beauty of the human body…classical models were revived in literature.

Ans to Q 4: Gilbert's work on Magnetism… …Harvey's work on the Circulation of blood… …Gutenberg's invention of the Printing Press and so on…

Ans to Q 5: Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and Raphael etc. were the greatest Renaissance painters… …they grappled with many problems like how to create an artistic painting… …how to give the illusion of three-dimension in a two dimension medium etc.

Ans to Q 6: William Caxton, a merchant of repute, established the press in Westminster in 1476… …he understood the English culture well… …he had a missionary zeal for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge through the medium of good and useful books… …*The Raquel of the Histories of Troy* was the first English printed book.

Ans to Q 7: Human beings are central in the universe… …emphasis on the study of the morally rich classical works… …human 'Reason' should replace passion and 'animal' instincts… …developments of the individual's physical, mental, artistic and moral powers.

Ans to Q 8: Thomas More's *Utopia… ...* Shakespeare's *Hamlet… ...* Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man… …*Castiglione's *The Courtier etc.*

Ans to Q 9: Humanism assumed the central position of human beings in the universe… …the humanists believed that 'Reason' purified human beings from 'animal' instincts… …many humanists stressed the developments of the individual's physical, mental, artistic and moral powers.

Ans to Q 10: The Queen had great liking for the theatre and other arts… …many leading writers dedicated their works to her… …drama became filled with pomp and pageantry… …the Queen conferred some stability on the nation… …the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588……patriotic pride manifested itself in renewed interest in the history of the nation… …writers like Shakespeare wrote a series of national chronicle plays.

Ans to Q 11: These are two formative books… Ascham despised scholasticism… …he urged Englishmen to 'praise unto themselves, and…profit to others'… … North praised Plutarch for reproducing the lives of 'the best persons, of the famous nations of the world'… …a new set of values entered the minds of the reading public.



4.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What factors, apart from the celebrated rediscovery of classical learning, constitute the Renaissance?

Q 2: How do the leading writers of the Elizabethan period embody the ideals of the Renaissance in their literary works?

Q 3: What is Humanism? Show your acquaintance with some of the leading Italian and English humanists.

Q 4: Write a note on the maritime successes of England during the Renaissance touching on their impact on literature.

Q 5: What effects did the new geographical exploration have on the Renaissance writers?

Q 6: How the Renaissance impact literary activities of the time. Write with reference to some of the important literary texts.

Q 7: Provide an account of the greatest achievements of the Renaissance.

Q 8: Explain how the exploration of New Worlds during the time of the Renaissance paved the way for colonial enterprise in later periods.

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UNIT 5: ENLIGHTENMENT I

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Ideas of the Enlightenment

5.4 Early Enlightenment Thinkers

5.5 English Empiricism

5.6 Rationalism

5.7 Let us Sum up

5.8 Further Reading

5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

5.10 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- define the term Enlightenment
- name the early thinkers of Enlightenment
- discuss the main ideas of Empiricism and Rationalism
- note down the occurrences following the Enlightenment
- trace the history and rise of modern Democracy

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block B of this Course. In this unit, we shall discuss the Enlightenment—a term applied to a literary, cultural and philosophical movement that took place in Europe roughly between 1660 and 1770. However, some ideas of the Enlightenment can be actually traced in the time of the Renaissance. The movement claimed the allegiance of a majority of thinkers during the 17th and 18th centuries. Soon, you will learn that to understand the natural world and humankind's place in it, solely based on reason, without turning to religious belief, was the goal of the wide-ranging intellectual movement called the Enlightenment. Emerging through an

unprecedented engagement with the idea of 'Reason', the Enlightenment took in different areas in its intellectual ambit like art, religion, philosophy, literature, language, and political theory. This unit intends to discuss the idea of the Enlightenment, and refer to the works of various thinkers whose contributions had far-reaching effects and influences in the time that followed.

5.3 IDEAS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The ideas of the Enlightenment emanated from France, and soon its impact was felt in different parts of Europe. In France, it was based in the salons and culminated in the great book *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot with contributions of hundreds of leading 'philosophes' (intellectuals). This work was extraordinary in the sense that it gave voice to radical and anticlerical thought, and almost all the contributors of this book advocated reforms. For example, we can take the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who came to symbolise many of the ideals of the Enlightenment. These thinkers were committed to the advancement of scientific thought, which became the basis of the idea of the Enlightenment. Subsequently, the French word 'philosophe' was used to describe the activities of any thinker who advocated the ideas of the Enlightenment. Immanuel Kant and David Hume were two thinkers who best fitted into this concept of a philosopher. Sometimes, the philosophers were also writers who analysed the evils of society, and sought reforms in accordance with the principles of reason. Support came from the salons (the gathering of people held partly to amuse one another and partly to refine taste and increase knowledge through conversation) who entertained them, sponsored their literary works, artistic creations and political ideas. The new intellectual force spread to urban centres across Europe notably England, Scotland, German States, the Netherlands, Russia, Italy, Austria, Spain, the Atlantic and European colonies where it influenced personalities like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

Throughout Europe, the ideas of the Enlightenment were being promoted with the themes of human dignity, freedom, equality and religion forbearance. The French thinker who epitomised the Enlightenment ideals

in the 18th century was François Marie Arouet, more famously known as Voltaire. The importance laid on intellectual autonomy in the Enlightenment period was perhaps most visible in the works of Rene Descartes. Baruch Spinoza a Jewish intellectual and Holland's greatest philosopher, was responsible for spreading the ideas of the Enlightenment throughout Europe. A combination of science and rational outlook contributed to the creation of an unprecedented belief in the importance of 'Reason'. The following were some of the main aspects of what we call the Enlightenment:

1. Politically, the state was responsible for upholding the individual rights.
2. Democracy was considered to be the best possible form of government.
3. Individual dignity was valued above everything else.
4. Equality in all spheres of life was favoured.
5. 'Reason' was more valuable than religion or other faith.

So, the Enlightenment was a cultural project that aimed at bringing in a visible change in the way people responded to society. The Enlightenment thinkers believed that individuals were conditioned by their own resources and the world, and the state would supply them with the proper conditions and guidance. So, proper education of the individual was conceived as crucial for the Enlightenment. The idea of progress was another preoccupation of the Enlightenment thinkers. That human history moves through the growth and progress of 'civilization', had become influential. Thus, the enlightenment helped in weeping away the obsolete existing social and political institutions so that knowledge and culture could flourish. As one of the greatest of the Enlightenment philosophers, Immanuel Kant saw that "the human race…continually advancing in civilization and culture as its natural purpose".

The Age of Reason:

Very often, the period of the Enlightenment is also referred to as the 'Age of Reason'. Because people believed that trust in the human 'Reason' could solve crucial problems and establish essential norms in society. This faith in 'Reason' formed the basis of progress towards a projected life of universal peace and happiness. Thomas Paine rightly called it the "Age of Reason". The Enlightenment is a movement that sought to mobilise the

power of 'Reason' in order to reform society and advance knowledge. It promoted intellectual interchange and opposed intolerance and abuses in Church and State. Emmanuel Kant defined the Enlightenment as "Mankind's final coming of age, from an immature state of ignorance and error". According to the eminent 20th century philosopher Bertrand Russell, the Enlightenment was a phase in the progressive development, which began in antiquity, and 'Reason' that challenged the established order was constant throughout that time. Russell argued that Enlightenment had been born out of the Protestant reaction against Catholic Counter Reformation. The period was characterised by a profound faith in the powers of the human 'Reason' and devotion to clarity of thought, harmony, proportion and balance. The application of 'Reason' led to the dissipation of the darkness of superstition and prejudice, freeing humanity from the earlier reliance on mere authority and unexamined tradition. There developed a deep sense of self- assurance in the force of human 'Reason'. The thinkers of the Enlightenment sought to unify and organise knowledge into one composite whole and felt that there was nothing that could not be explained by 'Reason'. For some thinkers, the model of 'Reason' was the inductive procedure of science which proceeds from a reasoning between facts of experience and general laws. To other thinkers the model was the deduction of particular truths from clear and distinctive ideas, which are known by the light of 'Reason'.

Many thinkers depended on 'Reason' in both these senses. One of the leading German philosopher of the Enlightenment Immanuel Kant in his essay entitled "What is Enlightenment?" pointed to the process of growing Enlightenment or the growth in new ideas and learning. He mainly pointed to 'Rationality' as the means to freedom from the servile obedience to rules and ideas laid down by certain 'authorities'. Another important German philosopher was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz in his book *Principles of Nature and of Grace Founded in Reason* stated "True reasoning depends upon necessary or eternal truths, such as those of logic, numbers, geometry, which establish an indubitable connection of ideas and unfailing consequences." Traditional modes of thought were challenged by the prompting of 'Reason' although both classical and Medieval Christian thinkers

had seen it as an important human faculty. However, the Enlightenment's insistence on 'Reason' was based on the argument that it was the only faculty capable of yielding knowledge. Here, 'Reason' is the instrument by which the well-ordered fundamental laws of nature could be deciphered. These cosmic laws dismissed the presence of a beneficent God, as Newtonian discoveries showed.



LET US KNOW

The Enlightenment has to be considered in terms of some noticeable changes taking place in various levels of the society as well as in the intellectual and philosophical spheres. What you need to seriously examine is how these changes in European thought, finally gave birth to ideas and knowledge based on the 'scientific method'. The Enlightenment has rendered a shaping influence on our familiar world as it came to be founded on a scientific vision of the universe as well as the idea of 'modernity.'



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the significance of the *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot?

Q 2: State some of the basic aspects of the Enlightenment.

Q 3: Why is the Enlightenment period also called the 'Age of Reason'?

Q 4: What were the 'salons'?

Q 5: What do you understand by the term Enlightenment?

5.4 EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

In this section, we will discuss some of the great early thinkers and philosophers of the Enlightenment who have left noticeable mark in the history of ideas. Taking social progress as their mission, these thinkers and philosophers sought to purge the human mind from irrationality and prejudice.

Thus, the contributions of these thinkers helped in creating a society based on freedom, tolerance and reason. You should pay particular attention to the contributions of each one of them and try to know for yourself how they might have contributed to the progress in society.

SIR FRANCIS BACON: (1561-1626)

Francis Bacon was an English philosopher. He was one of the early thinkers who provided the usefulness of inductive reasoning that led him towards Empiricism. Bacon is also famous as the writer of two books namely *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *Novum Organum* (1620). In these two major works, Bacon formulated his 'Induction Method', a modern scientific method more effective than the traditional 'Deductive Method'. In *Novum Organum* he laid down the propositions that actual observation of nature is crucial for knowledge and 'Reason' should be grounded in facts. In the same book, Bacon proclaimed the need to "begin anew from the very foundations" if scientific knowledge was to make any progress. Stressing the Inductive Method that used examples to prove, Bacon wanted to show how 'Reason' keeps human beings free from false beliefs and ideas in practical life. His 'Inductive Method' for which he is most famous, usually has three steps: Factual description, their tabulation or classification into presences or absences or varying presences, and then the rejection of what is not connected with the tables.

RENE DESCARTES: (1596-1650)

Descartes was a French philosopher. Descartes is considered the 'father' of Modern Western Philosophy. Modern 'Rationalism' begins in the philosophy of Descartes. He was a mathematician and according to him, the perfect form of knowledge can be gained only through mathematical demonstration. He believed that knowledge is given by clear vision of intellect or 'Reason'. For him intuition is the undoubted, immediate apprehension of self–evident truth by 'Reason'. He agreed with Bacon's discarding of the authority of the ancients but his way of understanding was through self–doubt and discovery. 'Rationality' became the governing principle of the Cartesian method. Descartes' influence was very strong on Spinoza whose rationalism and unorthodox views finally got him expelled from the Jewish

community to which he belonged by birth. His scepticism helped him to doubt everything including the senses whose perceptions could be deceptive. From such an argument, Descartes proceeded to the certainty that only the "I" could provide the "first principle of the Philosophy" which he had sought. Descartes posited his famous dualism distinguishing between the mind and the body according to which the mind 'thinks' while it is the body which belongs to the world of space, time and materiality. This is what provides the basis of his theory of "Cogito" as he stated in his book *Discourse on Method* (1637)" Cogito Ergo Sum" meaning "I think, therefore I exist." This was the route by which a mechanistic view of the world was introduced in his contemporary intellectual field.

BARUCH SPINOZA: (1632-77)

Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher. He had immense faith in 'Reason'. Like a true 'Rationalist', he held that we could know about truth through 'Reason'. 'Reason' can give us knowledge of reality because reality itself is rational in nature. According to Spinoza, God himself created the world 'Rationally' and intuition is the realisation of true knowledge. He inspired Radical Enlightenment, which in its political form adhered to Democracy, racial and sexual equality, and individual liberty of life style, full freedom of thought and the expression of press. In his ideas, we find a discussion of how the active and passive emotions affect our activities, and how we are attached or released from our circumstances in the world. Most importantly, according to Spinoza, "the intellectual love of God" essentialised through emotions can be realised through the understanding of the nature of the world.

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET OR VOLTAIRE: (1694-1778)

François Marie Arouet was a French Enlightenment writer, historian and philosopher. He was a radical exponent of freedom and attacked all forms of domination. He was responsible for taking Newton's ideas to France and for providing more visibility to Empiricism in Europe. The publication of his *Philosophical Letters* (1734) caused a furore in France, as it rebuffed the philosophy and culture of his own country. He also commented on various matters relating to British social, cultural and political life. He was full of

praise for British philosophy and Empiricism and opined that Britain's religious tolerance and social harmony was one of its major advantages over the French. Voltaire's views were a major call for the revaluation of values that came to characterise Enlightenment ideals. His views activated the climate of serious thought in the Continent. Voltaire was an advocate of the right to intellectual opinion and a defender of freedom of speech. His attack on religious bigotry, suggests the strong rational basis that held together the ideals of Enlightenment philosophy. His contribution to Enlightenment philosophy was remarkable as he was able to fuse together many of the strands that lay scattered across the Continent in his writings.



LET US KNOW

You must understand that Bacon, along with the French and the Dutch Rationalist thinkers, René Descartes and Spinoza, was a true precursors of the Enlightenment. The two important strands of Enlightenment thought—Rationalism and Empiricism, are represented by Bacon and Descartes. Another important strand was 'Materialism', which is well represented by Spinoza's roughly contemporaneous British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes.

BARON DE MONTESQUIEU: (1689-1755)

Montesquieu was a French social commentator and political thinker. He showed the use of empirical framework in political discourse. His book *Spirit of Laws (*1748) was a path-breaking effort as it tried to assess the political institutions, traditions behind their formations and the logic supporting such structures. He tried to evaluate the reasons behind the variety of governments and the principles that informed them. Like Voltaire, he favoured the British over the French for offering a more liberal form of government. He was the first political theorist to propose a threefold division of government–the executive, the legislative and the judicial, which was a major

influence upon the makers of the constitution of the United States. The ideas of both these thinkers fostered the climate of Enlightenment and their radical positions showed how clarity of vision and proper concept of subjects could facilitate new ideas.

JOHN LOCKE: (1632-1704)

John Locke was an English philosopher. He was a major inspiration to the Enlightenment intellectuals. His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) set forward theories of education and personal development, and placed human knowledge within the frame of perception. He placed man's intellectual capacities at the centre of a universe, which was only beginning to be a part of the scientific investigation. He was instrumental in visualising the economic aspect of man's life in the context of the 'laws of nature'. He reacted against Descartes' Rationalism and criticised his theory of innate ideas. According to him, the mind receives ideas from experience. He is an Empiricist, but he believes in the existence of matter, mind or soul, and God. Locke's ideas suggested that human progress was part of human design, intention and effort, and hence, this validated the supremacy of Reason.

GEORGE BERKELEY: (1685-1783) & DAVID HUME: (1711-76)

Berkeley was an Irish philosopher. His philosophy was based on how the sensible world is a part of reality but how it has to be accorded a secondary role for not being independent of the mind. For Berkley, the sensible world is 'real' but subordinate to the mind. Berkeley can be considered the originator of the philosophical position in Epistemology known as Phenomenology. The Scottish philosopher David Hume on the other hand, taking lead from Locke and Berkeley, believed that knowledge had its source in sense-impressions. For him, the mind was simply "a bundle of perceptions" without unity or cohesiveness and if there was uniformity in perception, it was due to "an associating quality of the mind". For Hume, philosophy was the experimental, inductive science of human nature. Hume was interested in raising greater awareness of reality and the facts of experience.



LET US KNOW

You should note that Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was another great exponent of the new thoughts of the Enlightenment and he inspired many thinkers and intellectuals in the field of physics. His *Philosophiae Naturalis* and *Principia Mathematica* are seminal contributions to modern science as they symbolise a scientific revolution rejecting the idea of a divine presence. In an age which searched for new ways to understand external reality, the Newtonian method directed understanding "from the phenomena of motions to investigate the forces of nature, and then from these forces to demonstrate the other phenomena."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Who are the philosophers and major thinkers of the Enlightenment?

Q 7: What do you understand by the Cartesian Cogito? What was its significance for the Enlightenment?

Q 8: Explain Bacon's Contributions as an Enlightenment thinker?

5.5 ENGLISH EMPIRICISM

In this section we shall try to discuss how the Enlightenment received impetus from the contemporary Empiricist and Rationalist philosophers. When you finish reading the section, you will find that the discussions and contradictions among the philosophers some of who are already discussed in the previous section, helped in inculcating a strong liking for the exploration and dissemination of knowledge.

Empiricism is a philosophical theory that states that knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience. One of several views of epistemology, the study of human knowledge, along with Rationalism and Skepticism, empiricism emphasises the role of empirical evidence in the formation of ideas, over the notion of innate ideas. Empiricism in the context of scientific temperament emphasises evidence, especially as discovered through experiments.

Empiricism, which is an important feature of Enlightenment philosophy, is mainly identified with the names of philosophers like John Locke, David Hume and George Berkeley, who are hailed as the greatest exponents of British Empiricism. Empiricism is that theory of knowledge which opposes other theories of knowledge such as Rationalism, Idealism and Historicism. Empiricism asserts that knowledge comes from sensory experience. It is a theory according to which experience is the source of true knowledge. It is a reaction against Rationalism. Empiricism emphasises the role of experience and evidence, especially sensory perception in the formation of ideas over the notion of innate ideas or tradition. Empiricism emphasises those aspects of scientific knowledge that are closely related to evidence. It is a pursuit of knowledge, purely through experience by means of observations and sometimes experimentation. This theory is also called 'Posteriori Theory' because according to this theory, knowledge is posterior or dependent on experience.

You must note that John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume were the primary exponents of Empiricism in the 18th century. According to Locke, our knowledge of things is a perception of ideas that are in accordance or dis-accordance with each other, which is very different from the quest for certainty of Descartes. A generation later, an Anglican bishop determined that Locke's view immediately opened a door that would lead to Atheism—the belief that God does not exist. The Scottish philosopher David Hume responded to Berkeley's criticisms of Locke, as well as other differences between early modern philosophers, and moved Empiricism to new level of scepticism. Hume argued in keeping with the Empiricist view that knowledge is derived from sense experience, but he also accepted that this has implications not normally acceptable to philosophers. He maintained that our beliefs are a result of accumulated sense experience.

5.6 RATIONALISM

Rationalism, on the other hand, is the theory of knowledge according to which 'Reason' or intellect is the main source of knowledge. Rationalism rejects all knowledge derived from sense experience. Socrates and Plato are the earliest Rationalist philosophers. According to the Rationalists, true

knowledge originates from 'Reason'. Rationalism that was advanced by these two philosophers became articulate in the philosophy of Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. We are repeatedly reminded of Descartes by the famous phrase "I think, therefore I exist" or *"Cogito Ergo Sum"* in Latin, which he had used in his work *Discourse on Method* (1637). Descartes used his Cogito as part of what he used to call 'methodological skepticism'. In other words, he thought that the right way of searching for truth and making it a part of systematic process was by searching for certainty. This led to the famous "Cartesian doubt" or doubt as method. He deals with it in his work, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). The only certainty that he perceived is the "I", — the thinking self. The only knowledge that can be taken to be true is that one can think. This is a revolutionary philosophical proposition that perhaps changed the whole intellectual world in the 17th century.

However, the Rationalist philosophers differed among themselves on how much importance should be given to experience in yielding to knowledge. Some Rationalists even regarded experience as wholly misleading while others attached some values to it. They say that knowledge given by experience is confused knowledge. However, in spite of their differences they all agreed that 'Reason' alone could give us certain and perfect knowledge. Rationalism is also called 'Priori Theory' of knowledge as according to this theory; knowledge is prior or independent of experience. Descartes is considered the father of modern Rationalism. Spinoza gave a developed form to the Rationalism initiated by Descartes. Like Descartes, Spinoza had immense faith in 'Reason'. A true Rationalist Spinoza held that we could know truth through 'Reason'. He too believed that if we start with self-evident principles and prove the steps involved in the argument then we will be able to reach certain and universal knowledge. Spinoza uses the geometrical method of philosophy to arrive at certain truths. Another Rationalist Leibniz was a famous mathematician who held that the world has logical and mathematical order. Laws that govern this world order are rational. Therefore, the world can only be comprehended by 'Reason'. According to him, knowledge is simply brought out and manifested by

experience. The 'Rational' laws governing the world are to be found only in 'Reason' because the world has been created by God based on 'Reason'.



LET US KNOW

Philosophical empiricists hold that no knowledge to be properly inferred or deduced unless it is derived from one's sense-based experience. This view is commonly contrasted with rationalism, which states that knowledge may be derived from reason independently of the senses. Some of the basic differences between Empiricism and Rationalism can be seen through the ideas of Locke and Descartes. Locke saw sensory impressions as leading to knowledge. Assuming that ideas are mental concepts, Locke is very much concerned with the origins of ideas. Locke refuted the notion of innate ideas to define true ideas and to explain the relation of thought to language. For Locke, as you have read, knowledge is based only on sense-experience, and on the subsequent reflection on the already gained experience. According to Locke, the mind is a '*tabula rasa'*, a 'blank slate' on which is written our experience of the world. In this, he departs from the 'Rationalist' Rene Descartes who argued that we have 'innate ideas', rather than the ideas gained through experience of the external world. Such reflections on our mental operations give us perception, thought, reason, belief and doubt.

So, you find, although different in approach, both Empiricism and Rationalism started with the common goal of forming theories of knowledge. You should note that the search for knowledge based on 'truth' and 'Reason' became the starting point for every Enlightenment thinker and philosopher.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: Briefly state the basic ideas of Empiricism.

Q 10: What do you understand by the term Rationalism? Who are its main exponents?



5.7 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the Enlightenment is a term applied to a literary and philosophical movement in Europe between 1660 and 1770. This period is characterised by a profound faith on human 'Reason' as adequate to solve crucial problems and to establish essential norms in life. The idea of the Enlightenment emanated from France. The first Democratic constitution was originally based on the principles of the Enlightenment. The early thinkers of the Enlightenment are Spinoza, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Descartes and Locke. Ideas of the Enlightenment can be understood in terms of the philosophical deliberations of the Empiricists and Rationalists. Empiricism is the theory of knowledge according to which experience is the source of true knowledge. Rationalism is the other theory of knowledge according to which 'Reason' or intellect is the main source of knowledge. The Enlightenment ushered in a new way of thinking that championed accomplishments of humankind. The Enlightenment was a cultural, scientific, social, literary and intellectual development, whose impact on the writers like Francis Bacon is quite obvious.



5.8 FURTHER READING

1) Audi, Robert. (ed). (1999). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Cambridge* University Press.

2) Briggs, Asa.(1999). *A Social History of England. (Third* Edition). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

3) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2009) .*English Social and Cultural History*. New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

4) Trevelyan, G.M. (1986). *English Social History.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: French Enlightenment began with a great book *Encyclopédie* edited by Denis Diderot… …this book gave voice to various radical and reformist thinkers… …they helped in advancing scientific thought… …subsequently, the French word 'philosophe' became a part of common intellectual parlance.

Ans to Q 2: Politically, the state was responsible for upholding the individual rights… …democracy was the best possible form of Government… …individual dignity is most important… …equality in all spheres of life… … 'Reason' is more valuable than religion.

Ans to Q 3: The term 'Age of Reason' is coined by Thomas Paine… …the Enlightenment sought to uphold the power of 'Reason' in societal reforms and advancement of knowledge… …philosophers like Emmanuel Kant emphasised that 'Reason' helped in the advancement of civilization… ...the Enlightenment 'Reason' freed human beings from the darkness of superstition and prejudice.

Ans to Q 4: The gathering of people held partly to amuse one another and partly to refine taste and increase knowledge through conversation… …they entertained the writers and philosophers, sponsored their literary works, artistic creations and political ideas.

Ans to Q 5: The Enlightenment was a term applied to a literary, cultural and philosophical movement that took place in Europe between 1660 and 1770… …it started as part of an attempt to understand the natural world and humankind's place in it… …it is based mainly on 'Reason', without turning to religious belief.

Ans to Q 6: For Descartes, rationality is the governing principle of his Cartesian Cogito… …he asserted that only the "I" could provide the "first principle of the Philosophy"… …he put more emphasis on the mind which 'thinks' as opposed to the body that belongs to the world of space, time and materiality… …this idea formed the basis of his

"Cogito Ergo Sum" meaning "I think, therefore I exist."

Ans to Q 7: In Empiricism, experience is the source of true knowledge… …John Locke, George Berkley and David Hume are the 18th century Empiricists… … Empiricism emphasises the role of sensory perception in the formation of ideas over the notion of innate ideas or tradition… …it is a pursuit of knowledge purely by means of observations and sometimes by experimentation.

Ans to Q 8: Francis Bacon provided the usefulness of inductive reasoning that led him towards Empiricism… …In his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *Novum Organum* (1620), he formulated his 'Induction Method'… …he held that actual observation of nature is crucial for knowledge and 'Reason' should be grounded in facts.

Ans to Q 9: Empiricism holds that that knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience… …Empiricism emphasises the role of empirical evidence in the formation of ideas, over the notion of innate ideas… …Empiricism is mainly identified with the names of philosophers like John Locke, David Hume and George Berkeley.

Ans to Q 10: Rationalism sees' Reason' or intellect as the main source of knowledge… …It rejects all knowledge derived from sense experience… …Socrates and Plato are the earliest Rationalist philosophers… …Rene Descartes, Benedict Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz are the main Rationalists.



5.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Define Enlightenment. Briefly describe the history of its development in Europe.

Q 2: What are the important aspects of the Enlightenment? Illustrate with examples.

Q 3: What was the impact of the Enlightenment on the society of the 18th century?

Q 4: Who were the early thinkers of the Enlightenment? Discuss their contribution in detail.

Q 5: Provide a comparative analysis of Empiricism and Rationalism as the offshoots of the Enlightenment.

Q 6: Define Empiricism and Rationalism? How do you think these philosophical trends helped in the proliferation of the idea of knowledge in the 17th and 18th centuries?

Q 7: Why is it that the age of Enlightenment is often referred to as an "Age of Reason"? Elaborate.

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UNIT 6: ENLIGHTENMENT II

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Aftermath of the Enlightenment

6.4 Rise of Democracy

6.4.1 Medieval Developments: The Magna Carta

6.4.2 Role of Church & the State of Learning: Democracy in the 16th and 17th Century

6.4.3 Developments from 18th to 20th Centuries

6.5 Let us Sum up

6.6 Further Reading

6.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.8 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- enlist the events following the aftermath of the Enlightenment
- have some ideas of the changes in social formations and movements
- find out how the social formations and movements finally lead to re-distribution of social and political power
- explain democracy as a description of a new and evolving social structure

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will get to read about the development following the Enlightenment with particular emphasis on the rise of modern democracy that refers to the emerging social structure in the 17th – 18th century Europe. The Enlightenment pioneered the application of scientific methods to study human society, one of them being the processes of democratic temperaments. However, the idea of modern democracy is closely linked to the idea of a nation, which shares history with colonialism. This unit shall

help you to explain how 'modern democracy' evolved in Western European history starting from the Magna Carta which put a check on the institution of monarchy, to the idea of 'modernity', in the eighteenth century Europe. However, in this unit, we shall look at democracy more as a social process, and less as a political concept, which proceeds through history in various ways. Besides, attempts will be made in this unit to view the social changes which brought about the downfall of the earlier feudal order, and to connect them to our 'literary' traditions and history.

6.3 AFTERMATH OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

You have learnt that the Enlightenment pioneered the application of scientific methods to study human society. It produced a set of basic principles about human affairs. The goal of society was to bring in improvement in material and social life. The Enlightenment thinkers showed an interest in technological change for greater prosperity. There was popularisation of new ideas to encourage changes in the habits and beliefs of many ordinary people. Clubs and Coffee houses allowed people to discuss latest reform ideas. Scientists like Newton and philosophers like John Locke were challenging the old order. Newton's laws of gravity and motion described the world in terms of natural law beyond any spiritual force. In the wake of political turmoil in England, Locke asserted the right of a people to change a government that did not protect natural rights of life, liberty and property. The old way of life was represented by superstition, an angry God and absolute submission to authority. The thinkers of the Enlightenment ushered in a new way of thinking that championed accomplishments of humankind. People were beginning to doubt the existence of a God who could predestine human beings to eternal damnation and empower a tyrant for a king. The Enlightenment also brought in tolerance in religious matters. The whole of Europe was changed by these ideas evident in all fields. Individuals did not have to accept despair as science and 'Reason' could bring happiness and progress.

With the coming of the Enlightenment, kings no longer had the right to rule by divine right. They had an obligation to their subjects. Attitudes towards children began to shift in many social groups. Older methods of physical discipline were criticised in favour of more restrained behaviour

that would respect goodness and innocence of children. Equality in the treatment of women and children was emphasised with love and emotional bonding getting prominence. Mary Wollstonecraft was the first thinker of the 18th century to apply ideas of the Enlightenment to explain the condition of women. What Montesquieu, the French social commentator and political thinker, did to the idea of the government, Wollstonecraft did to that of the domestic issues and affairs. The Enlightenment philosophy also addressed issues of freedom, taxation, economics and state policy. There was improvement in trade and commerce with many changes coming in. The field of agriculture moved forward with the introduction of new technology. The writings of Benjamin Franklin made many Enlightenment ideas accessible to the general public. The Enlightenment was thus manifested with the preoccupation of progress in all fields. It was a cultural, scientific, social, political, literary and intellectual development.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Which are the progressive developments following the Enlightenment?

Q 2: Mention some of the political and social changes after the Enlightenment?

Q 3: Mention the aspects on the basis of which modern democracy is to be studied?

6.4 RISE OF DEMOCRACY

As we have already discussed, literally 'democracy' means rule by the people (from the Greek *demos*, "people", and kratos, "rule"). Democracy is a form of Government in which the citizens of the country has the right to make political decisions by sending representatives chosen by and responsible to them. Thus, democracy is a form of government in which the powers of the majority are exercised within a framework of a constitution. Hence, democracy is sometimes referred to as "rule of the majority". Democracy was originally conceived in Classical Greece, where political representatives were chosen by a jury from amongst the male

citizens: rich and poor. Democracy usually consists of four key elements, (a) A free and fair election to choose and replace the Government, (b) The active participation of the citizens in politics and civic life; (c) Protection of the human rights of all citizens, and (d) A rule of law.

So, the concept of Democracy, which is a political concept, has evolved over time. However, for our purpose, we must narrow down our attention on Democracy to view the social changes following the decline of the feudal order, and then connect it to the 'literary' traditions and history. Keeping that in mind, attempts have been made in this unit to understand how "modern democracy" is modelled on what happened in England and Europe, and then how those ideas descended to us through colonial education. Thus, the beginning and development of modern democracy shall be discussed here in connection with the evolution of parliament, the separation of powers, development of the rule of law and the principle of representation. As has been mentioned already, to such developments, we must add the profoundly important intellectual and social developments of the Enlightenment as well as the American and French revolutions.

Democracy has its origins in Ancient Greece but democratic practices are evident in earlier societies including Mesopotamia, Phoenicia and India. Other cultures that have contributed to the evolution of Democracy include Ancient Rome, Europe, North and South America. The concept of Democracy arose from ideas and institutions that developed during European Middle Ages and the Age of the Enlightenment, and the American and French Revolutions. Democracy has been called the last form of Government and has spread considerably across the globe. The Greek city state of Athens established what is generally held as the first Democracy in 507 BC. During the Middle ages, there were various systems involving elections or assemblies involving a small amount of population. The first elected Parliament of England was De Montfort's Parliament which was established in 1265. The Power of the Parliament increased over succeeding centuries. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, there was increase in the influence of the Parliament with the enactment of the Bill of Rights in 1689, which codified certain rights. However, let us have a discussion of modern democracy in terms of various periods of developments.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What is known as the Magna Carta?

Q 5: Where did democracy have its origin?

6.4.1 Medieval Developments: The Magna Carta

You will feel interested to learn that modern democratic government has been shaped, to a large extent, by the ideas and institutions of Medieval Europe. Most notably, the concept of divine, natural, and customary law often affected the exercise of power. Thus, the growing practice by European rulers of seeking approval of their policies, as in the right to levy taxes, became very significant. This practice consisted of consulting the different 'estates' or 'group interests'. Modern parliaments have their origins in such gatherings. The Magna Carta arises from just such an idea of decisions based on consensus.

Magna Carta Libertatum or "the Great Charter of the Liberties", commonly called **Magna Carta** is a charter agreed to by King John of England at Runnymede near Windsor, on 15 June 1215. First drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury to make peace between the unpopular King and a group of rebellious baron. It promised the protection of church rights, protection for the barons from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and limitations on feudal payments to the Crown. Thus, neither the king nor the barons stood by their commitments, which led to the First Baron's War. After King John's death, the regency government of his young son, Henry III, reissued the charter document in 1216, stripped off some of its more radical contents, in an unsuccessful bid to build political support for their cause. Thus, the charter became part of English political life and was renewed each time a new monarch was enthroned. Although, as time went by, the English Parliament started passing new laws, it lost some of its practical significance.

At the end of the 16th century, there was an upsurge in interest

in Magna Carta. Lawyers and historians at that time believed that there was an ancient English constitution, going back to the days of the Anglo Saxons that protected individual English freedom. They even argued that the Norman Conquest of 1066 had overthrown these rights, and that Magna Carta had been a popular attempt to restore them, making the charter an essential foundation for the contemporary powers of Parliament and legal principles such as habeas corpus. Although this historical account was badly flawed, Magna Carta still forms an important symbol of liberty today.

From 1272 to 1307, England was ruled by King Edward I, who is often considered to be an ideal Medieval king. Edward sought to obtain consent for his taxation and to foster the relation between the king and subjects. With this aim in view, Edward would call representatives from the shires and the towns to Parliament. Historians have argued over Edward's Parliament, whether it functioned like an institution of representation. However, it certainly laid the foundation of what later developed into the institution parliament in modern times. Thus, the English government got used to "parliaments" since 1254. But, with Edward's practice, Parliament became a distinctive feature of English politics by 1307. The Parliament of 1295 is called the "Model Parliament" because it included representatives of shires, boroughs, and some minor clergy. For Edward I, parliaments and councils were the institutions by which many statutes could be enacted, especially the great statutes promulgated between 1275 and 1290. Edward's summoning of representatives to Parliament is also accompanied by his cultivating the idea of the community of the realm. This means that there was now the concept of a nation.

In the 13th century England, we see two directions of the emergent democracy. One was the beginning of Parliament, and the other was the new idea of the "community of the land". We have seen the achievements of Henry II in bringing able 'administration to the realm'. Henry's chief concern was with the judicial system. The

question of judicial systems is connected with ideas of moral conduct on the one hand, and with ideas of whose law and which law. In 13th century England, we see the development of law in the reign of Edward I. English customary law, that is, law based on established customs and practices, is known as English 'common law'. Until the 19th century, this common law developed as the body of principles evolving from the practice of judges.



LET US KNOW

You will note that, the Church in Medieval England had its own system of laws and courts separate from the King's and the state's. After Henry II assumed kingship, he laid claim to the power of adjudicating the offences of clerics (church officials) and other matters which the Church kept to itself. Henry's actions settled the primacy of common law in England-something that was to have great consequences for the English-speaking world later.

Perhaps you know that state, monarch, church, law, government are—all questions of power and politics. While they may not be directly related to literature, we can see their effects on language and literary texts when we look at Chaucer's great 'Prologue' to *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's History Plays, the emergence of English as the official language, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, Donne's "The Sunne Rising", the changes in art and architecture, literary production, and in so many other textual ways. You can find out for yourself many more such examples.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Describe King Edward's contributions to English Politics.

6.4.2 ROLE OF CHURCH & THE STATE OF LEARNING: DEMOCRACY IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY

Let us in this section turn towards the state of the Church and the world of learning from the medieval to the subsequent periods. The Reformation helps us to understand what was happening to the Church in the late medieval ages.

By the 15th century, there had been a decline in Scholastic theology. The view was that the Church needed to return to its authentic religious roots as available in the New Testament. Hostility towards the clergy or what came to be named 'anticlericalism' became quite widespread. Perhaps, you know that Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* so vividly refers to the corruption of the clergy. Also, with the new tide of the Renaissance came the intellectual re-thinking of the Roman Catholic teachings themselves. Renaissance Humanism became instrumental for a new cultural blossoming based on a world of knowledge, which had been solely under the control of the Church throughout the Middle Ages. In the context of the 14th century England, the anticlericalism of the Oxford teacher John Wycliff, is quite well-known. Most of his followers, known as 'Lollards' or 'Wycliffites', opposed Roman domination of the English church among other things. They developed Wycliff's controversial ideas into a political agenda which denounced the church as irredeemably deficient and the prelates as agents of Satan and Antichrist. Anticlerical literature signals a moment of transition in which new classes were emerging, and an older structure was breaking down.

The **English Reformation**, a movement specifically linked to religious power and domination, was a general dislike of priests and the pretensions of the Church which prevailed all over Western Europe. The Church was un-Christian in the wealth it possessed and desired. Acting like a State within a realm, it owned about one-third of English soil and some abbots and bishops controlled larger revenues than any nobleman did. William Tyndale needs special

mentioning here as the English biblical translator, humanist, and Protestant leader who believed that every Christian should be able to read the Bible in his own language. Being prevented by the English Church authorities from translating the Bible, he went to Germany in 1524. His New Testament translation was completed in July 1525 and its English version came out in 1526. The English Reformation was made possible as much through the actions of King Henry VIII following which he came to be known as the "Defender of the Faith". Protestant demands for Reformation came at a time when **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) was demanding deeper changes in the rituals of the church. He used his skills in the German language to attack the moral, financial and administrative malpractices in Roman Catholicism although he insisted that his critique was directed at the doctrine of the church and the distortions of the gospel. Luther refused to pay the ritualistic obedience due to the church and the Pope, thereby causing himself to be excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1521. In England, by the time of Elizabeth I, Protestantism had completely overtaken the Anglican Church. Nevertheless, religious life in the 17th and 18th centuries continued to be culturally important.



LET US KNOW

As observed by M H Abrams in his *Glossary*, the Reformation led by Martin Luther was a successful heresy which struck at the very foundations of the institutionalism of the Roman Catholic Church. This early Protestantism was grounded on each individual's inner experience of spiritual struggle and salvation. Faith (based on the word of the Bible) was alone thought competent to save, and salvation itself was regarded as a direct transaction with God, without the necessity of intermediation by Church, priest, or sacrament. For this reason, Protestantism is sometimes said to have been an extreme manifestation of "Renaissance individualism" in northern Europe. Soon, it developed its own type of institutionalism in the theocracy proposed by John Calvin (1509-64) and his Puritan

followers. Although England officially broke with the Catholic church during the reign of Henry VIII, the new state religious establishment (the Anglican church) headed by the monarch retained many of the characteristics of the old church while embracing selected Protestant theological principles. The result was a political and theological compromise that remained the subject of heated debate for centuries.

We have, therefore, to see democracy in much larger terms as the sum of social, religious, and economic processes. The changes within the church are reflections of larger changes in society. Particular events, such as King Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, or Martin Luther's defiance of the church authorities ultimately express what social changes were leading to. The cutting of the religious cord binding England to papal dictates, and the beheading of the Stuart king, Charles I, in 1649 all belong to the march of democracy. Renaissance humanism brought in the scholarly emphasis on the material existence of the human race by which the profession of divinity (as by the clergy) would be contested. The age of Marlowe and Shakespeare was written in the language of feudal land tenure and the rise of mercantilism. This was a world different from Chaucer's.

In order to trace the shades of democracy in modern form, we can look more closely at England roughly around the 1640s and thenceforth. For example, the Puritan revolution in England led by Oliver Cromwell and the Roundheads was the result of religious and political thought. It was not the result of desire to recast society or to redistribute wealth. There were more lords and gentlemen on the side of the King, but more yeomen and townsfolk on the side of Parliament. Entire London, above all, supported the Parliament. The stage of economic and social development which had reached England in 1640, was perhaps a necessary condition for the religious and political movements flaring up into the beheading of Charles I.

The Puritan society in which the Cromwellian revolution had

to play its role, helped in advancing the cause of democracy. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), the expression of Puritanism is obvious. Bunyan's, lonely Puritan represented Puritanism in society in the manner of Oliver Cromwell and his followers. The Puritans being hard-working, devoutly religious, disciplined people emerged as a great force. Between 1646 and 1649, the Parliament undertook to reform and re-structure the Royalist state of the Stuart king, and succeeded in dismantling this erstwhile organisation of governance by making changes in the Anglican Church as well as in the abolition of Charles' reign and the House of Lords in Parliament. The parliament retained its powers till Oliver Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector in 1653.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Who were the Lollards?

Q 8: What is known as the Reformation?

Q 9: Explain the role Cromwell played in changing the political structure of England.

6.4.3 Democracies from 18th to 20th Centuries

The 18th century is to be remembered as the time when the monarch collided with the nation, or the people. The state (as government and administration) would stand aside from both. This century is considered a formative period if seen in line with the development of modern ideas of politics and the state. In 1700, European hereditary rulers were still struggling for power. By 1789, the French Revolution drastically altered the situation in France. As a milestone in the move towards modern democratic government, the French Revolution stands out in upholding the ideals of national sovereignty, and the liberty and the equality of the citizens. The earlier theory of the 'divine right of kings' and the patrimonial attitude of kings was, in course of time, replaced by the theory that government

was to be in the interests of public welfare. Since the Renaissance, the idea had increasingly taken root that the state was an abstract entity. Later, this would mean that there would be no question of hereditary right in continuing government. Rather, the state was independent of whoever happened to be ruling at a given moment. Governments would have to act in the name of the state and the state would be the source of legitimate authority. By the 19th century, the people would lay stronger claims to sovereignty.

The first nation in modern history to adopt a democratic constitution was the short-lived Corsican Republic in 1755. This constitution was based on the principles of the Enlightenment and it allowed female suffrage which was not allowed in the democracies that followed. In the colonial period before 1776, only adult white male property owners could vote. In 1788, the United States Constitution provided for an elected government. On the American Frontier, democracy became a way of life with widespread social, economic and political equality. During 1820's and 1830's, Black Americans returned to freedom in Africa and the system evolved from Jeffersonian Democracy to Jacksonian Democracy. In 1789, the Revolutionary France adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and of the Citizen, and Universal Male Suffrage was established in March 1848. This was a milestone in the history of Democracy. A historical survey would tell you that several revolutions broke out in Europe with demands for liberal constitutions and democratic governments.

The 20th century transitions to Liberal Democracy resulted from decolonisation and economic circumstances of World War I. The dissolution of the Ottoman and Austro- Hungarian empires helped in forming new nation states in Europe. In 1920s, Democracy flourished but the Great Depression brought disenchantment, and many countries of Europe, Latin America and Asia turned to dictatorship. Fascism flourished in Nazi Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal. World War II brought in definite reversal of this trend in Western Europe. This was followed by decolonisation and many

new states emerged with democratic constitutions. India emerged as the world's largest democracy. By 1960, vast majority of country-states became Democracies. Economic malaise in 1980s, along with resentment of communist oppression, contributed to the democratisation of Eastern bloc countries. This trend spread to Africa in 1990's. According to the World Forum on Democracy, electoral Democracies now represent 120 of the 192 existing countries, and constitute 58.2% of the world's total population.



LET US KNOW

However, to the discussion of modern democracy, you must also necessarily add the profoundly important intellectual and social developments of the Enlightenment as well as the American and French revolutions. Because, the American Declaration of Independence (1776), and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) are two seminal documents of this period. Universal suffrage, which allowed the election of representative legislative bodies, became in the 19th and 20th centuries the central institutions of democratic governments.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: What ideas of democracy evolved during the 17th century?

Q 11: How did Democracy flourished in the 20th century?



6.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that 'democracy' should be seen as an idea which takes different shapes at various moments in history. As an ideal, it brought in significant changes in the medieval age, the Renaissance,

the Reformation, the Civil War in England, and then the 18th century. The concept of Democracy is evolving even today. So, the important point is that 'democracy' is not to be seen as a static model revolving around voting and franchise only. It is partly the scope to question authority, partly the opposition to injustice, partly the redistribution of wealth, as partly the redistribution of power. State, monarch, Church, law, government are all questions of power and politics. While they may not be directly related to literature, you all can very well spot their effects on language and literary texts when we look at famous examples like Chaucer's 'Prologue' to *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's History Plays, or the emergence of English as the official language, and so on.



6.6 FURTHER READING

1) Audi, Robert. (ed). (1999). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Cambridge* University Press.

2) Briggs, Asa.(1999). *A Social History of England. (Third* Edition). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

3) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2009) .*English Social and Cultural History*. New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

4) Trevelyan, G.M. (1986). *English Social History.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.



6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: New ideas to encourage changes in the habits and beliefs of common people… …Clubs and Coffee houses allowed people to discuss latest reform ideas… … Newton challenged the old order by describing the world in terms of natural law beyond any spiritual force.

Ans to Q 2: Kings no longer had the right to rule by divine right… …Equality

in the treatment of women and children was emphasised… …Mary Wollstonecraft applied ideas of the Enlightenment to explain the condition of women… …issues of freedom, taxation, economics and state policy were also addressed… …in the field of agriculture, new technology got introduced.

Ans to Q 3: The evolution of parliament, the separation of powers, development of the rule of law and the principle of representation.

Ans to Q 4: A charter agreed to by King John of England… …drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury to make peace between the unpopular King and a group of rebellious baron… …the protection of church rights, protection for the barons from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and limitations on feudal payments to the Crown.

Ans to Q 5: Democracy had its origins in Ancient Greece… …it was first established in Athens in 507 BC… …the first Democratic constitution was based on the principles of Enlightenment… …Universal Male Suffrage was established in France in March 1848… …by 1960, many countries turned Democratic.

Ans to Q 6: Edward sought to obtain consent for his taxation and to foster the relation between the king and subjects... ...he called representatives from the shires and the towns to Parliament… …it certainly laid the foundation of what later developed into the institution parliament in modern times… …he held that parliaments and councils were the institutions by which many statutes could be enacted.

Ans to Q 7: The followers of John Wycliff… … they opposed Roman domination of the English church… ...they developed Wycliff's controversial ideas into a political agenda which denounced the church as irredeemably deficient and the prelates as agents of Satan and Antichrist… …this was controversial.

Ans to Q 8: Protestant demands for Reformation came at a time when **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) was demanding deeper changes in the rituals of the church. He used his skills in the German language to attack the moral, financial and administrative malpractices in Roman Catholicism although he insisted that his critique was directed at the doctrine of the church and the distortions of the gospel.

Ans to Q 9: Cromwell helped in advancing the cause of democracy… …The Puritans who were the followers of Cromwell, being hard-working, devoutly religious, disciplined people emerged as a great force… …between 1646 and 1649, the Parliament undertook to reform and re-structure the Royalist state of the Stuart king… …the Parliament retained its powers till Oliver Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector in 1653.

Ans to Q 10: As a milestone in the move towards modern democratic government, the French Revolution stands out in upholding the ideals of national sovereignty, and the liberty and the equality of the citizens… … the 'divine right of kings' and the patrimonial attitude of kings was, in course of time, replaced by the theory that government was to be in the interests of public welfare.

Ans to Q 11: The 20th century transitions to Liberal Democracy resulted from decolonisation and economic circumstances of World War I… …The dissolution of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires helped in forming new nation states in Europe… …following decolonisation, many new states emerged with democratic constitutions… … India emerged as the world's largest democracy.



6.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How did the idea of modern Democracy evolve? Discuss in detail.

Q 2: What were the changes that occurred in the human society following the Enlightenment?

Q 3: Which political condition led to the making of the charter called the 'Magna Carta'?

Q 4: Write a note on the English Reformation with particular reference to the Church and the state.

Q 5: In what ways, can you state that Democracy is the result of various social, religious and economic processes?

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UNIT 7: INDUSTRIALISM AND ITS IMPACT

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Understanding Industrialism

7.4 Industrial Revolution in England

7.5 The Rise of the Working Class

7.6 Industrial Revolution and its Aftermath

7.7 Let Us Sum Up

7.8 Further Reading

7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.10 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- form an idea of Industrialism
- trace the history of pre-industrial times
- examine Industrial Revolution in its historical perspective
- asses*s* the impact of the Industrial Revolution on society and culture

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the concept of Industrialism, which is one of the most significant phenomena contributing immensely to the making of the modern world. The Industrial Revolution swept across the world in the 18th and 19th centuries, approximately between the years 1780 to 1850. For a long time, it was believed that Britain provided the world with the model for Industrialisation and set a trend that the rest of the world followed. However, present-day historians and social scientists have taken a newer look into the idea and challenged the superiority of England as the path breaking Industrial Empire. They have studied the Industrial revolution; its inception and influence in a different perspective, thereby bringing into focus the roles

of the rest of Europe, particularly Germany and France as well as America in the process. In this unit, you will learn about man's march towards modernisation, with special emphasis on the concept of Industrialism and the Industrial Revolution.

7.3 UNDERSTANDING INDUSTRIALISM

The word Industrialism first came into vogue in the year 1831. The word refers to an economic and social system based on the development of large-scale industries marked by the production of large quantities of manufactured goods and the concentration of employment in urban factories. Garden Marshall in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (1998) defines Industrialism in terms of the transition in methods of production, which have been responsible for the vastly increased wealth that changed modern societies. He adds that although industrialisation is generally thought of as something affecting the manufacture of goods, it is reasonable and necessary to apply the term to the modern methods of raising productivity in agriculture and other indicated sectors.

In the pre-industrial England of the 16th and 17th centuries, England was a rural agricultural nation consisting mostly of villages and a few major cities and towns like London, Bath and York. The primary occupation of the people had been agriculture and dairy farming. In his "Tour of England", (1725), Defoe commented on the wool industry as a sustaining cottage Industry where everybody had to do some kind of manual work beginning with tiny four year old to the eldest member. Drawing an idyllic picture, he mentions that there was not a beggar to be seen, nor an idle person. However, this self-sustained rural and agricultural economy changed drastically in the next 50 years and was replaced by an urban and mechanical population. For instance, during the 18th and 19th centuries, two major changes impacted the social life of England permanently changing its nature.

1. One was the enclosure of the common fields that put an end to the strip farming system that had given every small farmer the right to cultivate on his own plot of land. The enclosure of the common fields deprived the small farmers of their land and drove them away from

the farms to the mills.

2. The other was the introduction of power driven machinery that put a permanent end to domestic or household labour industry in clothe spinning and wool. The era of handloom and hand-spun goods soon vanished giving way to machine spun and machine made products.

By the year 1775, the Industrial Revolution was already gaining momentum in England. This was the year in which king George-IV conferred knighthood upon two scientists and inventors. One was **William Herschel**, the astronomer and the other was **Humphrey Davy**, the chemist and inventor of the safety lamp. They were among those scientists instrumental in bringing about the great social and economic transformation known as the Industrial Revolution. It was a transformation that brought about the birth of workshops and factories; of slum and poor houses, tall chimneys puffing out black smoke over the surrounding areas. It is in this era that William Blake wrote about *"the dark satanic Mills"* whose high brick walls were the prisons of the poor. Nonetheless, this was an era of path-breaking inventions. Look at the following:

- James Hargreaves had invented the spinning frame which he named after his wife Jenny that is how the 'spinning Jenny' had its name.
- Richard Arkwright had set up his own spinning machines in his large factories at Derbyshire.
- Henry Cort had revolutionised the manufacture of iron.
- Edmund Cartwright had invented the Powerloom.
- James Watt's Steam Engines were grinding malt in Whitbread's brewery.

England was fast becoming a world leader in Industry and technology. This led to the growth in trade and commerce, in development of towns, in developments in cotton, wool, coal, iron industry run by steam power, developments in roadways, railways and canals, transport and communications and so forth. In other words, it was an onwards march towards progress and modernisation.

So, you find that typical features of Industrialism would refer to

mechanised methods of working within a factory setting; division of labour; application of scientific methods for problem solving; time and discipline; bureaucracy and administrative rules; a socially and geographically mobile labour force etc. Though labour, production, market and capital are key elements in Industrialism the term is not to be confused with Capitalism. The two concepts, though interrelated, stand apart in so many ways.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you understand by the term Industrialism?

Q 2: What ideas do you have of the Pre-industrial England?

Q 3: What are the two major changes that affected England in the 18th and 19th centuries?

7.4 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

You would like to note that between the 1780s and 1850s, there occurred a great transformation in the industry and economy of England, and this is the period of the first Industrial Revolution in England. There were subsequent revolutions with new inventions like the steam engines, the railways, electrical power and so forth. But, the most significant episode of the Industrial Revolution is the period between 1780 and 1850, though one cannot really compartmentalise a historical period. The term Industrial Revolution was first used by the socialist philosopher and writer Friedrich Engels in 1845. It is believed that Karl Marx heard the term in a discussion with Engels and used it in his 'Das Kapital' in 1867, while J.S. Mill also used the term in his *Principles of Political Economy* as early as 1848. The term was used by the English philosopher and economist Arnold Toynbee (1852-83) in order to signify the changes that took place in British Industrial development between 1760 and 1820.

The Industrial Revolution refers to a period of remarkable economic and industrial growth in the cotton and iron industries, in coal mining in the building of roads and canals throughout England and in foreign trade. The

period coincided with the reign of King George III. England was among the first countries to experience the Industrial Revolution. There were many factors responsible for Britain's lead in industrial and economic growth. The most important factor was that new inventions in industry were made in England because of the scientific temperament patronised by the English Monarchy. The country was naturally rich in supplies of coal and iron; the essential material for the new industries. Among the European countries, Britain was the first to apply machine to manufacture. During this time, the British politics was relatively stable in England. Wales and Scotland unified under a single Monarchy. This led to cross border taxes being minimised, which further added the advantage of a common law, a single currency, and a large market. Though the land enclosures of the 16th century and the use of machinery in farming led to an 'agricultural revolution', it also rendered many small time farmers landless adding to unemployment and migration of the rural poor into nearby towns, into nulls and factories. This large-scale migration also provided ample and cheap labour force.

The population in most of the towns in England grew manifold and in the years 1750-1800, London acquired a new significance in World Trade with the shifting of focus of World Trade from the Mediterranean ports of Italy and France to the Atlantic ports of Holland and England. London gained significance as the principal source of loans for International Trade. The city gradually became the hub of trade and many companies functioning in America, Asia, Africa and the West Indies set up offices in London. The bank of England set up in 1664 set the trend in Banking services and expended so much that by the year 1800, there were more than 600 banks in the provinces of England, and nearly 100 banks in London alone. England was also helped by a good network through rivers, indented coastline with goods transportation and market outreach. All these conditions aided the upsurge of the Industrial revolution in England and set the stage for far reaching changes in the social and economic front. By the time George III died, the face of England was permanently changed; the nation of farmers and village craftsmen had become a nation of mechanics and factory hands.

The spinning and weaving industries were native to England and

each member of the household was adept at it. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, weaving and spinning were mostly done at home to meet domestic needs or that of local markets. When India came under the British, they began to import Cotton from India at great cost. Later, with the growing control of the East India Company the British minimised its import of Cotton cloth and began to import raw cotton at low cost to its textile mills where it was spun, and marketed in India and its other colonies. Therefore, with abundant raw material and ready markets it was not difficult for Britain to gain supremacy in the world textile industry. As you are already informed, several inventions paved the way for this remarkable progress made by Britain in the field of textiles. Among them, the most remarkable ones were John Key's (1704-64) "The Flying Shuttle Loom", James Hargreaves's (1720-78) "The Spinning Jenny", Richard Arkwright's (1732-92) "The Water Frame", Samuel Crompton's (1753-1827) "The Mule", Edmund Cartwright's (1743-1823) "The Power Loom".

Though the textile industry made rapid strides in England, it caused untold misery to its workers, mostly women and children who were made to toil ceaselessly, and in very bad working conditions. England made similar strides in its coal and iron industries. Naturally, rich in resources of coal, iron, timber, copper, lead and tin, the Industrial Revolution brought a great boom in the Metallurgical industry too. The manufacture of iron had been carried on in England since early times. So far, the fuel used in the extraction and smelting process had always been wood coal. Soon, wood coal was replaced by coal. The discovery of coal greatly revolutionised the iron industry, as iron came to be used to make household furniture, machines, water pipes and so on. Later steam-power replaced waterpower and brought about further progress in the iron as well as textile industry. Another advantage for England was that most of the iron fields were located near its ports so that the products could be easily shifted to overseas markets. Consequently, there was a growth in the shipping trade as well as in shipbuilding.



LET US KNOW

By the year 1830, British iron products were the cheapest in Europe and the most keenly sought after. Here mention must be made of the huge contributions made by the Darby family of Shropshire, a family of iron masters. The inventions and contributions of three generations of the Darbys are like these:

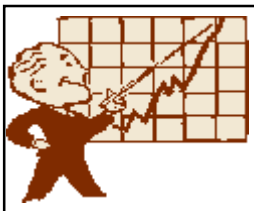
Abraham Darby I (1677-17) invented 'Blast Furnace' that could use coal capable of generating very high temperatures.

Abraham Darby II (1711-68) developed 'Wrath Iron' that was less brittle than pig iron.

Abraham Darby III (1750-91) built the first 'Iron Bridge' in the world over the river Severa.

The first use of steam-power was made in the year 1776. John Wilkinson, the iron master used steam power for bellowing in blast furnaces. It was in fact a few years before this, in 1769, that James Watt patented his invention, the Steam Engine. Watt's Steam Engine came to be largely used in coal mines, iron furnaces and the Textile Industries. In the 1770s, John Wilkinson, known as 'Iron-mad' Wilkinson, made the first iron chairs, vats for breweries and distilleries, and water pipes; which were exported in pairs to be used in its water supply. The increase in the use of machines also necessitated better means of transport and communication. Larger production of coal, iron, textiles and other heavy materials the greater was the need to transport them. Thus, a revolution was also brought about in road and river transport and subsequently in railways. First of all, coals were dug for transportation to big cities from where they could be further transported on barges. Rich land owners with mines and quarries on their lands initiated the process of canal making in order to transport goods and connect the loads to big market cities. The first canal called the Worsley Canal was built in 1761. From the 1760s to the 1850s, a period known as the period of 'canal mania' over 4,000 miles of canals were built. Along with the making of canals, road conditions were also vastly improved and many

new roads were constructed. By the 18th century, 'The Turnpike Trusts', were set up whereby local authorities could set up toll gates and maintain and repair roads with the money collected.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: How do you think the names of Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx and Arnold Toynbee are related?

Q 5: Give a brief overview of the growth of Industrialism in England.

Q 6: Mention some of the remarkable inventions in the cotton industry.

Q 7: What role did coal play in the history of English Industrialism?

Q 8: Explain the ways through which India contributed to England's Industrial growth?

7.5 THE RISE OF THE WORKING CLASS

1880 is an important decade in English labour history because, in this period, we see the rise of socialism. By the end of the century, politicians were aware of a new 'class consciousness'. Workers, in this period, were scarcely more than paupers, the wage earners who were largely exploited gave birth to a unifying sense among groups of people who were otherwise of diverse origins, diverse formations, with different languages and customs, and of varied economic situations. A common consciousness inevitably brought them together with a shared sense of thought. Therefore, you need to be careful in distinguishing the working class from the middle-class.

Between 1870 and 1914 (World War I), politics began to touch upon economics. Governments had begun to take interest in the growth of industries. The widening of the franchise, as through the Reform Acts in England, meant that the majority of the electorate would be poor and insecure. The "tidal wave of western capitalism" which flooded the "developed" countries ensured that the numbers of those who lived by earning wages for manual labour was greatly increasing. Even in predominantly agrarian countries, manufactured products were finding different markets. The spectacular increase in the numbers of wage-workers led to the formation

of recognisable labour classes chiefly in the countries of old established industries as well as in the countries which were newly industrialising in Europe, North America, Japan and some other areas of white settlement overseas.

The Reform Act of 1832 passed by the English Parliament, helped to bring in a change in the franchise by widening the electorate. However, its scope was not essentially democratic as the artisans, the working classes and sections of the lower middle classes remained outside its ambit. Besides, the Napoleonic wars had not brought peace and prosperity. So, this period saw the emergence of open social conflicts centred on "corn and currency", or agriculture and credit. A 'Corn Law' was passed in 1815 to shore up prices of grain. In Parliament, there was an apparent conflict of interests between the industrialists and the landowning classes. The term 'middle classes' began to be used in social political debate. The new environment of factory-driven work led to a break with old and familiar ways of life. The new working class people began to emerge. The proletariat, though deeply differentiated within its ranks, nonetheless became a significant section of society. From the last two decades of the 19th century, mass political parties based on the working class, forced a new direction in politics.

As a leader of industrialisation, Britain was an exception in already having in existence non-political labour organisation, trade unionism in the form of craft unions. Trade unions acquired legal status and privileges that employers were compelled to contend with their organisation in the workplace. The working-class holiday became an institution from the 1880s. Football culture became a national institution whose final recognition came with the attendance of the Cup Final by the king from 1913. Despite the differences already noted, "Labour" saw itself as a distinct class increasingly recognised by the politicians.

7.6 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Since its start in the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution has been the primary cause of many social, moral and political problems facing the

world today. When the upsurge of the Industrial Revolution hit England, she was barely prepared to face the consequent problems of such a phenomenal growth of Industry, of cities and industrial areas, of the working class, of class strife, of the rift between the upper class bourgeoisie and the working class, of the growth of slums, of moral and economic degradation and the downside in human dignity and labour. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, slum towns grew with planning but without any kind of government control. It was a time of rampant individualism and the desire for quick money returns on the part of the mill and factory owners and aristocrats who distanced themselves from industrial sectors in their estates. This was an age where individual talent could grow and bring about radical and revolutionary changes. It was an age when investments grew manifolds in no time. However, all this was possible at an immensely negative human cost.



LET US KNOW

The Industrial Revolution in England co-existed with two important historical events.

1. This was the time when Britain lost the 13 American colonies and Napoleon was defeated. Both events took a toll on England' economy and the poor masses were the ones to feel the pinch the most.
2. This was also a time of immense increase in urban population. The first census in 1801, showed a tremendous rise in urban population being particularly concentrated in new industrial towns like Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Shuffled, London and others. These new industrial centres and their citizens were all products of the machine age. The towns of industrial England, it has been said, were "barracks of cheap labour; not homes for citizens." Most of the people of these towns, women and children included, worked and lived in appalling conditions in factories and slums. Their wages were meagre and healthcare and sanitation were almost non-existent.

Neither the government nor the concerned authority could envision the far-reaching effects of the changes that the country was undergoing. On the one hand, there could be found a vast progress made in the industry, road and river transportation systems, and on the other, there was the regression in terms of quality and standard of life and of human dignity. Towns grew haphazardly with no planning at all. Back to back, brick houses were built for workers, without sanitation, drainage, proper lighting or ventilation. The new industrial cities were marked by stuffy factories with dreary rows of buildings and smoky chimneys. In these towns lived the workers and their families. The work in the factories continued under a strict work discipline and severe system of punishment. Even old women and small children were also employed in these Mills and factories. They had to work for a mere pittance in order to supplement the family's income.

As machines replaced men, employment grew sparse, working conditions poor, and wages meagre. The conditions were all the more deplorable in the cotton textile industries at Yorkshire and Lancashire, as well as in the silk, knitting and lace making factories where most of the workers were women and children. For instance, by the 1850s, almost two third of the work force in the button trade were constituted by women and children, and an average men received 25 shillings a week, women 7 shillings and children 1 shilling for the same amount of work and working hours. Coalmines were another segment where there were large occurrences of accidents and deaths. The rate of death in these slums was alarmingly large and longitivity of life was reduced largely. Most of the deaths were caused by air borne or water borne diseases like cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis. Yet the municipal authorities were lethargic and negligent towards their duties. Medical science was not so developed to deal with frequent outbreaks of epidemics that took such a toll of life.

A survey conducted in 1842 showed that the average life span of mill and factory workers was exceedingly low. It was 15 years in Birmingham, 17 years in Manchester, 21 in Werby and so on. This was much lower than the average life expectancy of the same people when living in villages. Such miserable condition of life and work were bound to result in different protests.

However, surprisingly the surge of protest was rather slow in coming to England. Complacency and indifference to the plight of the workers on the part of the aristocrats and the investors was a rule rather than an exception. Thinkers like Macaulay in fact extolled Man's command over nature while ignoring the large mass of suffering humanity. This kind of attitude was largely responsible for the rift between capital and labour in England. Around this time, the ideas of "Laissez-fare", "Leave things alone", "Let us alone", gained popularity. The idea of free trade, trade managed not by the state and its regulatory rules but by the merchants and traders themselves, gained a boost, especially after the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) the same year as America's War of Independence. As the propagator of free trade, Smith, with the backing of Prime Minister Williams Pit, propagated and brought about a great many reductions in Trade restrictions. In 1813, the Elizabethan Act, authorised local magistrates to fix wages was repealed.

In the meantime, the political and social ideas pioneered by the French Revolution (1789-94) and the ideals of 'Liberty', 'Equality' and 'Fraternity', reached the English shores. Fired by these ideals, there emerged a protest movements and unified resistance to exploitation. A further impetus was given to this crying need for social reform, by the growth of the humanitarian movement of the 18th century under the influence of religious societies like the **Quakers** and the **Methodists**. Such movements brought about the realisation that higher class people would not be allowed to carry on with their exploitation of other classes. The government initiated some short term solutions like the 'Spenhanland Act', a decision to augment wages with 'doles' from the parish. But this system, instead of relieving the wage earners, further pauperised them, because it freed mill and factory owners of the compulsion to raise wages. A further blow to the factory workers came in the form of the "Combination Acts" (1799 and 1800) that made trade unions illegal. Deprived of land by the enclosure system, pauperised by the Spenhanland Act, and barred from standing united by the combination Act, the poor of England were indeed very hard hit. Added to it, were the wars with France and the 'anti-Jacobian' feelings after the French Revolution. There was no way out but to protest and demand their rights.

One indication of the popular discontent was the Zuddite Riots, which broke out at intervals between the year 1810-20. One characteristic of these riots was the breaking of Machinery by the rioters. However, changes were sought to be brought by many reform laws. Subsequently, much change was brought about in the condition of workers through laws and Acts. A few significant Reform Acts are mentioned below:

1. The First factory Act (1802): Working hours of children limited to 2 hours per day.
2. Cotton Factories regulation Act (1819): Fixed working hours for children at 12 and forbade employment of children under 9 years.
3. The Reform Act (1832): Passed political power from the aristocracy to the middle classes.
4. The Factory Act (1833): Appointed paid inspectors for factories insisted on the principle of state interference between masters and employees, increased state control over industry.

Arnold Toynbee's "Lectures on the Industrial Revolution" was published in 1884. Toynbee, with many other contemporary and later day historians viewed the Industrial Revolution as a departure in human history, a movement as important in the history of man as the discovery of the 'wheel' or the development of language. It was a Revolution that radically changed man's view of life, his access to modern amenities, and his control over the resources of nature. It was a revolution that impacted the nature of family and household, the status of women and children. It was in fact much more than a mere economic or industrial change, it effected the very fabric of life, be it the spare of agriculture, population growth, political awareness, gender awareness, child rights, trade unions etc. It is the multifaceted nature of the change that has kept the debate upon the Industrial revolution alive among the scholars of different fraternities. You should also note that Industrialism directly or indirectly affected the writing of literature during the Industrial Revolution. For example, Charles Dickens in the Victorian age drew most of the raw materials for his renowned novels, from his experiences of the English Industrial culture and the conditions of the working class people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What were some of the main problems of Industrialism?

Q 10: Comment on the conditions of the working classes in England in the Industrial era.

Q 11: What were the different Reform Laws introduced in England?

Q 12: What do you mean by the term 'Laissez Fair'?

Q 13: Mention some of the effects of the Industrial Revolution.



7.7 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you must have learnt about the various uses of the term Industrialism and the contexts in which it has so far been used. You have read that Industrialism in England begins in between the 1780s and 1850s when there occurred a great transformation in the industry and economy of England, which finally led to the first Industrial Revolution in England. Industrial Revolution was possible also because of the invention of spinning wheel and other machines, which both reduced human efforts and increased productivity. However, the Revolution had both negative and positive aspects. We have also discussed in this unit the effects of the Industrial revolution on the life and culture of England. Industrialism, through various acts and treaties led to the consolidation of the British colonial power about which you will be studying in the nest unit of this course. Above all, the discussion of Industrialism in this unit, I believe, must have shown you ways to locate the elements that might have affected the materialistic and cultural productions of the 18^{th} and 19^{th} century England.



7.8 FURTHER READING

1) Aston, T.S. (1969). The *Industrial Revolution.* London: OUP.

2) Daunton, M.J. (1995). *Progress and Poverty: An economic and Social*

History of Britain 1700-1850, London, OUP.

3) Gilbert, Martin. (1968). The *British History Atlas.* New York: Macmillan.

4) Thompson, E.P. (1964). *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York, Pantheon.

5) Toynbee, Arnold. (1957). *The Industrial Revolution. Boston*: Beacon Press.



7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Industrialism relates to an economic and social system based on industrial development… …it is marked by the production of manufactured goods… …gradually it got associated with the social phenomenon called Industrial Revolution.

Ans to Q 2: The pre-industrial England of the 15thand 16th centuries was mainly rural... …the primary occupation of people was agriculture and dairy farming… …England was also famous for its wool and cottage industries.

Ans to Q 3: Enclosure of the common fields that gave a death blow to sheep farming… …introduction of power drawn machinery that replaced manual labour.

Ans to Q 4: The term was first used by the German Friedrich Engels in 1845… …Karl Marx used it in his 'Das Kapital'… …Arnold Toynbee used the term in order to signify the changes that took place in British Industrial development between 1760 and 1820.

Ans to Q 5: England made remarkable advancement in its Textile, coal and iron, steam powered industries... …great strides were made in roads, canals and railways… …England capitalised on its native Industries like spinning and weaving of flax and wool… …discovery of the natural resources like coal and iron.

Ans to Q 6: John Key's (1704-64) "The Flying Shuttle Loom", James Hargreaves's (1720-78) "The Spinning Jenny", Richard Arkwright's

(1732-92) “The Water Frame”, Samuel Crompton’s (1753-1827) “The Mule”, Edmund Cartwright’s “The Power Loom” and so on.

Ans to Q 7: Natural coal replaced wood-coal… …revolution in iron industry… …by 1830s, British iron trade flourished… …the inventions of the Darby family.

Ans to Q 8: The British began to import Cotton from India at great cost… …The East India Company the British minimised its import of Cotton cloth and began to import raw cotton at low cost… …marketed in India… …abundant raw material and ready markets enabled Britain to gain supremacy in the world textile industry.

Ans to Q 9: Phenomenal growth of industry… …cities and industrial areas… …working class, class strife and the rift between the upper class bourgeoisie and the working class… …growth of slums… …moral and economic degradation….loss of human dignity and labour.

Ans to Q 10: Very miserable… …poor working conditions… …meager wages… …government paid little hid… …houses built for workers were without proper sanitation, drainage, ventilation… ...extended working hours… … even old people and children also had to work for earning… …spread of epidemic… …no medical aid… … All these led to protest movements.

Ans to Q 11: The First factory Act (1802)… …Cotton Factories regulation Act (1819)… …The Reform Act (1832)… …The Factory Act (1833).

Ans to Q 12: “Laissez-fare” means “Leave things alone” or “Let us alone”… …it is a term related to the idea of free trade managed not by the state but by the merchants and traders themselves… …it gained popularity after the publication of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776).

Ans to Q 13: Slum towns grew but without government control… desire for quick money returns on the part of the mill and factory owners… …individual talent could grow and bring about radical and revolutionary changes… …investments grew manifolds in no time.



7.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Assess the significance of Industrialism in English social history. What were the major inventions that set the idea of the Industrial Revolution rolling in England?

Q 2: Write a note on the progress of the Industrial Revolution in England? What were the relative advantages that England enjoyed at the time?

Q 3: Give an account of pre-Revolution England, and the changes that came into the lives of people after the Revolution.

Q 4: Comment on the rise of the working class in England, and mention the changes that took place in the English social life.

Q 5: How did cotton and cotton industries bring about an unprecedented change in the history of England?

Q 6: Describe, in your own words, the turn of events in England, following the Industrial Revolution.

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UNIT 8: COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Colonialism and Nationalism

8.4 Trade and Conflict

8.5 Idea of the Empire

- 8.5.1 The First British Empire
- 8.5.2 The Second British Empire
- 8.5.3 Other Four Phases of the British Empire

8.6 Imperialism and Expansion

8.7 Let Us Sum Up

8.8 Further Reading

8.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

8.10 Possible Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- trace the origin of Colonialism
- discuss the growth and development of Colonialism
- discuss Colonialism as one of the most notable phenomena in the history of human race
- identify the various facets as well as the complex networks of far-reaching consequences of Colonialism and Imperialism
- relate Imperialism to the emerging idea of Nationalism.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to ideas of Colonialism and Imperialism. The word 'Colonialism' is perhaps derived from the 14th century term 'Colonye' or 'Colonia' which was again borrowed from a Latin term 'Colonus', meaning cultivation, settler or planter in a new country. Initially 'colony' did not carry

the significance of political authority over another country. It was from the 18th century that the settlers began to feel about their European difference and regard the native population as different from themselves. From this new realisation, emerged a policy of social discrimination, inequality and exploitation to be exercised over the natives of the non-European countries. The ultimate realisation of this aspect can be seen through 'Imperialism' in more recent times. You should know that the quest for a better life in the settlements outside the country, subsequently led to economic exploitation and political subordination of the colonised countries. Gradually, colonialism started to acquire a cultural dimension because European colonial presence was justified on the ground of its 'superiority' to the native culture, and colonial administration as well as education was substituted in place of native culture in the name of development and modernisation. The theory of 'Natural Selection', originally explained in the biological context by Charles Darwin, the 19th century evolutionary theorist, was later reinterpreted and reconstructed as the theory of the 'Survival of the fittest' in the socio-cultural context. Known as Social Darwinism, the theory of survival of the fittest tried to establish the Europeans as the civilized people in the world with the natural right to subjugate the non-Europeans in the interest of civilization of the entire race of mankind. When you finish reading this unit, you will be adequately informed about how Colonialism was projected as a mechanism to consolidate the foundation of human civilization in the world, which finally resulted in Imperialism.

8.3 COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

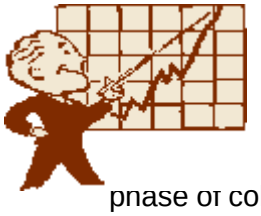
It has already been mentioned that the origin of colonialism dates back to the 16th century in the history of Europe, a period marked by Renaissance and English Reformation. Renaissance liberated the human mind from the inhibiting influences of the Medieval prejudices. It also set in motion an urge to know the unknown, a desire to explore the various fields of knowledge not only through learning and appropriating written discourses resulting in an intellectual revolution but also through undertaking difficult journeys to the undiscovered, unexplored parts of the world. The 16th century

Renaissance Europe experienced tremendous upsurge of overseas explorations fuelled by nationalist pride and zeal for adventure. Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese sailor, discovered an Eastern route to India via the southern tip of Africa, Spain, Portugal and Netherlands and turned to the Atlantic region for the overseas expansion of trade. In England, Richard Hakluyt wrote a book called *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* to provide information about the early English voyages to Africa.

The Hundred Years' War with France (1337-1453) was a landmark in the history of the birth of English nationalist feeling because the victory over France was regarded as the victory not only of the king or the aristocracy but also of the entire nation. Meanwhile, the English Reformation brought to end the jurisdiction of Pope over England. An English church and a common language including a distinctive sense of territory and ethnicity facilitated the consolidations of a nationalist consciousness in England of the 15th century. While, the sense of an English identity amongst the people in England was the root of English Nationalism, a nationalist urge to establish the might and pride of the English nation in the Americas and Asia, in the Age of Discovery, gripped the imagination of the explorers during the 15th and the 16th centuries. This tendency was particularly at work when we find the rise of Portugal and Spain as the pioneering explorers of the globe during the Age of Discovery.

The phrase 'Age of Discovery' refers to the 15th and 16th century Renaissance Europe embarking upon overseas exploration to assert the power of the respective nations in various parts of the world. This motive to expand the national frontiers was fuelled by nationalistic feeling and it resulted in competition and conflict among the nations. Again, it is to be noted that the Renaissance itself created the conducive atmosphere for colonial expansion by making geographical and cartographical fund of knowledge available to the overseas explorers. Columbus landed in America in 1492 followed by other European explorers mainly from Portugal and Spain. The enriched intellectual environment and geographical fund of knowledge were utilised by these countries primarily with nationalist concerns. The explorers

therefore were patronised by the ruling governments and this obviously resulted in mutual rivalries among the countries engaged in the undertaking. Exploration and discovery were followed by settlements, plantation and trading of the agricultural produce. As a consequence, large cities began to emerge in and around the trading posts. Thus, it is seen that colonialism is inextricably linked up with the new advances in geographical and cartographical knowledge, commercial rivalries and a strong sense of nationalist consciousness. As nationalism fuelled colonial enterprises by the European countries, colonialism in turn, also stirred the nationalist feelings across Europe particularly during the Napoleonic Era. The conquests of Napoleon in Europe generated an anti-France feeling in the countries like England, Spain, Poland, Russia and Belgium. The spirit of resistance to the Napoleonic imperialism, on the one hand, generated the nationalist pride of these countries, and on the other, they vigorously reacted to the expansionist drive of France with similar colonial drives in Asia and Africa in the 19th century. So, you find that both Nationalism and Colonialism are inextricably linked with each other.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did the Renaissance influence the first phase of colonisation ?

Q 2: What connections do you see between Nationalist concerns and colonial drives?

8.4 TRADE AND CONFLICT

Before 1760, colonial expansion was confined to trading posts and factories without any design or strategy to exert political authority in the colonised territories. However, the private trading companies certainly needed some sort of protection from their own governments in the event of attack by the rival Europeans. Although the governments did not have any direct part in directing colonisation, the British crown, however, granted charters to companies (like Virginia or Massachusetts) granting authority over the

trade of a designated tract. The trading companies, human enjoyed considerable freedom to frame rules in the expansion of commercial interests. In the context of Britain, the battery of controls was meant to secure the British merchants monopoly in colonial trade and minimise imports from outside the empire.

The early Spanish and Portuguese settlers in the Americas resorted to the cultivation of crops like sugar, coffee and tobacco mainly for commercial purposes. These colonies were also rich in minerals like gold and silver. The gold deposits of Brazil and Mexico attracted the European attention resulting in the rapid immigration of Europeans to the 'New World'. African slaves, European convicts, indentured labourers and free passengers signalled a flourishing market in all four categories till the American war of Independence. 'Slave trade' emerged as an organised branch of commerce as shipping companies vied with each other for its rising demand in the plantations in the Americas. This early phase of colonisation also largely shared the consumption pattern in the European countries. It was seen that the demand for sugar and tea propelled many early trading ventures in both the Atlantic and Asia. Spain and Portugal put the theory of mercantilism into practice by selling European finished products in the Americas and amassing gold and silver deposits for themselves to use these minerals as their national treasure. Britain, France, Netherlands and Denmark were late entrants in the colonising mission of the Americas. The presence of so many European colonial powers obviously led to a period of mutual rivalries and conflict, particularly from 1689 to 1763. During this period, the four wars between France and Britain were not confined to Europe alone but spread to their overseas colonies in the Americas and the East, particularly India. The Seven Years' War (1756-63) was the first major war fought on the issue of colonisation among the European powers. France, Sudan, Russia and Australia confronted England, Prussia and Hanover in this war for defending and securing colonial possession. The War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. The French colonial presence in the North America had almost disappeared with the ceding of New France (where French-speaking population dominated). In India too, Britain's rise in the

southern part was ensured with the result of the Carnatic wars.

Colonial trade by a pre-capitalist Europe resulted in massive flow of human and natural resources between the colonial and the colonised countries. Migration in the form of slaves and indentured labour to the plantations in Latin America, Australia and New Zealand caused significant changes in the demographic pattern of population of the concerned countries. Raw materials were transported to the colonial metropolis for manufacturing finished products both for metropolitan consumption and mainly for selling at high prices in the captive markets of the colonies. These exploitative measures kept the colonies economically underdeveloped for a long period to come. On the other hand, this economic imbalance proved highly conducive to the growth of European capitalism and industrialisation. In the West Indian plantations, slaves were engaged in the production of sugar for consumption in Europe; in India raw cotton was exported to Europe at nominal price and manufactures from Britain sold back clothing materials in India posing a threat to the survival of indigenous textile industries prevalent mainly in rural India.

The old mercantilist empire initiated by the trading companies was followed in 1780s by a different sort of empire called an Empire of free trade and Commerce. In 1776, Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* insisted upon commercial freedom for encouraging productivity and maximum wealth. He prescribed not territorial control or administration over people but access to markets, supplies and customers. He dismissed the idea of administrative empire as a waste of money and power of the governments, and argued for the expansion of mercantile connections to establish a wide network of commercial exchange. The emergence of e new type of empire led to the beginning of a new phase of global war between 1793 and 1815. During this period, the British overpowered the rival colonial powers like French, Netherlands and Spain. Britain lost its thirteen colonies in North America in 1783 after a War of Independence and then its attention turned to Asia, Africa and the Pacific. When France was defeated in 1815, there was virtually no one to pose a serious threat to Britain's increasing dominance in East Britain, which enlarged the "Empire of Rule" as against the "Empire

of Settlement". After winning the Opium War of 1839-42, Britain could enjoy the freedom of trade in China, the largest non-European empire that also had to submit to the commercial demands of the West. Another factor which was highly instrumental in the enlargement of British trade even in the little known regions of the world was the establishment of the Royal Graphical Society in 1830 and John Arrowsmith's great Atlas. Arrowsmith's maps provided necessary guidelines to the trading companies regarding the commercial, agrarian and religious prospects of hitherto unknown regions of the world.



LET US KNOW

Abolition of slavery and slave trade was initiated in 1807 and by 1837-38; it was terminated throughout the British empire. However, a new system of slavery in the form of indentured labour got introduced after 1834 involving millions of South Asians, Africans, Chinese and Pacific islanders until it was stopped in 1922.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What role did the trading companies play in the early phase of Colonialism?

Q 4: What is the significance of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations?*

Q 5: What do you mean by the terms 'Empire of Settlement' and 'Empire of Rule'?

Q 6: What were the factors that enlarged British trade and commerce?

8.5 IDEA OF THE EMPIRE

John Dee, a writer of the Elizabethan England and contemporary of Richard Hakluyt is said to be the first to use the term 'British Empire'. He advocated the establishment of a British Empire in the Atlantic region like that of the Spanish and Portuguese. The British Empire was decidedly different from the other European empires like the Habsburg Empire which

were based on lordship. The British Empire was a maritime, overseas and commercial endeavours held together by trade and settlement, and defended by naval power. Historians usually study the subject of 'Empire' as a historical process involving two distinct phases. The first phase refers to the period between 1583 and 1783, while the second phase covers the period from 1783 up to the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815.

8.5.1 The First British Empire

The first British Empire began to take shape during the early 17th century. In 1604, Britain's hostilities with its colonial rival Spain subsided as King James VI negotiated the treaty of London and Britain saw the prospect of establishing its own overseas colonies instead of eying on other colonial establishments. After a series of unsuccessful attempts in Guinea, Grenada and St Lucia, Britain established colonial settlements in St. Kitts (1624), Barbados (1627) and Nevis (1628). These English Colonies were used for sugar plantations, which also made the British initially dependent on the Dutch shipments for the import of slave labour and export of sugar. Later, the entry of the English ships for protecting the English business interests led to a series of Anglo-Dutch wars. England won Japan from the Spanish in 1655 and the next year the Bahamas formed a part of the English settlements in the Americas. A number of private trading companies like Virginia Company, the Newfoundland Company, Hudson's Bay Company, Royal African Company, etc. were formed for colonising the various parts of the Americas such as Virginia, Mayland, Connecticut, New Netherlands (renamed New York), Pennsylvania, Plymouth, etc. These colonies were mainly put to agricultural use and the extensive plantations also opened the doors for another highly profitable business — Slave Trade.



LET US KNOW

The seeds of the British Empire were sown in as early as 1578 when Queen Elizabeth I granted a patent to Humphrey Gilbert for discovery and overseas exploration. Gilbert made two attempts to establish a colony in North America but his success could not lead to any enduring result. In 1584, Gilbert's half-brother Sir Walter Raleigh made another attempt to found a colony in the present-day North Carolina which too did not last for long.

The rise of the thirteen colonies in the North America saw a parallel development with England and the Netherlands forming the East India Company and the Dutch East India Company in 1600 and 1602 respectively to dismantle the Portuguese monopoly of trade in Asia. A deal was signed between England and the Netherlands according to which the spice trade of the East Indies archipelago went into the hands of the Netherlands, and the textile trade of India was won by England, which later proved to be a more profitable trade than the spice trade. Meanwhile, England had to face a new threat from France in the beginning of the 18th century as France and Spain formed an alliance in the war of Spanish succession during the period 1701-1714 against the English, Dutch and Portuguese forces. At the end of the war, Britain gained Newfoundland and Arcadia from France. The British annexation of Gibraltar from Spain was a turning point in the growth of British Empire as the new territorial gain allowed Britain to control the Atlantic entry and exit point to the Mediterrarian. Britain and France again waged war for imperial gains in 1756 that lasted up to 1763. Known as the Seven Years' War, the war came ended with the signing of the **Treaty of Paris**. The war was fought on a global scale involving Europe, India, North America, the Caribbean, the Philippines and the coastal Africa. The treaty of Paris ensured and consolidated the position of Britain as the most powerful empire as Britain gained New France and Ruput's island in North America from France, and Florida from Spain. In India, the

result of the Carnatic wars went in favour of Britain ensuring the rise of the British India as the most valuable possession of Britain. The English East India Company which had acquired the trading rights in 1617 from the Mughal emperor, took every opportunity of the decline of the Mughal power in the 18th century and the gain of Bengal in the **Battle of Plassey** of 1757. This paved the way for the company's emergence as the powerful political force in the subsequent stages of the imperial history in India.

8.5.2 The Second British Empire

The outbreak of the American War of Independence in 1775 signaled the end of the Empire's rule over the thirteen colonies of America. In 1783, these colonies declared independence ending the first phase of the British Empire. Meanwhile, in 1776, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* came out in which the economist argued that mercantilists must give way to free trade. By 'mercantilism', Adam Smith meant the complex array of legislation imposed on colonial trade by the mother century. Smith argued that the mercantile regulations confined colonial imports and exports to the mother country. Moreover, the reduced prices for exported produce and high prices for imported produce failed to generate new business and new employment. On the one hand, these regulations lessened the wealth of the nations, and on the other, they raised the rate of profit among the merchants. Smith recognised the value of colonial trade, but did not believe that it was enhanced by mercantile regulation. He suggested the policy of free trade so that the costs of possessing on empire could not outweigh the gains. The growth of trade between Britain and the newly independent America after 1783 also seemed to justify Smith's opinion that regulatory measures in colonial trade were not necessary for economic profit. The realisation of the importance of free trade and some other important changes in the colonial administration marked the period of the Second Empire from 1783 till 1815.



LET US KNOW

The second phase of the British Empire was also marked by Britain's shift of focus from the Atlantic to the pacific zone. Although the Western coast of Australia was discovered by the Dutch in 1606 and named 'Now Holland' by the Dutch East India Company, only in 1770, James Cook discovered the eastern coast of Australia and claiming it to be a British colony named it 'New South Wales'. The Australian colonies exported wool and gold, and Melbourne becomes one of the richest and largest cities in the British Empire for its tremendous economic prospects and activities. Britain also initiated colonising activities in many parts of New Zealand in 1770s by establishing trading stations especially in the North. Meanwhile, the rise of France under Napoleon was a matter of grave concern for Britain in the beginning of the 17th century. Two victories for Britain, one at Trafalgar in 1805, and another at Waterloo in 1815, sealed the fate of France as France had to leave Ionian islands, Malta, Mauritus, St. Lucia and Tobago to Britain. Victory over Napoleon left Britain without any major rival in colonial expansion and consolidation, other than Russia in Central Asia.

In India, the first phase of colonisation had begun in the early 17th century with the East India Company flourishing its trading activities in Bengal. The company had to use the long route around the African cape to India because of the presence of many European colonial rivals on other available routes such as the Persian Gulf route through Iraq, the Red Sea route through Egypt. However, the company could procure the maximum profit for itself mainly because of the monopoly status granted to it by the Crown and for its enlarging shipments to carry Indian products to Africa and the Americas. The huge profit for the company had adverse impact on the revenues for the Indian rulers, which led to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and the victory for the British side ensured the rapid growth of British colonial

power even in the other parts of India. The inter-European rivalries and wars got reduced in the 18th century after Plassey; the intermediaries employed by the British East India Company snatched away the power of export, import and manufacture of goods from the hands of the Indian merchants. Besides textiles, opium trade became a major source of revenue collection by the British merchants and in the decades following the Battle of Plassey, the company acquired a virtual stronghold on the economic and political life of Eastern India.

This first phase of British colonialism in India was one of direct plunder as the company unscrupulously collected revenues from Indian farmers to buy Indian finished products to be reported to England, Africa and the Americas. In the second phase, (1813-1858) India was exploited both as a source of raw material and a market for British manufactured goods. In 1813, the company lost its monopoly of trading rights in India as per the Charter Act. It has already been mentioned that Adam Smith's critique of the idea of companies enjoying exclusive monopolies in his *Wealth of Nations* encouraged the British government to adopt the policy of free trade. The British East India Company was under attack mainly for the huge private profit enjoyed of the company officials depriving England of its share of gain in the whole enterprise. The Charter Act of 1813 brought an end to mercantile monopoly in India with the introduction of free trade marked by commercialisation of agriculture and entry of cheap, mass produced, machine made British products in the Indian market. As the nature of agricultural production was determined by the demands of the overseas markets, cash crops like indigo, cotton, jute and tea replaced the food crops. The railway network was built up to serve the interest of the British traders as the profit generated through the import trade went directly to British business houses, and millions of Indian farmers died of starvation and epidemics. The systematic drain of wealth from India to England speeded up the pace of Industrial Revolution and development of

modern capitalism in Europe while India had to wait till 1947 to break off the shackles of colonial economy and its adverse effects.

8.5.3 Other Four Phases of the British Empire

The British Empire passed through different phases. When the mid-Victorian Empire emerged after the collapse of the old Mercantile Empire, it began to develop four different versions or models of Empire in different regions of the globe which are as the following:

1. In Canada, self-governing settlement colonies were established and they were enjoying almost complete self-rule. In this form of Empire, imperial interference in the affairs of the colony was reduced to a considerable extent.
2. The second variety was the colonial dependencies. The essential principle of 'Crown Colony' government was the concentration of both executive and legislative power in the hands of a governor accountable to England. Britain applied this model in Trinidad, captured from the Spanish in 1796. 'Crown Colony' government was a highly flexible formula that allowed the colonial governors to make local agreements with indigenous rules; the local governors had the discretion on who to consult and how to form or select the legislative bodies.
3. Another variety of Empire was the 'Double Government' policy applied in India after the transfer of power from the company to the crown in 1857. It put on end to the company policy of annexing princely states. Thus, the existing 'British India' came under the direct governance of the Crown, while the 'Native State India' ruled by the Indian princes came under the watchful eye of the British 'resident'.
4. Then there was the most characteristic mode of Victorian Empire — 'Informal Empire'. In this form of empire, a country without losing its sovereignty had to compromise on economic and cultural fields to serve the interests of a stronger foreign power. Britain applied the policy of Informal Empire in some

Latin American countries like Argentina. Argentina with the large-scale ownership of banks and transport infrastructure by the British merchants was an example of how an empire could thrive and flourish without any formal political annexation. For example, in China, the British merchants gained the right to trade in a number of 'treaty ports' and their activities remained free from the Chinese administrative control. China's opening the doors of trade to the Europeans was illustrative of the functioning of the British Empire in its extra-territorial form.

It is important to note that Empire was displayed for public appraisal. The Great Exhibition of 1851 and the 1924 Wembley British Empire Exhibition were visited by millions of people. These exhibitions celebrated the achievements of the British Empire and the crowds were made to think that colonisation was a civilising mission, although in reality it was a strategy for economic exploitation and political subordination.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What was the nature of the British Empire during its early phase?

Q 8: What is the significance of the Seven Years' War in the colonial scene?

Q 9: What major changes took place in Britain's policy of colonisation of India after 1813?

Q 10: What were the four varieties of the British Empire?

8.6 IMPERIALISM AND EXPANSION

'Colonialism' and 'Imperialism' are sometimes used in synonymous terms. But, there are marked differences between the two ideas and their application. Imperialism is the continuation of the colonial practice of domination often without actual settlements in the non-European spaces. The British Empire attempted and also succeeded in controlling the non-European regions through economic strategies like slave labour, capitalism,

trade restrictions and mercenary expansion of the European power. By the end of the 20th century, political control of the colonies moved from the Europeans to the natives. However, economically, the native population is still under the control of the European and American power. Even after official decolonisation, the free nation-states continue to suffer from economic exploitation. Therefore, these states may still be called 'imperial', although they are post-colonial in the temporal sense.

Imperialism is usually seen as a recent phenomenon. J. A. Hobson, one of the classical theorists of Imperialism, in his book *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) mentioned the year 1870 is the origin of Imperialism. V.I. Lenin, on the other hand, argues in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) that it began in 1900 as capitalism had reached a new stage of development after 1900. Hobson explains the rise of Imperialism as the offshoot of the concentration of incomes in the hands of the upper classes. According to him, imperial expansion opened outlets for investment of the surplus capital by that particular group. Lenin, too, saw Imperialism as the outcome of the capitalist markets and industries which acquired new outlets for goods and capital. Both Hobson and Lenin maintained that imperialism is economic in its origin and manifestation. However, the critics of Hobson and Lenin point out that Imperialism is more than an economic affair.

Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's study of the 'scramble' for Africa shows that Britain did not acquire colonies in Africa as outlets for surplus capital. Britain's intention was to defend the routes to India via the Cape of Good Hope and Suez Canal. Robinson and Gallagher, however, did not dismiss the fact that India itself was a primary concern for the Britain administration for the avenues of trade and investment in the subcontinent. Thus, the Imperialism of free trade built up an informal empire that thrived, not upon formal annexation, but on forcing potential trading partners to open their doors. Recently, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins have come up with a new theory of Imperialism which highlight the close association of the business elite in the service sector (egg, trade, finance and the related services such as shipping and insurance) with the British policy makers as the prime reason behind the imperial expansion particularly after 1850.



LET US KNOW

The discussion on Colonialism and Imperialism in this unit might have left the impression that it is only a political and economic phenomenon. However, colonialism has a cultural dimension as well. On the one hand, there is an argument of 'colonial modernity' according to which modernisation, secularisation and development of the Asian and African countries would have been impossible without the project of colonisation undertaken by the West. But, majority of the recent cultural historians point out that besides the political and economic evils of colonialism (loss of independence, loss of territorial integrity, economic exploitation in multiple ways, etc.), it always had the secret agenda of distorting the culture of the indigenous people.

Although there is no single explanation of the driving force behind Imperialism, by the early 20the century, the British covered approximately a quarter of the globe. However, at the same time, it is to be noted that the new phase of Imperialism since 1870 to 1912, was also a period of constant rivalries among the European colonial powers mainly becomes of the rise of new colonial powers like Germany and Russia.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: What is 'Imperialism'?

Q 12: What are the evils of Colonialism according to some cultural historians?



8.7 LET US SUM UP

As you finish reading this unit, you find that in the last two decades of the 20th century, there has been a profound shift in the way colonial domination and imperial expansion have been understood. Colonialism is not simply about extending formal and informal political influence or

establishing of economic domination. It also represents the desire of the coloniser, to exert mastery over the colonised society through a variety of strategies. These strategies are seen through different discursive practices like the studies in the colonial history, anthropology, sociology, language, literature, travel writing and so on by the colonial officers often employed in the services of the colonial regime. This fund of colonial knowledge was employed by the colonial power for maintaining control over the colonies. India, being one of the largest colonies of Britain, figured prominently in the British imagination. For instance, the idea of India as an uncivilised place to be brought into civilisation by British rule had circulated widely in the Mid-Victorian England. Although official decolonisation of countries like India, Africa and Latin America was almost complete by the 6th decade of the 20th century, Colonialism in an insidious way is still continuing in the form of Neo-colonialism and Globalisation.



8.8 FURTHER READING

1) Briggs, Asa. (1999). *A Social History of England*.(Third Edition). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

2) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2009). *English Social and Cultural History*. New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

3) Trevelyan, G. M. (1994). English *Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries.* Hyderabad, Orient Longman.



8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The 16th century Renaissance spirit encouraged overseas explorations… …Vasco de Gama discovered an eastern route to India via the southern tip of Africa, Spain, Portugal and Netherlands… …the Atlantic region became open for the overseas expansion of trade.

Ans to Q 2: The Hundred Years' War with France (1337-1453) aroused the

English nationalist feeling… … consolidations of the nationalist consciousness in 15th century and the sense of an English identity … …a nationalist urge to establish the might and pride of the nation in the Americas and Asia.

Ans to Q 3: The trading companies enjoyed considerable freedom to frame rules for expanding British trade and commerce… …but these companies certainly needed some sort of protection from their own governments in the event of attack by the rival Europeans… …the British crown, however, granted charters to companies like Virginia or Massachusetts granting authority over the trade of a designated tract.

Ans to Q 4: Adam Smith in his book *Wealth of Nations* insisted on commercial freedom for encouraging productivity and maximum wealth… …he prescribed access to markets, supplies and customers… …he was against the idea of Administrative Empire as a waste of money and power of the governments.

Ans to Q 5: When France was defeated in 1815, there was virtually no one to pose a serious threat to Britain's increasing dominance in trade. Subsequently, there emerged "Empire of rule" as against "Empire of settlement" to maintain Britain's superiority over other powerful nations of the globe.

Ans to Q 6: One is the establishment of the Royal Graphical Society in 1830 enlarged British trade even in the little known regions of the world… …The other is John Arrowsmith's great Atlas providing necessary guidelines to these hitherto unknown regions of the world.

Ans to Q 7: The British Empire was a maritime, overseas and commercial endeavours held together by trade and settlement, and defended by naval power.

Ans to Q 8: Seven Years' War ended with the Treaty of Paris… …the war involved Europe, India, North America, the Caribbean, the Philippines and the coastal Africa… …the treaty consolidated the position of Britain as a major power.

Ans to Q 9: The Charter Act of 1813 brought an end to the British mercantile monopoly in India… …free trade was marked by commercialisation

of agriculture… …agricultural production was determined by the demands of the overseas markets… …the railway network was built up… …huge profit generated through import and export.

Ans to Q 10: Self governing settlement colonies as in Canada… …'Crown Colony' as applied by Britain applied in Trinidad… …'Double Government' policy as was applied in India… …'Informal Empire' as applied in some Latin American countries like Argentina.

Ans to Q 11: Imperialism is the continuation of the colonial practice of domination often without actual settlements in the non-European setting.

Ans to Q 12: Loss of independence, loss of territorial integrity, economic exploitation in multiple ways, etc. are some of the evils of Colonialism having a secret agenda of distorting the culture of the indigenous people.



8.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a brief sketch of the origin and development of British colonialism from the early 16th century till the end of the 18th.

Q 2: What were the factors behind the spurt of colonial activities in its first phase of expansion in Asia and the Atlantic?

Q 3: What were the two phases of the British Empire? What differences do you find in them?

Q 4: Explain the nature of the Second Empire and trace its development and consequences in colonial India.

Q 5: Comment on the variety of available views on 'Imperialism'.

Q 6: Assess the consequences of Colonialism and Imperialism keeping in view the far reaching impact on the economy and culture of the colonial territories of Asia and Africa.

Q 7: In what ways, did the colonial expansion, also gave birth to various conflicts of interests? Explain in detail with examples.

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UNIT 9: THE MEDIEVAL AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 The Social Context

9.4 The Intellectual Context

9.5 Major Literary Forms

9.6 Important Writers

9.7 Let Us Sum Up

9.8 Further Reading

9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.10 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- locate the social and historical contexts that shaped Medieval literature in English
- identify the major literary forms that had developed in the Medieval Age
- make a reference to the important writers of the Medieval age
- assess the importance of Geoffrey Chaucer in representing the age
- discuss the significance of the Medieval age as one having considerable influence on English literature of the subsequent periods.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this Block and it is to be studied in connection with Unit 1 of Block-1 of this Course. In this unit, more emphasis will be on the identifying and exploring various literary activities that mark some of the important developments in early literary history of England. The Medieval Age can be said to have extended roughly from 1066 (the Norman Conquest)

to the end of the 14th century, though scholars differ regarding the precise dates of the beginning and culmination of the period. In the history of the world, the Medieval Age is the middle period in a three period division-Classic, Medieval, and Modern. In this unit, you will be able to have some understanding of the society and culture of the Medieval Age through an acquaintance with the impact of Feudalism and the role of the Church in various aspects of the life of the people. This unit will finally hold in front of you an inclusive picture of the literary and artistic pursuits, and of the important social changes, which took place during the period signalling the transition of the 'Medieval' to the 'Modern'.

9.3 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Though there is a tendency among some scholars like Jules Michelet (1798-1874), J.A. Symonds (1840-93)), and G. G. Coulton (1858-1947) to deride the Medieval Age as backward, primitive, and inhibited by dogmatic theology, yet this age was one of important social changes in which we find the medieval mingling with the 'Modern'. Even Feudalism, which was the characteristic way in which society was structured, was in a process of decay. However, to appreciate these changes, it is necessary for you to briefly look at the idea of Feudalism and the role of the Church about which you have already studied in detail.

Just as the 14th century saw the gradual disintegration of the feudal system, so also, it witnessed the decline in the power and influence of the church and the emergence of secular forces. The high ideals of simplicity and devotion to religious and scholarly pursuits began to crumble as the church gave more importance to the acquisition of wealth through donations made by people who were made to believe that they could attain salvation only through the mediation of the church and through keeping the church dignitaries satisfied by offering money and gifts. The religious orders-the monks, friars, pardoners, summoners etc. became more notable for their worldliness than their other qualities. It is interesting to note that Chaucer in his Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* provides a clear picture of similar practices. In Chaucer's work we find how the monk does not like to spend

his time within the walls of the monastery, how he hates to study and to indulge in manual labour as enjoined by Saint Augustine. Chaucer's monk loves to eat and is as fat as a lord is. The other ecclesiastical characters too provide examples of greater corruption. For example, the friar, the summoner, and the pardoner make money by dishonest practices like selling false relics. The bishops and other higher dignitaries were aware of the corruption creeping into the ecclesiastical orders but could do nothing, as they were too busy with their secular offices. With the passage of time, people like John Wycliffe raised their voices against the degenerate clergy. His followers came to be known as the 'Lollards'. Their efforts led to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, which helped people to understand the teachings of the scriptures and reduced their dependence on the clergy. Wycliffe is regarded as 'The Morning Star' of the Reformation which, in the 16th century, brought about sweeping changes in the religious scenario. The king confiscated the wealth and land of the churches and monasteries, and disbanded the orders of monks, friars, summoners and pardoners.

Among other social changes, which can be mentioned, is the growth of towns and with it an urban culture. Along with London, a number of towns came up with population comprising of a few thousands. A town, unlike the open village, had a wall going round it, which offered it some protection from intruders. Civic spirit ran high in the towns with the people cooperating for such activities as digging of drains, repairing of roads etc. Agriculture was practised in the land outside the town walls. The inhabitants of the towns practised various arts and crafts like basket making, weaving etc. Among Chaucer's pilgrims we find a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, a haberdasher, and a tapestry maker besides a merchant, "a sergeant of the lawe" and "a doctour of phisik" testifying to the emergence of newer classes in society. Each craft that was practised in the towns had its own guild to protect its interests and the modern trade union spirit was already there. An important development in the fourteenth century was the expansion of the cloth trade. This led to the emergence of the entrepreneur with a broader outlook and money at his command, and he coordinated the different processes till the finished product could be brought to the best market. Thus, as early as the

14th century, one could see the beginnings of capitalism as an organising force in expanding the cloth trade. It is also to be noted that the towns had better amenities than the village and besides being the hub of different economic activities, they were great centres of culture. The guilds took upon themselves the responsibility of staging the Miracles, Morality and Mystery plays which brought people together fostering a sense of camaraderie among them.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does Chaucer reflect on the 14th century religious setup?

Q 2: What, according to you, is the 14th century urbane culture?

9.4 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

One of the most striking results of the Norman Conquest of 1066 was that the structure and vocabulary of the English language changed to a considerable extent. The change was so great that even Chaucer, if he had come across a manuscript of Old English poetry, would have experienced far more difficulty construing the language than with Medieval Latin, French, or Italian. Thus, you see that the literary culture of the Medieval Ages was far more international than national and was divided more by lines of class and audience than by language. Latin was still the language of learning and the Church. However, in the 11th century, French became the dominant language of secular European literary culture. The Norman Conquest finally imposed a French speaking ruling class on England following which an Anglo French linguistic and literary culture developed as part of the highest social classes. Geoffrey Chaucer was certainly familiar with poetry having roots in the Old English period. However, when he started to write his poems in the 1360s and 1370s, he turned directly to French and Italian models as well as to classical poets like Ovid. He read popular romances in Middle English, most of which were derived from more sophisticated French and Italian sources.

Another facet of the intellectual context of the Medieval Age is that it

manifested a lot of respect for the insights of ancient philosophers, most importantly Aristotle, who was a major intellectual authority in the period. Higher education was based on Aristotle or on the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. Scholasticism, which emphasised dialectical reasoning to extend knowledge by inference, was a method of learning prevalent all over Europe. Medieval philosophy was primarily theological. The main problems were the problem of evil and the problem of compatibility of divine power and human free will.

The medieval worldview was a coherent system of beliefs bearing on the social order. It was thought that Creation consisted of numberless but linked degrees of being from the four physical elements to the pure intelligence of angels. Divine will governed the whole universe. Nature was thought to be God's instrument; social hierarchy a product of Nature; subordination and unity were the natural rules for families, social institutions, and above all the state, which should be subject to a single head. The state was concerned with men's souls as much as their bodies. The godlike qualities of human beings had been deprived by the Fall, and they were periodically visited by divine wrath in the form of wars, plague, and even thunderstorms. Yet, they could enjoy some happiness in their earthly existence if they treated this world as preparation for the next and kept their bodies subject to their souls. This was believed to be the main task of human reason. Thus, you notice an interesting worldview emerging during the Medieval times.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What is the intellectual significance of the Norman Conquest of 1066?

Q 4: Briefly comment on the medieval worldview.

9.5 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

You must have already realised that one of the important features of the literatures of the Medieval period is the devoutly Christian temperament.

Although important for the development of narrative poetry like we find in case of Chaucer, this age has also seen the development of lyric poetry and drama. The following is a discussion of the major literary forms that had emerged during the Medieval Age.

Poetry:

The predominant literary form in the Medieval Age was Allegorical Poetry. An allegory is a work having hidden meaning under the surface. The underlying tone of most of the Medieval allegorical poems is religious. The allegorical outlook, in its full medieval form, implied the capacity to see a situation simultaneously under different aspects, each existing on its own level, but at the same time forming part of a larger order in relation to which its complete meaning is to be ascertained. In an allegory, the abstract was made concrete through personifications. Virtues, vices, and spiritual states were given tangible representations. Chaucer, who was very much influenced by the literatures of France and Italy, borrowed the allegorical form from France and used it in his poems. His contemporary Langland also wrote his famous *Piers Plowman* in the allegorical mode.

People in the Medieval Age were in the habit of going on pilgrimages to places of religious interest like Canterbury. The journeys to and from the centres of pilgrimage spread over many days. To enliven the journeys, people took with them professional storytellers and singers or minstrels. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a compilation of tales told by the pilgrims on their way to and from Canterbury. Throughout the Medieval Age, many such tales were told not only in England but throughout Europe. Chaucer's tales were inspired by the *Decamaron* of Boccaccio. This is yet another collection of tales told by people who shut themselves up to escape from the plague which raged all over Europe in the 14th century. Though the tales, which were told by the pilgrims initially, had the didactic element, yet with the passage of time, gaiety and ribaldry came to predominate, and many people critiqued the tales as breeders of lies and corruption.

There are about sixty English medieval metrical romances. The romances dealt mainly with English history and its heroes. For example, *King Horn* and *Havelock the Dane* and the popular *Guy of Warwick* and

Bevis of Hampton are among the best romances of the Medieval Age. Sometimes, contemporary history was drawn upon as in the case of *Richard Coeur de Lion.* This type of romance is often known as "The Matter of England." Besides these, there were certain tales in circulation and they formed the substance of these poems. Many of these tales, especially the Arthurian romances like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are Celtic in origin. There are a number of recurrent themes in these romances, like the theme of the union of a mortal with an otherworldly being, and the theme of a succession of quests, which a knight has to undergo to prove his manhood. Another important poem is *The Pearl*. This poem exploits the device of the dream vision, more personal and private, and is notable for its aesthetic qualities.

Other than allegorical poetry and metrical romances, a large number of lyrics have also survived since the medieval times. These lyrics were intended to be sung. The best lyrics are either spring songs or songs for Christmas, but there are also lyrics on the decline of the year, the onset of winter, meditations on the uncertainty of the human lot etc. The association between words and music was never quite broken leading up to the songs of the glorious Elizabethan songbooks. There is one English poem written around 1200 called *The Owl and the Nightingale*, which falls into the category of the debate poem. The debate is between two birds; it begins as an exchange of abuse but later develops into an argument, lively and satiric. It is essentially a flying match in which the two birds are the antagonists. As such, it has an ancient ancestry, for the ceremonial flying match is a phenomenon much older than the Middle Ages and seems to have been almost universal. The poem's asset is the English vernacular. With the conversational language, the contemporary life of the people has entered the poem. The final impression is not, however, of quarrelsomeness, but of friendliness, intimacy, and sociability. Hence, you will find a plethora of allegorical and narratives poetry, metrical romances and lyric poems in the context of Medieval Poetry.

Drama:

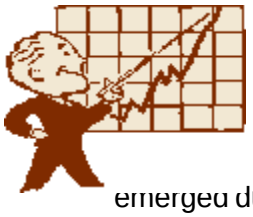
In the Medieval Age, the rate of literacy being low, people were more

prone to see and to listen than to read. Forms, which appealed to the eyes and the ears, were more appreciated than the written word, the ability to read being confined to a few clerics. In such a situation, drama was very popular. A number of Morality, Miracles, and Mystery plays were written within the precincts of the church. The plays were mostly didactic. A struggle between Good and Evil, Evil being personified in the form of the Seven Deadly Sins, was often staged. People were exhorted to shun vice and embrace virtue. The Morality plays personified the various virtues and vices and enacted the conflict between good and evil for the possession of the soul of each man; the Miracles were based on the miracles performed by saints. The Mystery cycle, on the other hand, reproduced a kind of history of humankind in relation to God from the Creation to the Last Judgement. With the passage of time, the religious fervour associated with the plays diminished. The plays moved out from the precincts of the church to the open spaces in the towns and secular elements began to creep in. The Devil became a comic character whose antics regaled the audience. It may be mentioned here that throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, apart from the dominant Christian culture, fragments of an older, pre-Christian culture– ceremonies, dances, games, etc. were still being practised, sometimes in defiance of the prohibitions of the church, as they were believed to be sacred and fundamental to life. The Mummers' Play, the Wooing Play, the Morris Dance, and the Sword Dance still survive among the folk. The fabliaux, which were ribald anticlerical tales, were also quite common among the new bourgeoisie in France and England. Chaucer turned to the fabliaux as the source for many of his best tales in the *Canterbury Tales*.

Prose:

Though the major imaginative effort of the writers in the Medieval Ages went into poetry, yet there was some development in prosaic writings too. During that time, prose was essentially a utilitarian medium. It was used to record information, to inform, to instruct, and to exhort. Nevertheless, it was a medium in which a variety of styles was available. Middle English prose survive in various dialects, the range of subject matters being saints' lives, sermons and homilies, doctrinal treatises, scientific or quasi scientific

manuals, chronicles, romances, and letters both official and personal. Notable examples of Middle English prose writings are *The Book of Margery Kempe,* an autobiography of a Norfolk bourgeoisie woman Margery Kempe (1373—1438), the sermons of John Lydgate (1370—1451), and *The Ancrene Riwle* written by an anonymous author in the early 13th century. It was written for three noble women who had become anchoresses, and was revised soon after for a larger community. It is a manual designed to guide them in the life they had chosen. Other than these, Julian of Norwich (1342 – 1416) wrote *The Long Text*, which is a theological exploration of the meaning of 'visions'. While her *Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love* (1393) is believed to be the first book in the English language written by a woman.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What are the different types of poetry that had emerged during the Medieval Age?

Q 6: Trace the development of drama and prose in the medieval times?

Q 7: What is a metrical Romance? Give Examples.

9.6 IMPORTANT WRITERS

The most important writer of the Medieval Age is undoubtedly Geoffrey Chaucer. He adopted modes, themes, and conventions of French and Italian medieval poetry to English poetry for the first time and gave it a new flavour. Chaucer is often referred to as "the father of English poetry" because of his contributions to the genre. However, the following is an attempt to recollect some of the important medieval authors without whose reference a discussion of Medieval Literature remains incomplete.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER :(1343—1400)

Chaucer is perhaps the greatest poet of his time. His early poems *Roman de la Rose*, *The Book of the Duchesse* and *The Hous of Fame* are influenced by the medieval French romances, allegories of courtly love and the dream vision poetry. Dante, Petrach and Boccaccio are the Italian poets who most influenced Chaucer. The memorable result of his contact with

Boccaccio is the poem *Troylus and Criseyde*, which was half translated and half adapted from Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. Chaucer's poetry grows out of allegory towards a larger, freer realism. His *The Canterbury Tales* is a portrait of the 14th century England with its different social classes, and their characteristic preoccupations. The tales are widely divergent and in conformity with the milieu, the characters come from. The characters are morally and socially representative; at the same time, they have highly individual characteristics, which distinguish them from other characters. However, most of the tales are based on traditional tales, old romances, and the fabliaux or merry tales.

Chaucer not only experimented with different literary forms like allegory and romance and introduced forms unknown to his country—the roundel, the virelai, and the ballade, but also contributed to English versification. He introduced a new stanza form composed of seven alliterative lines which he used in *The Canterbury Tales.* He sought to express in English all the graces and refinements he found in the poetry of France. Chaucer's contribution extends to the English language. During his time, there were at least four major dialects in circulation in different parts of England. Out of them, Chaucer chose for his literary activities the East Midland Dialect which was spoken in and around London. With the passage of time and the emergence of printing, the East Midland Dialect acquired the status of a standard language from which modern English has descended. Chaucer's greatness lies in the fact that he established English as the language of literature at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin.



LET US KNOW

You all should note that Chaucer's *The General Prologue* does not simply portray a closed social order. It also reveals how this order was in the process of breaking down at a historically significant period in English history. Most of Chaucer's characters are by no means content to stay in their proper places but

are engaged in the pursuit of wealth, status, and respectability. Thus, the conflict between the old and the new, between tradition and ambition is evident throughout the whole poem.

WILLIAM LANGLAND: (1332 – 1386)

Langland was another important literary figure of the period. His fame rests on *The Vision of Piers Plowman,* a Christian narrative poem written in allegorical form. It is a complete survey of human life under the aspects of good and evil. The poem combines universality of reference with an evocation of Malvern Hills and its surroundings in which Langland was born and brought up. Langland, like Chaucer, was concerned with the evils of contemporary society and presented in the poem an active representation of Christian virtues. The poem bears testimony to the poet's ability to handle narrative in verse. The alliterative verse quite effectively enacts the experience embodied in the poem. In *Piers Plowman,* Langland very beautifully manifests a concern with the corruption in the secular society and the clergies and its impact on the common masses. In the narrator's search for 'true' Christianity and salvation is found introspection and a condemnation of the established church systems. The significance of the poem is also seen in the fact that it was lauded by the thinkers of the Lollard Movement as well as by Wycliffe, who initiated the Reformation movement.

JOHN GOWER: (1330 – 1408)

Gower is another very important contemporary of Chaucer and Langland. His reputation rests on three long poems *Speculum Meditantis*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis*, written in French, Latin, and English respectively. These poems are well known for their moral and political themes. His verse has the same social and cultural milieu as that of Chaucer. His best known work *Confessio Amantis* which written in English. It is a typical medieval collection of tales in which Gower combines the roles of a courtly love poet and a Christian moralist. Following Gower, morality began to heavily invade the poetry of courtly love, whereas in earlier literature, the allegory of courtly love, the allegory of the Seven Deadly Sins and moral allegory are distinct. Each of the tales in *Confessio Amantis* exemplifies

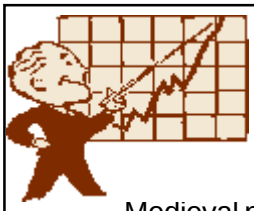
one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Many of the tales appear to have come originally from Ovid and are among the innumerable tales, which were in circulation in this great age of story-telling that had become part of the medieval tradition, both written and oral. It is said that Gower's reputation had been eclipsed by that of Chaucer. But, the important thing is that he was very popular during his days and he exerted a heavy influence on the Elizabethans.

SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE:

The name of Mandeville, whose identity is anonymous, is attached with a famous compilation of a French book entitled *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* between 1357 and 1371. This French work was very popular, and it was translated into several European languages, including English. In the Preface to the English version of the book, it is stated that the author was Sir John Mandeville, a knight, who crossed the sea in 1322 and travelled in many strange regions. Mandeville is one of the earliest fictitious narrators in English literature. It is a series of unconnected descriptions and information as Mandeville describes the terrains, flora and fauna and inhabitants of countries he visited. The interesting point is that Christopher Columbus might have used it as a point of reference.

SIR THOMAS MALORY:(1405—1471)

Malory was an English writer, best known for his long prose work *Le Morte D'Arthur* taken from the epilogue of Caxton, the first printer of the book. Although Malory's identity is uncertain, Caxton said that the book had been written by Sir Thomas Malory. *Le Morte D'Arthur,* like the travels of Mandeville, is a compilation of 8 tales in 21 books. The French Arthurian romances are drawn upon to create a prose romance of great length and detail. However diverse its sources, the book is written with a uniform dignity and fervour that express the very essence of romance and chivalry. It is a skilful blend of dialogue and narrative and is full of colour and life, while the style has a transparent clarity and a poetic sensitivity, which make Malory our first great, individual, prose stylist. Remote in spirit from the everyday concerns of its age, the *Le Morte D'Arthur* stands as another important stream of development in English prose in the Medieval Age.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Make a list of the important authors of the Medieval period.

Q 9: In what way, do Chaucer and Langland represent the Medieval age in their poetry?



9.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time, I am sure, you have gained some ideas of the various literary activities during the Medieval age. The gradual collapse of feudalism with its hierarchical social organisation and the emergence of a more egalitarian order, the increasing secularisation of society with and the decline in the power of the church, the coming of an urban culture with the growth of towns and the appearance of newer classes like merchants and the trading classes, are some of the newer tendencies of the period to which the writers often responded satirically. You must have understood that the most distinguishing feature of the literature produced during this period is that it is markedly Christian, and the writers dealt with the gap between the Christian ideal and the reality in this imperfect world. As represented by Chaucer's greatest work *The Canterbury Tales,* this age shows how the ideals of religious order are set against the reality of everyday disorder. You have learnt that along with poetry, prose writings also developed in the Medieval age as you can find through the works of Gower, Mandeville and Malory.



9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Albert, Edward.(1975). *History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2) Carter, Ronald & McRae, John. (2001).*The Routledge History ofLiterature in English: Britain and Ireland*. London and New York:

Routledge.

3) Daiches, David. (2001). *A Critical History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.

4) Ford, Boris. (Ed). (1991). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Vol.1. London: Penguin.

5) Sanders, Andrew. (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

6) Trevelyan, G. M. (1994). *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries.* Hyderabad, Orient Longman.



9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Chaucer very successfully represents the 14th century religious order… …accumulation of wealth became more important than religious pursuits… …the monks, friars, pardoners, summoners etc. became infamous for their worldliness… …the friar, the summoner, and the pardoner made money selling false relics.

Ans to Q 2: Growth of towns gave birth to an urban culture… …along with London, a number of other towns came up… …civic spirit ran high in the towns.

Ans to Q 3: The Norman Conquest brought noticable changes into the structure and vocabulary of the English language… …it imposed a French speaking ruling class on England… …this was followed by an Anglo French linguistic and literary culture.

Ans to Q 4: It is a coherent belief system… …divine will governed the whole universe… …nature was thought to be God's instrument… …and the social hierarchy was thought to be a product of Nature.

Ans to Q 5: Allegorical poetry having religious undertones… ...long narrative poem like Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decamaron… …*metrical romances like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight…. …lyric poetry… …debate poems.

Ans to Q 6: Prose writing in the medieval period was used to record, inform,

and to instruct… …the subject matter includes lives of saints, sermons, doctrinal treatises, chronicles, romances, letters and so on… …*The Ancrene Riwle* is an excellent example of Medieval prose… …drama gained popularity through Morality, Miracle, and Mystery plays… …these plays were mostly didactic in nature.

Ans to Q 7: A kind of poem that deals with themes of love, rites of passage, chivalry, adventure and interpersonal relationships… …knights, fair maidens and epic journeys appear frequently in such poems… …*King Horn* and *Havelock the Dane* and the popular *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* are the best romances of the Medieval Age… …recurrent themes like the theme of the union of a mortal with an otherworldly being, theme of a succession of quests which a knight has to undergo to prove his manhood and so on.

Ans to Q 8: For the answer, you are advised to re-read section 9.6 carefully.

Ans to Q 9: In his *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer portrays the 14th century English world of varied social classes and their preoccupations… …he portrays a closed social order which was in the process of breaking down… …the conflict between the old and the new was quite evident… …Langland's *Piers Plowman* is an allegory on human life under the aspect of good and evil… …like Chaucer, Langland is also concerned with the evils of contemporary society.



9.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: "Great changes, therefore, were taking place in Chaucer's day in the structure of society."(Trevelyan). Elaborate with reference to Chaucer's work.

Q 2: How does Chaucer's Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* represent the religious set up of his time?

Q 3: Discuss the role of the Church in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the Medieval period.

Q 4: How did the newly emergent towns contribute to the cultural life of medieval times?

Q 5: Explain the important aspects of medieval poetry with particular reference to the different types of poetry that emerged in that age.

Q 6: How did the important writers of the Medieval age respond to the social and cultural context of the time? Explain with examples.

Q 7: Why is it that Chaucer is often referred to as the 'Father of English Poetry'? Discuss in detail.

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UNIT 10: THE RENAISSANCE

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 The Intellectual Context

10.4 Impact of the Renaissance on English Literature

10.5 Major Literary Forms

10.6 Reassessing the term Renaissance in the 20th century

10.7 Let us Sum up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

10.10 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the intellectual contexts of the literature produced in the time of the Renaissance
- discuss some of the most common characteristics of the Renaissance literature
- identify the literary forms that emerged in England during the Renaissance
- name the important literary figures who were influenced by the Renaissance
- examine the term Renaissance in the context of the 20th century critical discussions.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will get to read about English literature produced in and around the Renaissance. The term Renaissance, means “rebirth” in English. It is the name commonly applied to the period of European history following the Medieval Age. It is usually said to have begun in Italy in the late 14th century and continued, both in Italy and other countries of Western

Europe, through the 15th and 16th centuries. This is a period in which European arts like painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature reached an eminence not experienced in any age. The development came late to England in the 16th century, and did not have its flowering until the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Sometimes, John Milton (1608-74) is described as the last great Renaissance poet. Therefore, in the English literary tradition, the Renaissance implies that reawakening of learning which changed men's outlook to a great extent. In this unit, we will try to discuss the impact of the Renaissance on the intellectual and literary activities of the 16th and 17th century England in some detail.

10.3 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

While discussing the intellectual contexts of the Renaissance, we should also discuss some of the implication of the Renaissance in England.

Firstly, the Renaissance meant the death of medieval scholasticism, which had for long been keeping human thought in bondage.

Secondly, it signalled a revolt against spiritual authority – the authority of the Pope. The 'Reformation', though not directly a part of the 'revival' of learning, was a companion movement in England.

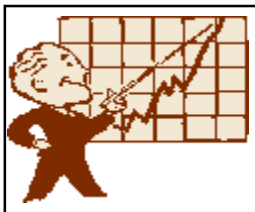
Thirdly, the Renaissance implied a greater perception of beauty and polish in the Greek and Latin scholars. This beauty and polish were sought by the Renaissance men of letters to be incorporated in their native literature.

Lastly, the Renaissance marked a change from theocentric to the homocentric conception of the universe. During the Renaissance, human values came to be recognised as permanent, and they were to be enriched and illumined by the heritage of antiquity. It is important to note that the impact of the Renaissance was evident on all the spheres of English literature. The Renaissance is often seen as the emergence of 'New Learning' because it approached the great classical works of Greece and Rome for its own sake, rather than for its use of Christianity. At the same time, the value of human beings as responsible 'individuals' to face the affairs of the society was restored. Soon, there emerged an interest in imaginative literature as the minds of the people were steered by stories brought from

'new' lands. Subsequently, the reordering of society for happiness through laws and education became the goal. Along with the resurgence of the 'individual', there could also be seen recognition of human being's fallibility, weakness and limitations imposed by uncertainties.

The early thinkers, whose contributions made the intellectual contexts of the Renaissance more remarkable, are Montaigne and Bacon. Montaigne's discussions on the probing of human nature and Bacon's deliberations on "Knowledge as Power" in *Advancement of Learning* are two other significant developments that might have influenced the intellectual contexts of the Renaissance in England. Along with these, the emergent classical scholarship meant a direct contact with the achievements of classical culture. Soon there developed a new concept of civilization. Humanism became scholarly, stylistic, and ethical.

As you have been informed already, one of the most significant events that mark the flourish of the English Renaissance is the introduction of the Printing Press by William Caxton which replaced hand-made manuscripts with mass produced books. Subsequently, there emerged a large reading public who accelerated the multiplication and circulation of books. The Printing Press also made room for the translations of the mighty authors of Greece and Rome for the English audience and readers. Caxton became instrumental in publishing from Westminster, books like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur.* The so-called humanistic revival sometimes resulted in sterile imitations of ancient works and styles, and a rigidly authoritarian rhetoric and literary criticism. In 1528, Baldassare Castiglione published *II Cortegiano* ("The Courtier"), to cultivate the idea of the Renaissance aristocracy. This was one of the most admired and widely translated of the many Renaissance 'courtesy books' which were meant to train the man of the court. Niccolo Machiavelli provided lessons on statecraft through his *The Prince* which became one of the leading texts for the preparation of a future king to rule. You should note that the famous Renaissance playwrights like Christopher Marlowe in his play *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare in many of his plays including the history plays, directly or indirectly refers to this work by Machiavelli.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What were the implications of the phenomenon called Renaissance in England?

Q 2: Refer to some of the works contributing to the intellectual context of the Renaissance?

Q 3: How did Montaigne and Bacon contribute to the Renaissance?

10.4 IMPACT OF THE RENAISSANCE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

Critics opine that modern literature starts with the Renaissance, and from about 1600 onwards, the language resembles the language we use today. Perhaps, the most significant trait of the literatures of this period is that the new stress on the idea of individuality and inwardness as is reflected in the soliloquies in Shakespeare's tragic plays. If you read about the relationship between the Renaissance and literature, you find that literature of this period is very rich and complex as the society was changing in some fundamental ways. The gaps between the religious ideals and the changing demands of the newly emergent society were becoming wider. Therefore, basically what we find in Renaissance literature is the tension between a traditional order and the disruption of that order. In recent times, critics have also tried to see how women were excluded from the dominant political order of the time. However, there were exceptions like the Countess of Pembroke, the sister of Phillip Sidney, who made her voice heard. There are however some important developments of the Renaissance which greatly affected the literatures of the period. You will do well if you concentrate on the following developments.

1. The Renaissance scholars of the classics, often called the Humanists, revived the knowledge of the classical Greek and Roman languages and literatures with a view to opening up the richness of the historical past, and to exploring ideas, materials, literary forms, and styles prevalent in them. Subsequently, these were made available to the

English writers. However, the spread of new ideas, discoveries, and types of literature during the Renaissance was made possible also by the new technology of Printing brought to England by William Caxton.

2. The Reformation movement had shaken the foundation of the rigid institutionalism of the Roman Catholic Church. This is an early form of Protestantism, which is strongly grounded on the individual's inner experience of the spiritual struggle and salvation. Subsequently, Protestantism came to be seen as an extreme manifestation of "Renaissance individualism".
3. Christopher Columbus' exploration of the world, the continents and the native populations, and the settlement by the Europeans in new lands, gave new raw materials to the literary imagination. One of the best examples of this is William Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest.* This play's main concern over the treatment of the native inhabitants by Prospero and others is perhaps derived by Shakespeare from a contemporary account of a shipwreck near Bermuda and other writings about voyages to the New World. More important for English literature, is also the way economic exploitation of the new world put England at the centre, and how a reaction to the prosperity of the English encouraged the development of a vigorous intellectual and artistic life.
4. Studies on the idea of the cosmos was another important development of the time of the Renaissance which had heavily influenced the literary cultures of England. When you will read about Milton's *Paradise Lost,* you will also get to read about the idea of the cosmos, which during that time, was divided between the Ptolemaic and the Copernican theory of the cosmos—the first taking the earth as stationary around which rotated the successive spheres of the moon and the various planets, and the second taking the sun as the centre.

The first and the earliest impact of the Renaissance was found in the humanistic literature that developed in England as exemplified by Thomas More's *Utopia*. This work emphasized the importance of individual men apart from their social rank or power. At the same time, the newly aroused enthusiasm for classical scholarship resulted in the production of several

theological and secular works, such as John Colet's *An Exposition of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*, Sir John Cheke's *The Heart of Sedition* and Sir Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*. A revival of classical studies had already developed in Italy with the rediscovery of Latin writers like Catullus and Lucretius who could steer the imagination of the Italians and who contributed to a new kind of aesthetic culture noticeably different from the Middle ages of Europe.



LET US KNOW

Some of the major literary figures in the English Renaissance are:

Francis Bacon, Thomas Dekker, John Fletcher, John Ford, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, Phillip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, Sir Thomas More, Thomas Nashe, William Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Webster, Ben Jonson, John Donne, John Milton.

You will do well if you read about them and their works in one of the good books of history of English literature as stated in the reading list.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What, according to you are the main characteristics of the Renaissance literature in England?

Q 5: How are the Humanists related to the Renaissance?

Q 6: Mention briefly the four major literary developments during the Renaissance.

10.5 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

Since it is not possible to provide you a detailed picture of the different writers and their works, I suggest that you go through history of English literature books like Andrew Sanders' *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* or David Daiches' *A Critical History of English Literature* for getting

a firm hold over the authors and their works that come under the influence of the English Renaissance. During the Renaissance, there emerged rich and varied literary forms in England. These can be classified in the following ways.

POETRY:

The spirit of the age is perhaps best reflected in dramatic poetry. Blank Verse as a mode of presentation was firmly established in England. Blank Verse introduced a freedom in terms of metrical arrangements. Iambic Pentameter was made less formal than rhythmic poetry. More and more emphasis was laid on the way a poet could create a pattern, further used extensively by Marlowe and Shakespeare. The members of the "University Wits" like George Peele and Christopher Marlowe had already made Blank Verse a chosen style to compose their dramas. However, the real temper of the age was suited to the lyrical mood, and so the abundance of lyric poetry, like the sonnet, became a marked achievement of the 16th century England. You should know that sonnet writing in England begins with the efforts of Wyatt and Surrey only to be taken up by none other than William Shakespeare in later times. Then, the lyrical impulse is carried out further by John Donne.

Wyatt and Surrey became the first reformers of English poetry and style. However, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne and Milton are some of the greatest Renaissance poets. Their most favoured modes are epics and lyrics, and their central themes are both secular and divine love. Spenser's deviation from the Chaucerian tradition helps in defining the poetry of the Renaissance period to a great extent. Although Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1596) has much in common with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (1386), in their use of allegory and romance, there is a marked difference. While Chaucer comically observes the disorder of love and experience, Spenser tries to impose order on everything. This attempt made by Spenser has direct allegiance to the Renaissance. If we further compare Spenser's sonnet sequence *Amoretti* (1595) with Shakespeare's sonnets (1609), we find that Spenser presents the impression of idealised love, while Shakespeare admits more of the bitter realities of existence. Such comparative analysis

will help you understand life and experience of a transitional phase under the influence of the Renaissance.

You will get another experience of Renaissance Poetry as you read the poems of John Donne and John Milton. In Donne's poetry, you find that he delights in the puzzling over the paradoxes of experience although the ultimate faith in God is quite secure. The strains and tensions of life do not lead Donne to despair. His poetry is largely an intellectual game representing the concerns of the age. However, unlike Donne, John Milton writes in a far more serious manner. While uttering the purpose of his *Paradise Lost* being the justification of the ways of God to men, he actually indicates a real problem. He was well aware of the fact that a few decades ago, God's order was taken for granted and nobody had ever felt the need to justify God's action. A major factor for Milton in this situation was perhaps his experiences of the Civil War of 1642-51, which had emphasised the basic difference between society's order and God's order.



LET US KNOW

Look at some of the themes in Renaissance Poetry as exemplified by different works and concerns:

- Spenser's ***Shepheardes Calender*** (1579)—signified the 'Pastoral' setting
- Spenser's ***Amoretti*** (1595)—provided the impressions of Idealised love
- Shakespeare's **Sonnets** (1609)—presented the bitter realities of existence

Renaissance poetry often dealt with how the old Christian Universe got replaced by the concerns of the modern secular society, how the court rather than the church became important for everyday life. Many of the Renaissance poets tried to express how individuals were caught between the demands of their conscience and desires that resulted in a noticeable conflict between ideas and values.

PROSE:

During the time of the Renaissance, English prose too flourished. Due to the introduction of the printing press, prose became the common vehicle of amusement and information. The most remarkable element in prose is expressed in the literary romances of Sir Philip Sidney and the works of the University Wits. Such romances have their inspiration mainly from the tales of the great classical masters like Boccaccio, Cinthio, Bandello and so on. They represent the impact of the Renaissance on the English mind caused by the contact with classical literature. At the same time, it appears to be an obvious continuation of medieval romances. Among them, Lyly's *Euphues* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*are worth- mentioning. You also find that a number of books were written on politics, history and travels. For example, the prose writings of Thomas Malory (his *Morte D'Arthur*), Erasmus (his *The Praise of Folly*), Thomas More (his *Utopia*) and Niccolo Machiavelli's (his *The Prince*) are significantly responsible for heralding the beginning of the Renaissance. Out of these, Thomas More's *Utopia* is often considered the 'true prologue to the Renaissance'. Other than these, Bacon's *Essays* also bring the mind of Bacon and his wisdom into firm contact with the common readers.

Another facet of Renaissance prose writing is the birth of literary criticism, which indicates the realisation of the need to establish principles of writing. The literary criticism was concerned mainly with the status and value of poetry. For example, Stephen Gosson attacked poetry as immoral in his treatise *The School of Abuse*. Sidney replied to Gosson in his famous *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) which stressed the value of poetry. In Sidney's view, imaginative literature is a better teacher than philosophy and history. Literary critics of this era emphasised the importance of classical models. For example, William Webbe, in *A Discourse of English Poetry* attempted the first historical survey of poets and poetry, and Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie* is the first systematic consideration poetry as an art. In addition to the above-mentioned prose works, there were pamphlets, theological works, sermons, translations, travels and such writings as Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. These works helped in founding the

tradition of prose writing for the future.

DRAMA:

You should note that with the coming of the Renaissance, the medieval mystery and morality plays lost their previous status. Subsequently, there is a sweeping advancement toward regular comedies, tragedies and history plays. There was an attempt to introduce classicism into drama. Perhaps, the first English regular tragedy is *Gorboduc* written by Sackville and Norton, and the first comedy is *Ralph Roister Doister* by Nicholas Udall. Such works greatly imitated the tradition of classical tragedy and comedy. For example, *Gorboduc* is a slavish imitation of Senecan tragedy. Let me tell you in this context that the English dramatists did not come under the spell of the ancient Greek dramatist like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, but under the Roman dramatist Seneca, Plautus and Terence. The theme of blood and revenge of Seneca became very popular among the English dramatists. Later on, the "The University Wits" struck a note of independence in their dramatic style. They refused to copy Roman drama as lavishly as the writers of *Gorboduc* and *Ralph Roister Doister*.

Let us now pause for a while to discuss the "University Wits" and their contribution to Renaissance drama. You should remember that the dramatic works of many of the members of the "University Wits" clearly represent the ideals of the Renaissance. The term "University Wits" is applied to a group of English men of letters who flourished in the Elizabethan age under the impact of the Renaissance. The group was more or less constituted by some young scholars from Oxford and Cambridge. The members of the group were highly cultivated literary men who took to writing drama as their profession. They are George Peele (1558-98), Robert Greene (1558-92), Thomas Nash (1567-1601), Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) Thomas Kyd (1558-94) and Christopher Marlowe (1564-93). As the literary historian Edward Albert has pointed out, their plays had the following points in common:

1. There was a fondness for heroic themes
2. Their fondness for heroic themes needed great fullness and variety,

splendid descriptions, long speeches, the handling of violent incidents and emotions.

3. The style in which they wrote their drama was also 'heroic'. The aim was to achieve strength, magnificent epithets, and powerful declamation. In the plays of Marlowe, the result is quite impressive. In this connection, it is to be noted that the best medium for such expression was blank verse, which was sufficiently elastic to be adapted to any method.
4. Their themes were usually tragic in nature, for they paid little heed to what was considered the lower species of comedy. The general lack of real humour in the early drama is one of its most prominent features.

While discussing the role played by the "University Wits", you must also acknowledge their influence on the succeeding dramatists of England including Shakespeare. For example, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* directly influenced the writing of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* a few years later. However, it was none other than Christopher Marlowe who stands in the forefront in representing the Renaissance ideals in his dramas. I must tell you that Marlowe is rightly called the true child of the Renaissance as the protagonists of his most popular plays like *Dr. Faustus, The Jew of Malta* and *Tamburlaine the Great* show the spirit of the Renaissance.

After the "University Wits", the English drama regained its strength in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's compassionate understanding of the human lot has perpetuated his greatness and made him one of the leading representative figures of English literature of the whole world. His comedies like *As You Like It* (1599) and *Twelfth Night* (1600) depict the endearing as well as the ridiculous sides of human nature. His great tragedies — *Hamlet* (1601), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), *Macbeth* (1606), penetrate deep into the human soul. In Shakespeare's last plays like *The Tempest* (1611), you can see the picture of the English maritime adventures, which is another facet of the Renaissance ideals of discovering new lands.



LET US KNOW

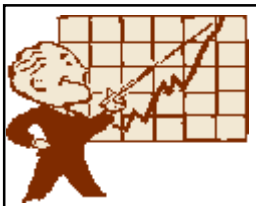
The Four Periods of the English Renaissance:

Early Phase: (1500-58) It relates to the heavy cultural influence of Italian Renaissance on English Culture and Society. Often this phase is called the preparatory stage.

The Elizabethan Period: (1558-1603) It refers to the period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I from 1558-1603. This period is signified by rapid developments in English commerce, maritime power, and nationalist feeling followed by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. This period saw the contributions of authors like Sir Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson and others. These authors produced excellent works in prose and poetry.

Jacobean Period: (1603-1625) It refers to the reign of James I from 1603 to 1625 after Queen Elizabeth I. This period is significant for the prose works of Bacon, John Donne's sermons and poetry, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* and the King James' translation of the Bible. This is also the time for William Shakespeare's greatest tragedies and tragicomedies.

The Caroline Period: (1625-1649) It refers to the reign of Charles I from 1625 to 1649. This was the time of the English Civil War fought between the supporters of the king known as "Cavaliers" and the supporters of Parliament known as "Roundheads". The most important literary figure of this period is John Milton.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What are the main elements in Renaissance poetry?

Q 8: Make a list of the common elements among the "University Wits"?

Q 9: Mention some of the Renaissance prose works.

10.6 REASSESSING THE TERM RENAISSANCE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

You will find that many attempts have been made to define the term "Renaissance". For example, M H Abrams has described it as the birth of the modern world out of the ashes of the Dark Ages; as the discovery of the world and man; and as the time of the emergence of individualism in human life, thought, religion, and art. Moreover, during what we tend to call "the Renaissance," it is possible to identify a number of events and discoveries, which clearly effected radical and distinctive changes in the beliefs and manners of the people of the upper and the intellectual classes.

However, during 1940s, a number of historians replaced the term "Renaissance" with "early modern" to designate the period from the end of the Middle Ages until the late seventeenth century. They seek to highlight the period as a transitional one leading to the modern world. The notion of calling this period "The Renaissance" is itself a relatively modern invention. In fact, the term Renaissance was popularised by the historian **Jacob Burckhardt** in the 19th century. Instead of being a 'rebirth', the Renaissance is sought to be viewed, in its innovations and intellectual concerns, as a precursor to our present century. The different innovations made during this period may be regarded as the opening up of the relatively closed and stable world of the great civilization of the later Middle Ages, when most of the essential and 'permanent truths' about God, man, and the universe were considered to be adequately known. The full impact of many developments in the Renaissance did not make its presence felt until the Enlightenment in the later 17th and 18th centuries. But, the fact that they occurred in this period indicates the vitality, the restless curiosity, and the imaginative power of many scholars, thinkers, artists, or adventurers of this period.

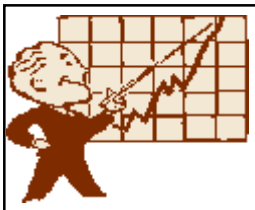
One impulse in later 20th century criticism, i.e. in New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, is to look at texts in their historical contexts. You must be informed that E.M.W. Tillyard in his book *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) presented a cosmic world order that was believed to have governed human institutions and natural phenomena in the Elizabethan age.

The literary texts produced in this period were seen as an expression of a sense of order. But, most interestingly, where Tillyard found stability, the New Historicist and Cultural Materialists, while presenting their views on the literature of the Renaissance, found instability, difference and division. They made the point clear that in Tillyard's book there is no mention of the women and the poor, and the lower class people. Subsequently, they re-read the literature and history of the Renaissance period and displaced an essentially coherent and orderly view of the society with a sense of incoherence and argument. You will read more about New Historicism and Cultural Materialism during the course of this MA English Programme.



LET US KNOW

The idea of the English Renaissance has faced intense criticism by many cultural historians. Some have even contended that the "English Renaissance" has no real connection with the artistic achievements of the Italian artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, closely identified with the Italian Renaissance. They tend to argue that, since the time of Chaucer, England had already produced a wide range of rich literatures marking its influence on the writings of the future generation of English writers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: In what way can we call the English Renaissance 'early modern'?

Q 11: Write briefly about how the thinkers of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism have discussed Renaissance literature.



10.7 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the Renaissance in England is marked by huge cultural changes and many technological advances, the

most important of which is the spread of printing. Many of the concerns in literature of this period are derived from efforts to explain emergent patterns in society and culture using different literary forms. You must have understood by now that it was also a time when the distinctions between the 'secular' and the 'religious' had clearly been recognised. In order to understand some of these tensions, we only need to look at the various works of literature and how they were consumed during a historically significant time. It was a time when the Holy Roman Empire was still considered an ideal view of history. What men could make of themselves by cultivating arts and science, represented a revolution of thought. The economic and social fabric of society were also changing. The rise of the middle class finally contributed to the evolution of a free society unlike in the time of Feudalism. Soon, there emerged a money-economy that was to transform the whole world in the subsequent times. However, a study of the different writers of this period makes it clear that intellectually the Renaissance contributed a lot to the developments of English Poetry, Prose and Drama.



10.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bush, Douglas. (1993). *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century*, *1600-1660***.** Oxford: Clarendon Press.

2) Daiches, David. (2001). *A Critical History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.

3) Drabble, Margaret. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to English literature***.** Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4) Ousby, Ian. (ed) (1993). *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Death of medieval scholasticism… …revolt against spiritual authority… ...a greater perception of beauty and polish in the Greek

and Latin scholars… …a change from theocentric to the homocentric conception of the universe.

Ans to Q 2: Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*… …Montaigne's *Essays*… …Bacon's A*dvancement of Learning… …*Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* etc.

Ans to Q 3: Montaigne's discussions on the probing of human nature and Bacon's deliberations on "Knowledge as Power" in *Advancement of Learning* are two other significant developments that might have influenced the intellectual contexts of the Renaissance in England.

Ans to Q 4: Renaissance literature is rich but complex… …the English society had undergone changes in some fundamental ways… … The gap between the religious ideals and the demand of the newly emergent society was widening… …Renaissance literature basically reflects the tension between a traditional order and the disruption of that order.

Ans to Q 5: The Humanists revived the classical Greek and Roman languages and literatures… …this helped in spreading the ideas, materials, literary forms, and styles steeped in them… …Caxton's printing press gave further impetus to it.

Ans to Q 6: The Humanists revived the classical Greek and Roman literatures and opened up their richness … …the Reformation movement had shaken the foundation of the rigid institutionalism of the Roman Catholic Church… …the discovery of new lands gave new raw materials to the literary imagination… …contemporary discussion on the idea of the cosmos helped a writer like Milton.

Ans to Q 7: Poetry reflects the spirit of the age... …Blank Verse became popular… …Iambic Pentameter became less formal… …lyric poetry like the sonnet reflected the temper of the age… …after Shakespeare, the lyrical impulse is carried out by John Donne.

Ans to Q 8: They were fond of heroic themes and style… …they liked splendid descriptions, long speeches, the handling of violent incidents and emotions… …they wrote heroic drama in blank verse… …their themes were usually tragic.

Ans to Q 9: Lyly's *Euphues... …*Malory's *Morte D'Arthur… …*Erasmus's

The Praise of Folly, … …More's *Utopia,* Machiavelli's *The Prince… … …* Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy… …* William Webbe's *A Discourse of English Poetry… …*Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie… …* Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) and so on.

Ans to Q 10: During 1940s, many thinkers wanted to replace the term "Renaissance" with 'early modern'… …they highlighted the Renaissance as a transitional period leading to the modern world… … for them Renaissance meant innovations in intellectual concerns that resemble those of the modern times.

Ans to Q 11: New Historicisist and Cultural Materialist thinkers placed a text in their historical contexts… … they found that Tillyardhad not made any mention of the women, the poor, and the lower class people while discussing the Elizabethan world… …hence, Renaissance literature has to be re-read.



10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the main developments in English Renaissance literature? Elaborate with examples?

Q 2: What were the major literary forms that developed during the Renaissance period? Discuss.

Q 3: Write in detail about the prose literature of the Renaissance period.

Q 4: Write a note on the development of English drama during the Renaissance with particular reference to Marlowe.

Q 5: What do you know about the "University Wits"? Discuss their contribution to English drama.

Q 6: Do you agree that the spirit of the Renaissance is best reflected in poetry? Explain with adequate examples.

Q 7: Why is it that during the 1940s, some historians replaced the term 'Renaissance' with 'Early Modern'? Discuss.

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UNIT 11: RESTORATION AND AFTER

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 The Intellectual Context

11.4 Major Literary Forms

11.5 Important Writers

11.6 Let us Sum up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.9 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- describe the basic characteristics of the Restoration age
- explain the intellectual context of the period
- identify the major literary forms that emerged in the Restoration period
- name the important and influential writers of the period and make a survey of their literary works.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

You must have already read that the Restoration refers to the restoration of monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England in 1660. Subsequently, great changes entered the social and political life of the English people. The literature of this era mirrors noticeable socio-political transition. During this period, priority was placed on the importance of 'Reason', which was considered a unique human quality that served as a guide for man. Thus, this age is also roughly called by many as the 'Age of Reason'. Literature of this period was considered a tool for the advancement of knowledge. The writers were found observing Nature in their attempts to express their beliefs. There was a strong reaction against Puritanism and an atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness replaced the stern morality of

the previous ages. Society and Politics gained an upper hand and reflected their influence in the different literary forms. There was also a rapid advancement in science with emphasis on absorption and details of investigation. This unit thus introduces you to the various issues of the literature of the Restoration and the succeeding periods.

11.3 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The Restoration Age is the first phase of what we usually call the Neo classical Period in English literature. This period expands from 1660 to 1785. The other two phases are the Augustan Age and the Age of Sensibility. The Restoration Age (1660-1700) is marked by the urbanity, wit, and licentiousness of court life, in contrast to the seriousness and sobriety of the earlier Puritan regime under Oliver Cromwell. The theatres reopened after ten long years of ban. This is the great age of Restoration 'Comedies Of Manners popularised by Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, and John Dryden. The second phase, namely the Augustan Age (1700-1745), is signified by the writings of the leading writers like Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Joseph Addison who deliberately imitated the literary forms and subjects, decorum, and urbanity seen during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus around 27 BC to 14 A.D. While, the Age of Sensibility is marked by a stress on new cultural attitudes, theories of literature, and types of poetry at around 1740s. In this age, there can be seen a turn from neoclassical "correctness" and the emphasis on judgment and restraint to an emphasis on instinct and feelings. Thus, you find that the literature of the Restoration Age and the subsequent times became instrumental in bringing lot of noticeable changes that influenced the writings of the authors.

The authors of the Restoration Age, turned to classical writers—to the Greek, Roman and Latin writers in particular, for guidance and inspiration. The writers of this period strove for harmony and precision, and imitated Homer, Cicero, Virgil and Horace. A brilliant set of writers had arisen in France, actuated by classical methods that excited a profound influence upon literature. Charles II had spent most of his exile in France, and being attracted

to its literature, he did his best to enforce the ideals in English Literature. The literary tendencies of the Restoration period were deeply influenced by the French writers who strove to repress all emotion, and use only precise and elegant methods of expression. Stress was laid on the value of form rather than originality of ideas. Expression was more important than the matter or thought for which correctness, accuracy, clarity, and lucidity became the watchwords of literature. The new spirit that emerged following the Restoration was above all critical, intellectual and analytical, where imagination and emotion were substituted with wit, intellect and rationality. A new spirit of realism and search for fact replaced the old Elizabethan love for patriotism and creative vigour. Love for romance gave way to love for realism. This developed a perfection of form, unbroken by pauses and thoughts of passion or imagination. It was an age of understanding, an age of Enlightenment, which was governed by a set principles and rules, laid down by the classical Greek and Roman writers like Homer, Virgil, Horace and Aristotle. This classicism was fostered and encouraged by the political needs of the age.

During the Restoration Age, the neoclassical ideals of logic, order, restraint and decorum gained momentum. With the emphasis on 'Reason' some poetic qualities of the English language such as imagery and idiom disappeared. There was a tendency to deal with manners and superficialities rather than elemental things and larger issues of life. By reflecting the vices and foibles of the society literature became an interpretation of life involved with the political and social circles, while the coffee-houses became the most powerful element to foster literary discussions. Within these circumstances, satire was the most important literary tool that was utilised by many of the writers of the age. The prevalence of satire, which resulted from the union of politics and literature, is another important characteristic.

So, you find that the Restoration is seen as a prolonged critical period intervening between three periods of English literature. All tendencies that developed during the Restoration Age became more pronounced in the Augustan Age or The Age of Sensibility. The critical spirit prevailed and literature was produced not by free creative effort but by conscious and

deliberate understanding of the conditions of the society. Thus, you will find that the 18th century shows a continuation of the social and literary forces seen during the Restoration. The most important part of the literature of this period was an interest in society and institutions rather than in the individual.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Why is the Restoration Age called the "Age of Reason"?

Q 2: What do you mean by the Restoration spirit?

Q 3: State some of the major tendencies of Restoration literature.

Q 4: Mention the three stages of the Neoclassical period.

11.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

The Restoration Age marked a new advance in the field of poetry, prose and drama. There is a severance of ties with the Elizabethans both in matter and style of literature. The social and political conditions were congenial for the growth of different forms of literature.

POETRY:

The poetry of this age was distinguished by classical or neo-classical traits like balance, exactness, ardour and polish. Lyrical poetry suffered a decline although the most favourite form of lyrical utterance was the ode. Satire was cultivated with great assiduity and poetry became didactic dominated by intellectual vigour, irony and wit. Heroic couplet was adopted as the medium of expression in poetry in preference to blank verse, which was a favourite with the Elizabethans. Poetry began to be written according to rules and regulations borrowed from the ancients and the French. Realism was a marked feature representing the picture of a corrupt court and society. The appeal of poetry was to the intellect and reason. Besides Dryden, who was the best of the lyrical poets, we have the Earl of Rochester and Sir Charles Sedley who wrote lyrics dealing with love in an artificial manner. Other poets had neither the flights necessary for lyric nor the genius for writing lyrical poetry. The lyric almost disappeared after Dryden. Dryden

towers predominantly in this class of poetry. His two odes on the anniversary of *St Cecilia's Day* and *The Alexander's Feast* and his famous ode on the death of Mrs. Anne Killigrew are some of the best exponents. Alexander Pope too wrote a few odes one being *On St. Cecilia's Day* in imitation of Dryden's ode.

It is also interesting to note that several circumstances combined to make this age bound in satirical writing. It was a period of bitter political and personal contention, easy morals and subdued enthusiasms, of sharp wit and acute discrimination. For these reasons, satire acquired a new importance and sharper edge. Satire of this age is personal and vindictive and its effect is more incisive. Satire can be described as a literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking amusement, contempt, scorn and indignation. The main function of satire was to acknowledge a problem in society, and attempt to reform the problem in a comical manner. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* is the best example of political satire while his *Mac Flecknoe* shows the personal satire type. *The Rehersal*, *Hudibras* and *The Dunciad,* are famous examples of satire written during this period. Pope developed the epistolary form of satire in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* The seed of satire was laid by Dryden, but it reached its pinnacle in the hands of Pope.



LET US KNOW

Heroic Couplet:

In the Neoclassical Age, the change in the style of poetry could be seen in the development of the heroic couplet, which had previously been used by Chaucer with great ability. The heroic couplet consisted of two lines of rhyming pentameters. The end of a 'heroic' couplet coincides with the end of a sentence. It is called heroic because it was the usual form for epic verse in English celebrating heroic exploits. This form attained a perfect finish and acquired great success in the hands of Dryden and Pope. *Mac Flecknoe, The Rape of the Lock* and *An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* are excellent examples where writers have successfully used the heroic couplet.

PROSE:

In the field of prose, this age makes remarkable achievements. There is no doubt about the fact that prose of this period was directed towards the purpose of practical life. Prose as a medium of expression was best suited for plain narrative, argumentative exposition and handling of critical subjects. The style is plain, lucid and clear, without aiming at grandeur or extravagance. The emotional temperament of prose declined in the Restoration period. Dryden was one of the great pioneers of modern prose writing in English. His force, vigour and rationality are directly visible in his prose works. The Diarists and Memoir writers of whom Samuel Pepys played a prominent role were the other prose writers. A multitude of practical interests, arising from changing socio-political conditions demanded expression not in books, but in pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. This led to the emergence of the Periodical Essays, which became popular with both readers and writers. It appeared at regular intervals in the form of journals and had an inherent social purpose. It aimed at improving manners and morals of the people by reflecting the life and society. Daniel Defoe published the *Review, which* appeared twice a week, but it met its end in 1712. Richard Steele then founded the *The Tatler* in 1709, which was followed by *The Spectator Papers* in 1711. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele are regarded as the founders of the Periodical Essays. Prose acquired utility and permanence preparing the way for writers who stood on the threshold of modern prose. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* Richard Steele's *The Tatler,* Steele's and Addison's *The Spectator Papers* are best examples of satires in prose.

DRAMA:

Drama took a new form after the lapse of twenty years. In 1660, theatres reopened and drama was revived. There was a complete break from Elizabethan tradition. The dramatists of this age criticised the old Elizabethan plays and Shakespearean comedies and tragedies. These dramatists turned to French dramatists for inspiration and guidance. Pascal, Bousuet, Fenelon, Malherbe, Corneille, Moilere were the dramatists who inspired Restoration drama. In the field of comedy, the Restoration dramatists, headed by George Etherege and William Congreve, pioneered

the **Comedy of Manners**, reflecting gaiety, foppery, insolence and intrigue of an aristocratic group that came into prominence due to changes in the political sphere. The plots of these plays were loosely constructed having scattered scenes and situations. The characters are types, and share some of the eccentricities and oddities of Ben Jonson's humours. The dramatist's keen interest in the social achievements and follies of the society is communicated through these plays. Congreve's *The Way of the World* is regarded as a classic of English comedy because of its artistic excellence. In the field of tragedy, dramatists cultivated Heroic tragedy with themes of epic magnitude and super heroes and heroines. The purpose was didactic with love and honour being the driving force of tragedy. The Heroic couplet was used as the medium of expression.

NOVEL:

Novel was still in its formative stage in the 17th century. However, in the later part of century, the English novel took a new turn under the influence of the French novelists. It was seen to be the product of the emerging middle class and the representation of their ideals and sensibilities. Novels mainly depicted social relationship, and the realism and contemporaneity helped the readers identify themselves in the social world of which they were integral part. The antidote to the drab and austere life was found in the romances of France which came to be known as the Heroic Romances of the 17th century, and which often dealt with the suffering characters adventuring in remote lands. The vogue of Heroic Romances took a new turn in the direction of Realism and practical problems of Middle class society. This change from romance to realism, from roguery to morality was mainly brought about by John Bunyan, William Congreve, Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe. These writers exercised a profound and deep influence in the development of English fiction. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678-1684) is a memorable portrayal of the psychological states of the pilgrims against the hostility and incomprehensibility of the contemporary world. Congreve's *Incognita* (1692) is a prose tale that combines romantic action with mock-heroic comments. This work represents the growing interest of the reading public in prose fictions. In Aphra Behn's two important works *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt*

(both published in 1698) one can easily access the romantic actions of the characters in the contemporary society. While in Daniel Defoe, we find that the interest in combining social and material reality with the complexities of human personality helped him create fictions that fully represented all the aspects of the 17th century from morality to roguery, from politics to economics. Thus, you find that in this period, novel as a genre of literature was gradually taking its shape to realistically represent the society and its people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Do you think that satire is the most important type of poetry that developed during the Restoration period?

Q 6: What is Heroic couplet? Name two poems where this form has been used.

Q 7: What was the aim of the Periodical Essay? Who were the main exponents of this genre?

Q 8: What do you mean by 'Comedy of Manners'?

Q 9: Briefly state the characteristics of the Neo classical age.

Q 10: Mention the significance of Restoration Prose works with examples.

11.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

The following is list of important writers whose contributions made the literature of the Restoration period a remarkable source for the 17th and 18th century life and society.

JOHN DRYDEN: (1631 – 1700)

Dryden was an influential English poet, critic, translator, and playwright who dominated the literary life of Restoration England. He was the representative literary figure of his age. He left his indelible imprint on various branches of literature. He is recognised as the greatest transitional poet who serves as a link between the Renaissance and the Classical age.

As a writer, Dryden gained maturity very slowly. It was as a Metaphysical poet that he first began. From 1663 to 1681, Dryden earned his livelihood by writing plays. His first play *The Wild Gallant* (1663) was a failure. *The Rival Ladies* and *The Indian Emperor* established his reputation as a playwright. When the Plague broke out, he shifted to Charlton and wrote *Annus Mirabilis* a narrative poem describing the terrors of the great fire in London.

In 1661, he wrote his first great satire *Absalom and Achitophel* where he exposed the relations between Monmouth and Shaftesbury. In the same year, he satirizes Thomas Shadwell in *Mac Flecknoe.* His satires are masterpieces of political vigour, personal animosity and anti-puritan spirit. He paved the way for Alexander Pope who used satire more exquisitely. After these two political satires, Dryden wrote two theological poems *Religio Laici* (1662) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1665). He produced five more plays, which were translations of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal and Homer. In his works, we have the reflection of both good and evil tendencies of the age. Dryden is known as a great artist in verse as well as in prose, but his reputation lies on his artistic excellence. As a literary artist, he endeavoured to find better literary forms, better vocabulary, better constructions and better style. He handled with dexterity the heroic couplet and gave English verse actuality and directness. Dryden exercised a great influence on the poets of the nineteenth century. His quality is artistic and literary but not very imaginative as we find in Romantic literature that followed.

John Dryden was the major poet critic, as well as one of the major dramatists of his time. The names of the other poets includes the satirists Samuel Butler and the Earl of Rochester. Other notable writers in prose, in addition to Dryden, were Samuel Pepys, Sir William Temple, the religious writer in vernacular English John Bunyan, and the philosopher John Locke. Aphra Behn, the first English woman to earn her living by her pen and one of the most inventive and versatile authors of the age, wrote poems, highly successful plays, and *Oroonoko,* the tragic story of a noble African slave, an important precursor of the modern day novel.

WILLIAM CONGREVE: (1670 – 1729)

Congreve was an English playwright and poet. He was the greatest

prose comedy writers of the later Restoration period. In his comedies, he dealt with the upper class people with a view to exposing the fops and gallants, dandies and coquettes. His plays which treated the subjects of love, bargaining and intrigues, are satiric portraits of contemporary society. Congreve presents a serious outlook of life, and gives equal importance to sentiment and feeling while maintaining a balance between reason and sentiment. His excellence lies in his witty dialogue, which exemplifies his intellectual brilliance. His most satiric play *Love for Love* produced in 1695 is reminiscent of the Jonsonian Comedy of Humours. His *The Way of the World* produced in 1700, is a masterpiece of witty and sparkling dialogue, replete with sense and satire. The play represents the flowering of Restoration comedy. Congreve develops a tone that is radically different from that of earlier dramatists and handles his material with perfect balance and control, using a language that is lucid, concise and pointed, showing an excellent ear for rhythm and cadence.

JOHN BUNYAN: (1628 – 1688)

Bunyan was a Christian writer and preacher. He was a religious man and had great reverence for the Bible. His first book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is a spiritual biography where he relates his spiritual history, mean birth, wicked childhood and youth with intense fervour. Bunyan's next work *The Pilgrim's Progress* was published in 1678. It is an allegory that takes the form of a dream by the author, where a noble man goes on a journey from this world to Paradise. This book is loved for its tale as well as for its style and has enjoyed much popularity. It is remarkable for the beauty and simplicity of language, author's sense of humour and feeling for the world of nature. The extraordinary appeal which it makes is shown by the fact that it has been translated into 108 languages. Bunyan's third book *The Life and Death of Mr. Bradman* was published in 1680. It is the counterpart of his *The Pilgrim's Progress* where he describes the journey of the soul from this world to Hell. His last book is the *Holy War* which appeared in 1682. It is an allegory of a soldier's life. Bunyan is an imaginative writer who has succeeded in writing a long prose allegory, filling it with the absorbing interest of a real human story. His vivid and plain style of writing is

another remarkable feature of his works.

APHRA BEHN: (1640 – 1689)

Behn is a prolific female writer of the English Restoration. She cultivated the friendship with different playwrights. She also wrote novels, poems and pamphlets. Her most popular works included *The Rover*, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, and *Oroonoko*. Behn was such a writer who accepted the taste and attitudes of her day. Her first work comprising a series of letters was an attempt to exploit a contemporary scandal and it excited a great sensation in London in1682. Her best stories came out in a single volume *Three Histories: Oroonoko, The Fair Filt* and *Agnes de Castro.* She seasoned her narratives with facts, real or spurious, with familiar names and places, and played with the reader's sense of curiosity, surprise, wonder, suspense, dread, pity and indignation. Her prose style was emotional and inflated.

DANIEL DEFOE: (1661—1731)

Daniel Defoe was an English trader, writer, journalist, and pamphleteer. He is known for being one of the earliest exponents of the novel form, as he helped to popularise the form in Britain and along with Richardson. Daniel Defoe was the first great novelist who introduced the new technique of realism. He was a pioneer among the writers who invented narrative with a sense of reality and introduced the technique of circumstantial evidence. He presents his accounts in such a way as if he is a witness to all the incidents and events he has narrated. Defoe introduced verisimilitude in narration and made his characters verify one another's testimony. His greatest work *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a book of adventure loved by all. Realism and morality comes to the forefront in this novel. Defoe's message to the middle class is to be patient, industrious and honest. In short, *Robinson Crusoe* humanises adventure and makes it a thing of realism and morality. His other popular work is *Moll Flanders* which is often regarded as a female counterpart of *Robinson Crusoe.* Defoe had contributed a lot to the idea of English novel by introducing realism and morality. He reconstructed prose fiction and made the novel an independent art form.

ALEXANDER POPE: (1688 – 1744)

Pope was an 18th century English poet, best known for verse satires and the translation of Homer. Pope was the most important figures in the 18th century poetry. He exemplified all the essential qualities of the classical school of poetry. The evolution of Pope's poetic career is generally divided into four periods. In the first, he wrote his *Pastorals, Windsor Forest, Essay on Criticism* and *The Rape of the Lock.* In the second period we get his *Translations of Homer*. In the third, which is the best period of Pope' life, we have the *Dunciad* as well as his *Epistles.* In the forth period, Pope wrote the philosophical *Essay on Man* and *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* He introduced in his poetry the qualities of terseness, condensation, exactness, correctness, precision and finish. Pope is generally regarded as one of the great masters of poetic technique. He excelled in expressing his thoughts in the most terse and neat manner. Pope made poetry a vehicle for the satirical exposure of the foibles and weaknesses, using it as an instrument for attacking his enemies. His satires are trenchant and direct. He ranks high among the satirists of England and is often placed in similar rank with Dryden. His poetry lacked imagination but he used the heroic couplet with skill and introduced to English poetry the diction and language of the ancients. He sought to model his style in conformity with the ancient writers of Greece and Rome. Pope is the only poet who has pictured the society of his time.

JONATHAN SWIFT: (1667 – 1745)

Swift was an Anglo-Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet and cleric. He is remembered for works such as *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Modest Proposal*, *A Journal to Stella*, *The Battle of the Books*, and *A Tale of a Tub*. Swift is probably the foremost prose satirist in the English language. The interesting point is that he originally published all of his works under pseudonyms—such as Lemuel Gulliver, Isaac Bickerstaff, M.B. Drapier. However, all his writings bear the stamp of his unique personality. *A Tale of the Tub* is one of the best and most characteristic of Swift's writings. It is a brilliant satire on Roman Catholics and Calvinists. *Gulliver's Travels,* published in 1726, is by far the most famous of all his works. Its charm lies in its air of artless authenticity. This is a satire which is more scathing and universal, the last book being the most powerful indictment of humanity

ever penned. Swift was highly original and practical. He was indifferent to fame publishing very little in his own name. His style was perfect, clear, precise, exact and absolutely free from rhetorical devices.

RICHARD STEELE: (1672 – 1729)

Steele was an Irish writer and politician, who co-founded with Joseph Addison the magazine *The Spectator*. He took major initiatives in enhancing the periodical publication in the 18th century. He launched *The Tatler* in 1709 with an aim of mingling instruction with amusement. He decided to reform morals by laughing at frivolities. As a writer, Steele is remarkable for his versatility in conceiving humorous types of characters. For the wide range of his experience with which he adapts himself to his subject matter, he remains famous. His humour is broad and less restrained with a touch of pathos that is reminiscent of Oliver Goldsmith. Steele worked in close alliance with Addison.

JOSEPH ADDISON: (1672 – 1719)

Addison was an English essayist, poet and playwright. He is remembered alongside his long-standing friend, Richard Steele, with whom he founded the magazine entitled *The Spectator in 1711*. To the readers of the succeeding generations, Addison appeals more as an essayist. His contribution was to the flourish of the periodical essay is worth mentioning. Along with social and moral reform, the aim of *The Spectator Papers* was to represent a faithful picture of the eighteenth century. The instruments used by Addison were humour and satire. He knew how to use ridicule without being virulent or violent. He raised a vehement attack on the vanities and vices of the time in a moderate and gentle manner. Addison's prose style is lucid and precise as that of Jonathan Swift. Addison may be said to have created and wholly perfected English prose as a powerful instrument for expressing social thought.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON: (1709—1784)

Popularly known as Dr. Johnson, Samuel Johnson made lasting contributions to English literature. He was a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. He was a devout Anglican and is often described as "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English

history". He began his career writing reports of the debates in the Parliament. In 1744, he published *Life of Richard Savage* and in 1747 he announced his plan of writing his famous dictionary. The dictionary *A Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1755. This was followed by *The Rambler*, a paper modelled on the *Spectator*. Johnson began writing his masterpiece *The Lives of Poets* in 1777. It remains one of the best books of biographical criticism in English. It is transparently honest and is full of common sense exemplifying its author's immense knowledge of life. He is remembered chiefly as a conversationalist and is also the subject of "the most famous single work of biographical art in the whole of literature": James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

JOHN MILTON: (1608 – 1674)

Milton was an English poet, polemicist, and civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell. He is best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Milton's work can be divided into three periods. **The first period** covers his poetry up to 1640. In his period, he wrote "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity", "On Shakespeare", "On Arriving at the Age of Twenty three", "L'Allegro" (The Happy Man) and "II Penseroso" (The Serious Man), the masque *Comus*, the pastoral elegy "Lycidas", and a number of sonnets including the famous autobiographical sonnet "Twenty Third Birthday". Milton's **second period**, which begins from 1638 to 1660, is one of prose writing. The most important political prose writing can be seen in pamphlets like *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Areopagitica or A speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, The Image Breaker, First Defence of the English People (written in Latin), The Second Defence of the People of England* and so on. Milton's **third and last period** significantly, coincides with the 14 years of the Restoration from 1660 to 1674. This was the period in which blind Milton finished *Paradise Lost.*

So, you find that Milton was a polemical writer and he wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval in England. Hence, naturally his poetry and prose addressed various urgent and contemporary issues.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: Make a list of the important authors of the Restoration age?

Q 12: Who in your opinion serves as the link between the Classical and the Restoration age?

Q 13: What significance does Daniel Defoe's name carry?

Q 14: Comment on the role played by Steele, Addison and Swift as writers of their age.



11.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you must have seen that a critical spirit dominated both the Restoration and the succeeding periods. Most interestingly, imagination and emotion were substituted by wit, intellect and rationality. You have read that it was an age of understanding, an age of enlightenment, which was governed by a set of rules, laid down by the classical writers. The age is also known as the Neoclassical age as there is a great allegiance to the classical masters of Greece and Rome. This age was also influenced by French writers. It was an age of prose and reason. Satire was perhaps the most favourite form employed by the writers of this period. The Heroic Couplet took the place of blank verse in poetry. Restoration dramatists founded the Comedy of Manners. Precision, neatness, order and rationality was emphasized, and form was considered more important than content. In the field of prose writing, the Periodical Essay gained tremendous popularity during this age. The important writers of this period are: Dryden, Congreve, Pope, Swift, Bunyan, Defoe, Steele, Addison and Johnson. You will do well if you consult some more books available in the Further Reading list, and try to get a better understanding of this age.



11.7 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (2003). *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (7th Edition). Singapore: Thomson Asia Pte Ltd.

2) Daiches, David: (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. III, Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

3) Ford, Boris. (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature* (From Dryden to Johnson), Penguin Books Ltd. Harmmondsworth, England.

4) Sanders, Andrew. (2002). *A Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press: London.



11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: It was mainly because human 'Reason' was considered a unique quality that served as a guide for man… …there was a new interest in the classical ideas of logic, order, restraint and decorum… …satire was the tool employed by the writers of this period.

Ans to Q 2: The Restoration spirit was critical, intellectual and analytical… …imagination was substituted by wit, intellect and rationality… …patriotism got replaced by realism and search for fact…. …correctness and neatness of expression was emphasised.

Ans to Q 3: Restoration literature dealt with human manners and superficialities… …literature interpreted political and social circles… …satire became an important literary tool helping to unite politics with literature… …these were also the tendencies seen in the Augustan Age or The Age of Pope.

Ans to Q 4: Restoration Age…. …Augustan Age… …Age of Sensibility.

Ans to Q 5: Yes… …the circumstances of the age led to writing satirical poetry… …the bitter political and personal contention, sharp wit and

acute discrimination gave new impetus to the satires… ....the main function of satire was to acknowledge a problem in society which needed reform… …Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and *Mac Flecknoe,* Pope's *The Dunciad* are the famous examples of satire.

Ans to Q 6: It is style of writing poetry… …it consists of two lines of rhyming pentameters… … called 'heroic' because it was the common form for epic… …Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* are two of the famous examples.

Ans to Q 7: The aim of the Periodical Essay was to improve manners and morals of the people by reflecting life and society… …Richard Steele and Joseph Addison were the most famous practitioner.

Ans to Q 8: Comedy of Manners reflected the gaiety, foppery, insolence and intrigue of an aristocratic class… …they presented characters who are more like types… …the playwright shows a keen interest in addressing the follies of the society… …Congreve's *The Way of the World* and George Etherege's *She Would If She Could* are two excellent examples.

Ans to Q 9: The authors exhibited a strong sense of traditionalism… …literature became the perfection of skills… …human beings became integral to social organizations… …arts reflected representative characteristics and widely shared experiences… …law of measure and the acceptance of limits of one's freedom was willy-nilly accepted.

Ans to Q 10: Prose was directed to the purpose of practical life… …it was a medium of expression for plain narrative, argumentative exposition and handling of critical subjects… …Dryden used powerful prose, Samuel Pepys wrote diary… …pamphlets, magazines and newspapers emerged to address multiple interests… …Periodical Essays emerged.

Ans to Q 11: John Dryden… …William Congreve… …John Bunyan… …Aphra Behn… …Daniel Defoe… …Alexander Pope… …Jonathan Swift… …Richard Steele… …Joseph Addison… …Dr. Samuel Johnson… …John Milton

Ans to Q 12: He was John Dryden… …as an artist he endeavoured to find better literary forms, better vocabulary, better constructions and better style… …he handled the heroic couplet with dexterity.

Ans to Q 13: He is the first novelist who introduced realism and circumstantial evidence… …he introduced verisimilitude in narration… …his novel *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* reconstructed prose fiction and differentiated the novel as an independent art form.

Ans to Q 14: For the answer, section 11.5 is to be referred.



11.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the main characteristics of the Restoration Age.

Q 2: Write a note on the development of prose following the Restoration of Monarchy.

Q 3: Discuss the main forms of poetry that emerged during the Restoration period with particular reference to two important poets.

Q 4: Write a note on the changes in the field of drama in the Restoration Age.

Q 5: Discuss the main features of Dryden and Pope as satirists.

Q 6: What was Daniel Defoe's contribution to the development of modern English narratives?

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UNIT 12: NEO-CLASSICAL AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Intellectual Context

12.4 Features of the Neoclassical Age

12.5 Important Writers and Their Works

12.6 Let Us Sum Up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.9 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- enlist the general tendencies of the Neo-classical Age
- trace the intellectual inspirations that led to the development of Neo Classicism
- identify the major literary forms that flourished during the Romantic age
- make special mention of the major Neo classical writers and their works
- appreciate the literary achievements of the Neoclassical Age.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the Neoclassic Age in England that spans the 140 years or so after the Restoration (1660). Historians have often tried to 'define' the term neoclassicism, as though it denoted a single essential feature, which was shared by all the major writings of the age to varying degrees. However, the course of literary events during the age and the varied definitions of Neo classicism that are available are either so vague or so specific in addressing the great range and variety of the literary phenomena.

One useful way that you can adopt is to specify the salient attributes of literary theory and practice used and shared by a number of important Neo classical writers, which also serve to distinguish them from many outstanding writers of the Romantic Period. Thus, in this unit, you will be briefed on the intellectual contexts of the Neoclassical Age, its salient Features, the important writers and their works.

12.3 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

[Adapted from the Oxford Companion to English Literature]

Neoclassicism, as you must have understood by now, refers to the habit of imitating the great authors of antiquity (notably the poets and dramatists) as a matter of aesthetic principle; and the acceptance of the critical precepts which emerged to guide that imitation in later times. Medieval writers had often used classical works for models, but Petrarch in the 14th century was the first to do so because he considered it to be the only way to produce great literature. Thus, literary genres like epic, eclogue, elegy, ode, satire, tragedy, comedy, epigram etc. of ancient times started becoming extensively popular. At the beginning of the 16th century, the recovery of the previously neglected Aristotle's *Poetics* provoked an attempt to establish rules for the use of the ancient genres. The Italian theoretician **Lodovico Castelvetro** (1505–1571) and French scholar **Joseph Justus Scaliger** (1540–1609) imprisoned the notion of 'imitation' within a rigid framework of rules, following which the flexibility of ancient practice offered little precedent. The most famous of their inventions was the observance of the dramatic unities of time, place, and action that won great support in France where a new generation of playwrights in the 1620s and 1630s was eager to attract a more educated public.

Up to the last quarter of the 17th century, Neo-classicism had little influence in England. The imitation of classical models was less common than on the Continent and, except for Samuel Johnson, no important writer paid strict attention to the rules the humanist critics had formulated. Dryden also produced *All for Love* (1677) and Addison his *Cato* (1713), which has been called the only correct Neo-classical tragedy in English; but the fashion,

was outdated. The usual excuse for the rules was that they helped writers to be true to nature. Pope famously wrote—"Those RULES of old *discover'd,* not *devis'd,* Are *Nature* still, but *Nature methodiz'd"*. Implicit in his view was the assumption that 'nature' consisted in what was generally true. However, this assumption, advanced first by Scaliger and echoed by Dr Johnson later, had never commanded unquestioning support. What is natural came to be seen no longer as an absolute, but as 'historically conditioned'.

You should note that the changing views of the goal of literary creation provoked by Boileau's translation (1674) of the Longinian **Treatise of the Sublime** finally undermined Neo-classicism most decisively in the context of the 18th century. It is interesting to note that the cult of sublimity—which is mostly seen as the preference to the greatness of emotion, finally replaced the wish to produce a just representation of general reality. This tendency also marks the beginning of Romanticism about which you will read in the next Block.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Briefly describe the contexts of Neo classicism.

12.4 FEATURES OF THE NEOCLASSICAL AGE

[Adapted from MH Abram's Glossary]

Based on the account mentioned in the previous section, the following list of ideas and characteristics that were shared by the authors such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and Edmund Burke between 1660 and the late 1700s; may serve as an introductory sketch of some of the prominent features of Neoclassical Age:

(1) The authors mentioned exhibited a strong sense of traditionalism against radical innovation, which was evident from their great respect for writers of ancient Greece and Rome. Because they were thought to have achieved excellence, and established enduring models of literary works in

all the major literary *genres.* Hence the term “neoclassic” was used. (It is from this high estimate of the literary achievements of classical antiquity that the term “classic” come to be applied to any later literary work that is believed to have achieved excellence and set a standard.)

(2) Literature was conceived to be primarily an ‘art’; that is, a set of skills, which, though it requires innate talents, must be perfected, by long study and practice, and consists mainly in the deliberate adaptation of known and tested means to the achievement of foreseen ends upon the audience of readers. The neoclassic ideal, founded especially on Horace’s Roman *Ars Poetica* (first century B.C.), is the craftsman’s ideal, demanding finish, correction, and attention to detail. Special allowances were often made for the unerring freedom of what were called natural geniuses such as Homer or Shakespeare who are extremely rare. So, the representative neoclassical writer commonly strove for “correctness”, stylistic “decorum”, and the established “rules” of art.



LET US KNOW

The neoclassic “rules” of poetry were theoretically the essential properties of the various *genres* (such as epic, tragedy, comedy, pastoral) that have been abstracted from classical works whose long survival has proved their excellence. Such properties, many critics believed, must be embodied in modern works if they too are to be excellent and to survive. In England, however, many critics were doubtful of some of the “rules” accepted by Italian and French critics, and opposed their strict application—such as the *three unities* in drama.

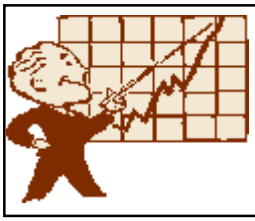
(3) Human beings as an integral part of a social organisation were regarded as the primary subject matter of literature. Poetry was held to be an *imitation* of human life—in a common phrase—”a mirror held up to nature.” And, by the human actions it imitates, and the artistic form it gives to the imitation, poetry is designed to yield both instruction and aesthetic pleasure to the people who read it. Not “Art for Art’s sake”, but “Art for Humanity’s

sake", became a central ideal of Neoclassicism.

(4) Both in the subject matter and the appeal of art, emphasis was placed on what human beings possess in common—representative characteristics and widely shared experiences, thoughts, feelings, and tastes. "True wit" Pope said in a much-quoted passage of his *Essay on Criticism,* is "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed." That is, a primary aim of poetry is to give new and consummate expression to the great commonplaces of human wisdom, whose prevalence and durability are the best warrant of their importance and truth.

(5) The neoclassical writers viewed human beings as limited agents who ought to set themselves only accessible goals. Many of the great satiric and didactic works of the period, vehemently attacked human "pride", or presumption beyond the natural limits of the species, and enforced the lesson of the golden mean (the avoidance of extremes) and of humanity's need to submit to its restricted position in the cosmic order—an order sometimes envisioned as a natural hierarchy, or *Great Chain of Being.* The poets admired extremely the great genres of epic and tragedy that showcased human beings' limitations in the scheme of things.

From these characteristics, it must be clear to you that Neo classicism was also a way of life.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Note down the characteristics of Neo classical literature.

12.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS

[Adopted from Edward Albert's History]

In this section, we shall try to look at some of the greatest Neo classical writers, and try to get some information on their important works.

John Dryden (1631-1700):

John Dryden is often considered one of the greatest Neo classical writers. For forty years, he continued to produce an abundance of literary

works of every kind—poems, plays, and prose works. One of his earliest important work of the pre-Restoration (1659) period is a laudation of the recently dead Oliver Cromwell. At the Restoration, however, he changed his views, attaching himself to the fortunes of Charles II and to the Church of England. This loyalty brought its rewards in honours and pensions, so that for many years Dryden was easily the most considerable literary figure in the land.

Dryden began his career with poetry. His first published poem was a series of 'heroic' stanzas on the death of the Protector Oliver Cromwell (1659). Then, in 1660, he published *Astraea Redux,* in celebration of Charles I's return. Although the poem represents a complete reversal of the poet's political opinions; it is nevertheless a noteworthy literary achievement. Another of his early poetical work is *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), which gives a spirited account of the Great Fire and the war with the Dutch in the previous year. Then, for more than fifteen years, Dryden devoted himself almost entirely to the writing of plays. However, in around 1680, both political and personal events drove him back to the poetical medium. Political passions over the "Exclusion Bills" were at their height, and Dryden appeared as the chief literary champion of the monarchy in the famous satirical allegory *Absalom and Achitophel* (1691). Next year, he produced another political poem, *The Medal,* which called forth an answer from an old friend of Dryden's, Shadwell. A new poetical development was manifest in *Religio Laid* (1682) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687). The first poem was written in support of the English Church; the second, written after the accession of James, is an allegorical defence of the Roman Catholic faith. Though it is small in bulk, Dryden's lyrical poetry is of much importance. The longest and the best-known lyric is his *Song for St Cecilia's Day* (1687) and *Alexander's Feast* (1697).

Dryden had been one of the most famous of the English playwrights. His first play *The Wild Gallant* (1663) was a comedy with a complicated plot. After that, he turned to tragedy, which fall into two main groups: (a) *The Heroic Play, and* (b) *Blank-verse Tragedies.* The first is a new type of the tragedy that became prominent after the Restoration, and of which Dryden

is one of the earliest and most skilful exponents. The chief features of the new growth are the choice of a great heroic figure for the central personage; a succession of stage incidents of an exalted character, which often, as Dryden himself realised, became ridiculous through their extravagance; a loud, declamatory style; and the rhymed couplet. Plays like *The Rival Ladies* (1663), *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *Tyrannick Love* (1669), *The Conquest of Granada* (in two parts, 1669 and 1670), and *Aureng-zebe* (1675) show the heroic kind at its best and worst. While Dryden's second group of plays start with his next play *All for Love, or The World well Lost* (1678), and this is often considered to be his dramatic masterpiece. For subject he chose that of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* His other blank verse plays are *Don Sebastian* (1690), *Cleomenes* (1692), and *Love Triumphant* (1694).

Dryden's versatility as a writer is apparent when we observe that in his prose works too. His *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1669) is his longest single prose work and a major piece of English literary criticism. It is in the form of a discussion between four characters, one of whom is Dryden himself, and treats, with an openness of mind and a lack of dogmatising which are new in criticism, most of the major topics which interested contemporary dramatists. Among them were the question of rhyme or blank verse in drama; the comparison between French and English drama; and the possibility of making a judicious compromise between the strict observance of the classical unities and the greater freedom of the English dramatic tradition. Moreover, the essay is the first attempt to evaluate the work of the Elizabethan dramatists and especially of Shakespeare.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745):

Swift was born in Dublin. In 1686, when he was 19, he left Trinity College, and in 1689, entered the household of his famous kinsman Sir William Temple, following whose advice he took holy orders. After Temple's death in 1699, he obtained other secretarial and ecclesiastical appointments. His real chance as a writer came in 1710, when the Tories overthrew the Marlborough faction and came into office. To them Swift devoted the powers of his pen, became a political star of some magnitude. He might have become a bishop,

but it is said that Queen Anne objected to his *A Tale of a Tub* and had doubts about his orthodoxy. His last years were passed in silence and lunacy.

Swift's poems were mostly recreations: odd verses (sometimes humorously doggerel) to his friends; squibs and lampoons on his political and private enemies. His first noteworthy book was *The Battle of the Books* (1704). The theme of this work is the dispute between ancient and modern authors. This book is full of wit and brilliant in its imaginative power and the incisiveness of its thought.

From a literary point of view, the next important period of his life was from 1710, when he deserted the Whigs for the Tories, to 1714, when the latter party fell from power. Several of them were written for *The Examiner,* a Tory journal, and the best known are *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), *Some Remarks on the Barrier Treaty* (1712), and *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (1714). To this period also belongs the *Journal to Stella,* which is a kind of informal private logbook written by him and sent regularly to Esther Johnson.

Then followed some miscellaneous political work, aimed at the improvement of the lot of the oppressed and poverty-stricken Irish, and then his longest and most famous book, *Gulliver's Travels* (written between 1720 and 1225, and published 1726. However, the terrible savagery of *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of poor people from being a burden to their parents* (by selling them as food for the rich) should not blind us to the great range of his work.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719):

Addison was an English essayist, poet, playwright and politician. He went to Oxford, where he became a Fellow of Magdalen College. Soon, he made his mark as a serious and accomplished scholar, and attracted the notice of the Whig leaders who marked him out as a future literary prop of their faction. Then, the misfortunes of the Whigs in 1703 reduced him to poverty. In his Latin verses, Addison attained early distinction. Then *The Campaign* in 1704 gave him a reputation as one of the major authors of the age. In 1713, he produced the tragedy of *Cato.* Addison also attempted an opera, *Rosamond* (1707), which was a failure. Addison is most famous for

his essays as he regularly contributed to Steele's journal *The Tatler* that appeared thrice weekly. Then, Steele began a daily newspaper called *The Spectator.* Addison rapidly contributed as many as 274 essays to *The Spectator*.

Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729):

Like Addison, Steele was educated at Oxford. Then he became a Member of Parliament, and wrote for the Whigs. But, his political ambition left him expelled from the House of Commons. Then, he became a Tory and quarrelled with Addison on private and public grounds. He also issued a number of periodicals. Steele wrote some prose comedies such as –*The Funeral* (1701), *The Lying Lover* (1703), *The Tender Husband* (1705), and *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). They followed in general scheme the Restoration comedies. However, Steele earned better recognition as an essayist. He started the journal *The Tatler* in 1709, *The Spectator* in 1711, and several other short-lived periodicals, such as *The Guardian* (1713), *The Englishman* (1713), *The Reader* (1714), and *The Plebeian* (1719). Steele's aim in his essays was didactic as he desired to bring about a reformation of contemporary society manners, and is notable for his consistent advocacy of womanly virtue and the ideal of the gentleman of courtesy, chivalry, and good taste.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744):

Pope was an 18th century English poet, best known for his satirical verse, as well as his translation of Homer. Also famous for his use of the 'heroic couplet', he is one of the most frequently quoted writers after Shakespeare. Pope's earliest important work was his *Pastorals.* By 1709, he also became an established poet who used heroic couplet so nicely. In 1711, appeared his *An Essay on Criticism* in heroic couplets. In 1712, was published the first version of *The Rape of the Lock,* one of the most brilliant poems in the English language in which Pope mocked at two families estranged by the act of Lord Petrie's cutting off a lock of hair from the head of Miss Arabella Fermor. The poem combines with its humorous, epic treatment of the trivial theme a delicate fancy and a good deal of satire

on the weaknesses of the fair sex and on society manners in general. After that, Pope became well known, and he completed the task of translating the *Iliad* in 1720. It was followed by a translation of the *Odyssey* in 1725 and 1726. His success brought upon him jealousy and criticism, and led to many quarrels, notably with Addison. Still, more criticism was evoked by his edition of Shakespeare, published in 1725. He was vehemently criticised by Theobald, in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726). Theobald's criticism encouraged him to write the poem *The Dunciad,* which appeared anonymously in 1728, and again in 1742, with the addition of a 4th book and the dethronement of Theobald in favour of Colley Cibber. In this poem, modelled on Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe,* Pope mocks at a host of minor writers whose attacks had been making his life a misery.

In between 1731 and 1735, Pope published a series of philosophical poems, including *To Lord Bathurst, Of the Use of Riches, Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men, Of the Characters of Women,* and, most famous of all, *An Essay on Man,* in which he discussed Man's place in the universe. The years 1733 to 1737 mark Pope's last important period of production. In them appeared his *Imitations of Horace,* in which, using the Latin satirist as his model, Pope launched his attacks in a series of poetical epistles on the greed and corruption of his day, and especially of the Whig party then in power. His famous *Prologue to the Satires,* better known by its other title, *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* (1735), contains some of his most brilliant and finished work.

Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773):

Chesterfield belonged to the famous Stanhope family. He was a man of illustrious wit and fashion, and held high political offices. He is an example of the aristocratic amateur in literature, and he wrote elegant articles for the fashionable journals, such as *The World.* His *Letters to his Son,* published in 1774 shortly after his death, caused a great furore. No doubt, they affect the tired cynicism of the man of the world, but that does not prevent them from being keen and clever, and underneath their bored indifference to morality, they reveal a shrewd judgment of men and manners.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754):

Fielding was an English novelist and dramatist best known for his rich, earthy humour and satirical prowess, and is famous for the novel *Tom Jones*. A younger son of an ancient family, Fielding was born in Somersetshire, was educated at Eton and studied law at Leyden. Lack of funds stopped his legal studies for a time; he took to writing plays for a living, but the plays were of little merit; then, having married, he resumed his studies and was called to the Bar. After some time in practice, he was appointed a magistrate the post of which brought him a small income. His magisterial duties provided him with some first-hand experience of the different types of human criminality, which was of much use to him in his novels. In 1742 appeared *Joseph Andrews.* His later works are *A Journey from this World to the Next* (1743) and *Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743). *Jonathan Wild* is the biography of the famous thief and 'thief-taker' who was hanged at Newgate. *Tom Jones* (1749) is his greatest novel. His last important novel is *Amelia* (1751).

Samuel Johnson (1709-84):

Often referred to as Dr. Johnson, Samuel Johnson was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. The son of a bookseller Johnson pronounced Tory views he inherited and steadfastly maintained. From his birth, he was afflicted with a malignant skin disease, which all through his life, affected his sight and hearing, and caused many of the physical peculiarities. After being privately educated, he proceeded to Oxford, where he experienced the miseries and indignities that are the lot of a poor scholar cursed with a powerful and aspiring mind. From the obscure position of a publisher's hack, he became a poet of some note by the publication of *London* (1738), which was noticed by Pope; his *Dictionary* (1747-55) advanced his fame; then somewhat incomprehensibly, he appears in the limelight as one of the literary dictators of London, surrounded by a circle of brilliant men. He has been immortalised by James Boswell in his *The Life of Samuel Johnson.*

Johnson also wrote some poems which are of not great merit. His first poem, *London* (1738), written in the heroic couplet, is of great and

sombre power. His only other poem is *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). He also wrote *Irene,* a solemn, ponderous, undramatic, blank verse tragedy. But, Johnson's claims as a writer must rest on his prose. In 1744, appeared *The Life of Savage,* his penurious poet friend, who had recently died in gaol. It was later incorporated in *The Lives of the Poets.* Then, in 1747, he began to work on his *Dictionary of the English Language.* This was his greatest contribution to scholarship. While working on this project, he also wrote periodical essays for *The Rambler* (1750-52), and during 1758-60, he was contributing a series of papers, under the title of *The Idler,* to the *Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette.* Johnson's preface to his *Shakespeare* (1765) is a landmark, not only in Shakespearian scholarship, but in English criticism as a whole. His last work was *The Lives of the Poets* (1777-81), planned as a series of introduction to the works of fifty-two poets.

Oliver Goldsmith (1730-74):

Goldsmith was an Irish novelist, playwright and poet, who is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768), and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771). His first poem, *The Traveller* (1764), deals with his wanderings through Europe. His only other poem of any length is *The Deserted Village* (1770). Goldsmith's miscellaneous poems are important, for they include some of his characteristic humorous and pathetic writing. He wrote two prose comedies, both of which rank high among their class–*The Good-natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). In addition, Goldsmith produced a great mass of hack-work, most of which is worthless as historical and scientific fact, but all of which is enlightened with the grace of his style and personality. Some of these works are *An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759), his first published book; *The History of England* (1771); and *An History of Earth and Animated Nature,* a kind of text-book on natural history, which was published posthumously.

Edward Gibbon (1737-94):

Gibbon was an English historian, writer and Member of Parliament. His most important work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman*

Empire was published in six volumes between 1776 and 1788 and is known for the quality and irony of its prose, its use of primary sources, and its open criticism of organised religion. His first projected book, *A History of Switzerland* (1770), was never finished. Then, appeared the first volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). At nearly regular intervals of two years, each of the other five volumes was produced, the last appearing in 1788. His *Autobiography,* which contains valuable material concerning his life, is his only other work of any importance and it is written with all his usual elegance and suave, ironic humour.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Name some important works of John Dryden.

Q 4: How did Dryden contribute to the world of drama?

Q 5: Describe the contributions of Addison and Steele to essay writing.

Q 6: How did Theobald's criticism encouraged Pope to write his famous poem *The Dunciad*?

Q 7: Which are the greatest works of Johnson?



12.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you must have formed some ideas on what the term Neoclassicism means. You have been briefed on the intellectual context of the Neoclassical Age, its salient Features, important writers and their works. You have learnt that Neoclassicism refers to the habit of imitating the great poets and dramatists of antiquity as a matter of aesthetic principle; and the acceptance of the critical precepts, which emerged to guide that imitation. As students of English Literature, you will do well if you try to see the features of the Neo classical Age in contrast with those of the Romantic Age. Your understanding of the major concerns of the works produced by the different Neo classical writers at different times shall help you to consider the importance of the Neo classical age in the context of the 17th century.



12.7 FURTHER READING

1) *Abrams, M. H.* (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* (Seventh Edition). Thomson Learning.

2) Albert, Edward. (1979). *History of English Literature*. (Fifth Edition), Oxford University Press.

3) Drabble, Margaret. (ed). (2000). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.* Oxford University Press.



12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Neoclassicism refers to the habit of imitating the great poets and dramatists of antiquity… … literary genres like epic, eclogue, elegy, ode, satire, tragedy, comedy, epigram etc. of ancient times stared becoming the models ... …Lodovico Castelvetro and Joseph Justus Scaliger imprisoned the notion of 'imitation' within a rigid framework of rules for literary productions.

Ans to Q 2: The authors exhibited a strong sense of traditionalism against radical innovation… …literature was conceived as a set of skills which must be perfected by long study and practice… …human beings are part of a social organisation… …in the subject matter and the appeal of art, emphasis was placed on shared experiences, thoughts, feelings, and tastes… …human beings as limited agents.

Ans to Q 3: Astraea Redux… …Alexander's Feast… …Absalom and Achitophel… …Religio Laid… …The Hind and the Panther… …Song for St Cecilia's Day… …Annus Mirabilis

Ans to Q 4: Dryden wrote a comedy *The Wild Gallant* (1663)… …then, he turned to tragedy which fell into two main groups: *The Heroic Play* and *Blank-verse Tragedies… …* Plays like *The Rival Ladies* (1663), *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *Tyrannick Love* (1669), *The Conquest of Granada* and *Aureng-zebe* (1675) show the heroic kind… … *All for*

Love, or The World well Lost (1678), is his masterpiece based on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Ans to Q 5: Addison regularly contributed essays to Steele's journal *The Tatler… …* Steele began a daily newspaper called *The Spectator… …* Steele earned better recognition as an essayist… …his aim in the essays was didactic as he desired to bring about a reformation of contemporary society manners, advocacy of womanly virtue, gentlemanly courtesy, chivalry, and good taste.

Ans to Q 6: Theobald in *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) vehemently critiqued Pope's work on Shakespeare… …in reply, Pope wrote the poem *The Dunciad… …*In this poem, modelled on Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* Pope turns to the minor writers whose attacks had been making his life a misery.

Ans to Q 7: *The Life of Savage… …The Lives of the Poets… … Dictionary of the English Language.*



12.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the general tendencies of English Neo Classicism? Discuss.

Q 2: Enumerate some of the predominant literary forms that emerged during the Neo- classical Age?

Q 3: Write a comprehensive note on the Neo classical writers with special reference to Dryden and Pope.

Q 4: Identify the most dominant forms of Neoclassical Poetry and explain their significance with suitable examples.

Q 5: What are the main concerns of the Neo-classical Prose writing? Elaborate with examples.

Q 6: Provide an account of Neo classical drama with particular emphasis on their themes and techniques.

Q 7: Discuss critically the contributions of Dryden and Pope to Neoclassical poetry.

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UNIT 13: THE ROMANTIC AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Intellectual Context

13.4 Major Literary Form(s)

13.5 Important Writers

13.6 Let us Sum up

13.7 Further Reading

13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.9 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the general tendencies of the Romantic Age
- trace the intellectual inspirations that led to the development of Romanticism in English literature
- identify the major literary forms that flourished during the Romantic age
- make special mention of the major Romantic writers.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall read about the Romantic Age, which perhaps began in reaction to many of the Neoclassical ideals of the preceding age. The beginnings of the English Romantic Age in English literature may be traced back to the latter half of the reign of George III, and may be said to have ended with the accession of Queen Victoria to the English throne in 1837. Historical records tell that it was an age that witnessed great events like the Independence of the United States of America (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the Reform Bill (1832) – all of which primarily influenced the minds of men shaping the all-round spirit of the age. Politically speaking, drawing inspiration from the previously mentioned events, the

English society realised the need to lend its voice for the abolition of class distinctions and the assertion of the natural rights of men. However, you should also mark that there is a noticeable influence of the French Revolution on the literature of the Romantic Age. For example, the slogan of the French Revolution – "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" came to be asserted within the English society in a manner that tremendously influenced English patriotic zeal. By the time you finish reading this unit, I hope you will be able to discuss the literature of the Romantic Age in detail.

13.3 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

As you know that the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution, played a key role in developing a sense of nationalism, and this appeared to many as symbols of political progress and rise of democracy. While taking into account the general socio-economic and political atmosphere of the age, the literature of the period may be seen to represent a sense of enthusiasm, which as we shall see later, was amply reflected in the different literary forms of the age. However, we need to keep in mind that it was not only literature through which the ideas of romanticism were spread. Besides, the overwhelming impact of the French Revolution, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant of Germany and John Wesley's advocacy of religious revival installed in the human spirit a desire for liberation.

When we examine the traits of this age, we should take note of the fact that the period may be distinguished into two phases–the first phase of Romantic fervour characterised by the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott, and the second phase characterised by a disillusionment and revolt epitomised in the works of the younger generation of Romantics–Byron, Shelley and Keats. Nevertheless, certain general tendencies can also be discerned in the works of the poets of this age. The Romantic Age may be defined as a break away from the social and literary conventions, a going back to nature while advocating a spontaneous and genuine life and reasserting the right of man to satisfy his impulses and emotions. The reassertion of the rights of man happened in two directions. First, in the advocacy of whatever was distant and out of the ordinary, and the other

reflected in an inward journey into things that were apparently common, which, after close examination, seemed to contain new meanings. Thus, we may summarise that the fundamental philosophy of Romanticism inculcated a belief that literature must echo all that is spontaneous and unaltered in nature and in man, and be free to pursue its own fancy in its own way.

Thus, this age is marked by the development of fresh ideas for poetry and novel, the rejuvenation of the form of the essay, and the unprecedented activities of critical and miscellaneous writers. As part of this new literary endeavour, the classical writers are explored anew, contemporary times are analysed and critically discussed in the work of the novelists. The treatment of nature regains unprecedented response from the great Romantic poets, as in the new race of poets; the observation of nature becomes more mature and intimate. Notably, in the case of Wordsworth's poetry, nature is amplified and glorified. However, this period is also marked by other Political and Periodical writing too. There appeared a number of periodicals like *The Morning Chronicle* (1769), *The Morning Post* (1772) *The Times* (1785), and so on. Other than these, a number of other powerful literary magazines like *The Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1809), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), *The London Magazine* (1820), and *The Westminster Review* (1824) sprang to life. Such excellent publications reacted strongly upon authorship, and were responsible for much of the best work of Hazlitt, Lamb, Southey. Another important aspect of this age is the declining of the French influence over the English following the long war with France. In the place of French, the study of German literature and philosophy came rapidly into vogue to alter the idea of English Romanticism for the periods to come.

One of the most convenient ways to understand the characteristics of the Romantic Age is to compare it with those of the preceding Neo-classical age. The prevailing 'Romantic' attitude favoured innovation over traditionalism in the materials, forms, and style of literature. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth in 1798 and the Preface to the second edition in 1800, proclaimed Wordsworth's revolutionary aim of denouncing

upper-class subjects and the 'poetic diction' of the preceding century in favour of materials borrowed from "common life" in "a selection of language really used by men." This violated the basic neoclassical rule of 'decorum', which asserted that the serious genres of literatures should deal only with the momentous actions of royal or aristocratic characters in an elevated style. In his famous Preface, Wordsworth declared that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." According to this declaration, poetry is not primarily a mirror of men in action; rather it is an essential component in the poet's own feelings. "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree," Keats wrote, "it had better not come at all." Coleridge substituted for neoclassic "rules," which he described as imposed on the poet from without, the concept of the inherent organic "laws" of the poet's 'imagination'; that is, he conceived that each poetic work, like a growing plant, evolves according to its own internal principles into its final 'organic form'. Representative Romantic works are in fact poems of feelings filled with meditation, which, though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with general human experiences and problems.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What were the main international influences that shaped English Romanticism?

Q 2: Mention the two phases of Romanticism in England.

Q 3: In what ways is Romanticism a reaction against Neoclassicism?

13.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORM(S)

During the Romantic period, there emerged three major literary forms, which are as follows.

Poetry:

The Romantic Age is known as the age of poetry owing to the great surge in poetic creativity of the major literary figures of the age. The preceding age was dubbed the age of prose since literature produced during the period predominantly dealt with a practical view of life. However, with the ushering

of Romanticism (generally believed to have begun with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798) young enthusiastic individuals with a literary bent of mind turned naturally to poetry to give expression to their feelings and emotions. The conventional rules of art were now treated with open disapproval in the practice of the new doctrines of poetry. There was an open display of vehement criticism of Pope and the Augustan school and the assertion of spontaneity became a part of prominent creative endeavours. Poetry of this age exhibits an innovative concern with form, which encompassed both the poetic genre and its comprehensive pattern as a literary creation. The poets displayed their experiments with novel forms, while at the same time; they were rarely content to imitate the pre-existing model. The use of metre, verse form, rhythm and rhyme displays an entire array of technical experimentation started by the poets.

When we talk of the forms of poetry, which flourished in the Romantic Age, we find that they include lyric, ode, ballad, and sonnet, which were the most predominantly popular forms during this period. Lyric poetry refers to short poems with intensely musical expressions. It is in fact, the product of a swift, momentary and passionate impulse. For example, Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems reveal the poet's consistent innovations with regard to this form where he attempts to blend the impersonality of the ballad with an intimacy that proximate confessional voice of the poetic persona. Again, Shelley's 'Adonis' is another lyric remarkable for its artistic power. He is remembered for the histrionics and the swift moving of all pervasive emotional elements he had infused in lyric poetry. Generally speaking, the lyrics of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Byron are remarkable for their personal element. The word ode denotes in its simplest form 'a song'. It is a strain of passionate and illustrious lyric verse directed to a predetermined idea and deals progressively with a theme. Essentially, it comes in the form of an address, often to some abstraction in a manner that is elaborate and intricate. Some fine odes were written during this period, instances of which are Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' and Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode', Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. It is in the hands of Keats that the ode reached its highest degree of perfection through his immortal creations such as 'To

Autumn', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The odes composed by the romantics are remarkable for their harmonious flow of music expressed through their exquisite imagination and lofty idealism. The ballad on the other hand, is a song transmitted orally which narrates a story in verse. Originally, the ballad was a song with a predominant narrative substance sung to the accompaniment of dancing. Generally considered to be a medieval verse form, the ballad was revived in the romantic period through the publications of Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Coleridge's 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The charm of the ballad is enhanced by its haunting melody coupled with the use of dialogue, which infuses dramatic quality in it. The sonnet is a short lyric of fourteen lines, which during the romantic period flourished in the hands of Wordsworth and Keats who introduced nature as one of the most prominent themes in their sonnets. The sonnet as a literary form contains subjectivity and unity of expression with a display of a wonderful harmony in its subject matter. The sonnet, it may be noted, is devoted to the development of a single mood and the expression of a single thought within a brief canvas.

Novel:

When one speaks of the novel during this period, one would agree that the Romantic and the Gothic form gained predominance. Both these forms were preoccupied with imaginary supernatural forces seen as operating in nature or human destiny. The romantic novelists were inclined to find material for their creative purpose, in an increased knowledge of the past and the remote and in alien cultures as well. The practice of the Gothic in literature provided the Romantics a sense of freedom in spirit, variety, mystery that mingled seamlessly with their emphasis on individuality, imagination and sublimity. **The gothic novel**, a popular form during the romantic period, implied a long horror narrative that displayed the typical gothic elements of doom with special emphasis on mystery and magic. It is characterised by a conspicuous presence of dark medieval castles, secret passages and super natural elements that kept the reader thrilled. The practitioners of Gothic fiction bestowed a sense of sublimity in their work by taking recourse to ideas related to vastness, infinity and astonishment through

contemplation of nature, panorama of the wild, rugged castle ruins, and mediaeval cathedrals. It may be assumed that Gothic fiction was, in reality, a response to and reaction against comfort, security, political stability, progress that became a part of contemporary commercial and industrial ventures.

Besides the above-mentioned type of novel, **Regional novel** was also another form that came to be widely practiced during this period. As the name suggests the regional novel represented a narrative that was specifically confined to its creator's regional milieu. Such novels projected a world – social, political and cultural, restricted strictly to the physical locale of the novelist while the narrative focused on the typical qualities of the character situated in the contemporary setting. Notable examples of this genre are Hardy's "Wessex novels" and William Faulkner's novels set in Yoknapatawpha Country.

Literary Criticism:

You should note that the Romantic Age also witnessed a flourish of critical literature in the form of literary and critical essays, which appeared in the contemporary magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1802) and *The Spectator* (1828). These magazines exerted a considerable influence on contemporary lives. Initially however, the literary magazines were bent on negative criticism finding faults with the literary outputs of the likes of Wordsworth and Keats But, with the passage of time; they adopted a more pragmatic approach and devoted themselves to the true function of criticism while establishing normative injunctions for literary works. These magazines also performed one very significant function in that they became the voice of the unknown writers giving them a scope to publish their works thereby producing in the process essayists of repute like Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt.

The publication of Wordsworth's *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, added more impetus to the ideas of literary criticism. While Wordsworth in his famous Preface discusses the nature and purpose of his 'Romantic' poetry and the kind of 'poetic diction' to be used for such poetry, Coleridge in

his work mainly discusses the processes of human creativity. According to Coleridge, the English tradition of literary and philosophical thought often tended to view culture and creativity as given rather than as the products of specifically constituted intelligence. Borrowing his raw materials from the German philosophers like Kant, Schelling and Schlegel, Coleridge provides the famous definition of 'imagination' or 'the creative intelligence', to explore the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, self and the world, speculative reason and rational understanding. The poet John Keats, on the other hand, introduced the term "Negative Capability" in a letter written to a friend in December 1817 to define a literary quality. This was a quality, which according to Keats "Shakespeare possessed so enormously". By "Negative Capability", Keats meant—"When man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats differed from Coleridge, who "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude . . . from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge," and went on to express the general principle "that with a great poet the sense of beauty over comes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." As M H Abrams states, Keats's "Negative Capability" first characterises an impersonal and objective author who maintains *aesthetic distance,* as opposed to a subjective author personally involved with the characters and actions represented in a work of literature. Secondly, "Negative Capability" also suggests that, when embodied in a beautiful artistic form, the literary subject matter, concepts, and characters are not subject to the ordinary standards of evidence, truth, and morality, as we apply these standards in the course of our practical experience.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the innovative concerns of English Romantic poetry?

Q 5: What is the significance of the Regional novels?

Q 6: Comment on the role played by Periodicals and Magazines in the Romantic period.

Q 7: Comment on Literary Criticism in the Romantic Period?

13.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

In this section, you will be provided brief information on some of the most important Romantic writers and their works.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: (1772 – 1834)

Coleridge was one of the three prominent "Lake Poets". He is probably best known for his poem *Kubla Khan*, as well as for his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. The Romantic Movement gained momentum from the works of Coleridge who along with his contemporary William Wordsworth created some of the most notable verses in keeping with the Romantic tradition formulated in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Coleridge's contribution to Romanticism was remarkable for the treatment of mysterious and supernatural subjects in a manner that bestowed an illusion of reality. Coleridge's greatest poems include 'Frost at Midnight', 'France: An Ode', 'Kubla Khan', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and the first part of 'Christabel' which were all composed during 1797 – 1798. In his poems, you will very often encounter a Romantic imagination that builds an atmosphere of dream, supernatural realm and phantasmal scenery. For instance, his poem 'Kubla Khan' may be considered an oriental dream vision with its portraiture of castles, valleys and caverns arousing a sense of wonder and mystery hidden in it. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is another great poem which paints a picture of awe with its delineation of seas and oceans, night and morning, the rustle of sails and the wonder of a dream caught in a magic mirror. Thus, Coleridge's poetry is indeed a splendid instance of the Romantic imagination at its best. However, Coleridge is also well known for his critical works. His work on Shakespeare was highly influential. He also introduced German idealist philosophy to the English-speaking world.

William Wordsworth: (1770 -1850)

Wordsworth was a major English Romantic poet who helped to formally launch the Romantic Age in English literature through the publication of *Lyrical Ballads in 1798* with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Perhaps it would not be disagreeable to say that in Wordsworth's poetic oeuvre, we find some of the best poems of Romanticism, and it is he who exhibits in his Romantic

association with nature the realisation of the divine and the mystic inherent in nature. The poems of Wordsworth are best representatives of the poet's belief in poetry as a medium of communication with nature and man. He was marvellously sensitive to nature around him which was inspired by the life he spent at the countryside and which intensified as he matured. Remarkable for their display of a sense of serenity and tranquillity, his poems seem to be keen observations on nature and commonplace experiences of life seen around him. With immortal creations which include 'The Solitary Reaper' (1803), 'Michael' (1800), 'Westminster Bridge' (1802), 'The Prelude' (1805) and 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1806), Wordsworth reached the zenith of his poetic career. Moreover, in him we can also trace the makings of a mystic, which made him acknowledge the mystical presence of the natural spirit around him, a man establishing a mutual relationship between the two. Such a philosophy is perhaps best expressed in his 'Tintern Abbey' published in the *Lyrical Ballads.*



LET US KNOW

Lyrical Ballads:

It is a collection of poems composed by Wordsworth and Coleridge first published in 1798. A second edition of 1800 contains a Preface by Wordsworth replaces the original short 'advertisement' in the first edition. This collection of 23 poems is often considered an important reference point of English Romantic literature. It finally established Wordsworth's fame as a poet.

Robert Southey: (1774 – 1843)

Robert Southey forms the last of the triad known as the "Lake Poets", the other two being Coleridge and Wordsworth. Southey devoted himself to a study of literature while writing both prose and poetry. Born at Bristol and educated at Westminster School and at Oxford, Southey settled down to lead the laborious life of a man of letters. He produced works of considerable merit. He was made 'Poet Laureate' in 1813. His reputation as a poet rests mainly on poems like *Joan of Arc* (1798), *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801),

The Curse of Kehama (1810), and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814). Typically, Romantic in theme, most of these poems are too ambitious. In terms of poetic style, they are straightforward and unaffected. Some of his shorter pieces are *The Holly-tree, The Battle of Blenheim,* and *The Inchcape Rock.* Very often, Southey expressed his impulse to flee from the contemporary world into a world of the ancient and remote past, the Orient, olden Wales and Spain and ancient Mexico. In his long poems such as *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama,* Southey gave full expression to his Romantic instincts. Robert Southey is also remembered for his prose pieces. His numerous prose works include *The History of Brazil* (1810-19) and *The History of the Peninsular War* (1823-32). The slightest of them all, *The Life of Nelson* (1813), is the only one now freely read.

George Gordon Byron: (1788 – 1824)

George Gordon Byron or Lord Byron, as he was popularly known, was reputed to be one of the most expressive poets of his times voicing displeasure at the failure of the idealism associated with the French Revolution. His first published work *Hours of Idleness* was written at a young age. His poems voice his intense individualism and his feeling of revolt against the society. Some of his best known poems are ‘Mazeppa’, ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ and so on. It may be mentioned that Byron’s poetic creations are known for their splendid descriptions of natural scenery, exquisitely lyrical display of love and despair. However, critical assessment of Byron’s poetry reveals that his poetry at times tend to be a rather loud display of pomposity and rhetoric which on the whole, gives an impression of unwholesomeness to his creations. Nevertheless, you will do good to remember that in Byron we find a faithful association with nature, and his poetry contains some of the most beautiful and unsurpassed portrayals of nature in English language.

Percy Bysshe Shelley: (1792–1822)

In Shelley we find, as in other Romantic poets, an intensely passionate liking for everything represented in nature, which he rendered into extremely melodious verse. At times, however, he displays a sense of

vain revolt against the contemporary society in a manner that likens him to Byron. Through his poetic works, we may chart two distinct moods – first, in which he appears as a zealous reformer displaying a sense of hurry. Instances of such mood are available in his poems like 'Queen Mab', 'Revolt of Islam' and 'the Witch of Atlas', which portray his vehement diatribe against almost everything visible around him–the government, priests, marriage, religion and even God. In his other mood, we find the wonderful lyricist in Shelley creating poems remarkable for their melody. For instance, in poems such as 'Adonais' one finds the poet in the garb of a wanderer in search of a beautiful yet abstract vision only to meet with disappointment and discontent. It is perhaps 'Prometheus Unbound' (1818–1820) which immortalises Shelley's poetic genius. Displaying his revolutionary enthusiasm, the poem portrays a hero Prometheus conceived in the image of humankind, desirous of freedom and liberty but captive and tortured by the ruler of Heaven. His poetry represented a world of dreams inhabited by ethereal forms and at times a world of myths. For him, the world of nature represented truth and all symbols from the natural world, perhaps best exemplified in 'The Cloud', 'The Skylark' and 'The West Wind'.

John Keats: (1795-1821)

The greatness of Keats' verses lie in his sensitiveness toward the idea of 'beauty', which he worships with the unreserved ecstasy of a devotee. Keats' famous utterance "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" perhaps best encapsulates his philosophy, which for him was at equal par with truth. The sensuous richness of Keatsian verse emanates from this passion for beauty revelled through extraordinarily fresh and energetic compositions. The concern for form is revealed in Keats' later verse. His poem 'Endymion' appears to be essentially formless. However, we see a wonderful display of a sense of structure in his great odes especially, the 'Nightingale', 'Grecian Urn' and 'Eve of St. Agnes' and so on. Apparently, Keats' verses represented him as indifferent to human affairs. A deep scrutiny however reveals that the poet was a keen observer of reality as he harboured an intense sympathy towards human life and affairs thereof. His contribution to romantic literature lies in the treasure of sensations and the enriched diction and melody, which

he bestowed upon poetry, which made him one of the most unparalleled artists of the period.

Jane Austen: (1775–1817)

Jane Austen brought to prominence the novel of manners in which she exploited with unparalleled expertise the potentialities of social experience within a seemingly narrow mode of existence. Her most famous novels include *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park.* In her novels, Austen presents the world of provincial folk through a well-defined story, which develops naturally through the influence of one character upon another in society. Jane Austen is thus renowned for her novel of manners. One of her famous work *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) narrates the predicament of characters located in a provincial setting. Austen's later novels such as *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816) continue to represent the provincial society and culture with their well- defined story, characters developed in a manner that very well reflected the characteristic humours of provincial life. Other notable novels of Austen include *Persuasion* (1818) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). A cursory review of her novels reveals that she engaged in an ironic exposure of pretentiousness and blended her moral message with an ideological assertion on merits of good conduct, good manners, sound reason and marriage as an admirable social institution. The comparatively confined world of her novels and the limitations of her setting potently display an illusion of reality, which urges the reader to relish the world she narrates.

Sir Walter Scott: (1771–1832)

Walter Scott was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet. Contemporary to Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott has to his credit several novels which include *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *Kenilworth* (11821) among others. Scott's style revealed his long descriptions of the locale combined with an exactness and vividness, which enhances his realism. In his works, the setting becomes an actual requirement of the action. He displayed his intense understanding of the local Scottish types with his very first novel *Waverly* that was published anonymously in 1814. Scott is remarkable for his liking of the past which

provided him with materials for his 'historical' fictions. Though his stories at times appeared to lack symmetry, they were however, significant for the manner in which he consummately represented the characters and action in a picturesque setting, which bestowed the narrative a sense of appropriateness, which only seemed natural. The genre of historical fiction attains a sense of perfection with Scott through his definite portraiture of historical characters and historical events which reflect his exquisite imagination and insight.

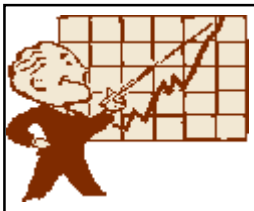
William Hazlitt: (1778–1830)

The Romantic essayist and critic William Hazlitt is known for his famous essay 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' in which he presents a vivid and detailed portrait of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the invigorating conversation that he had with Coleridge which left a strong impression on him. Hazlitt became a critic of art, literature and politics. His lectures influenced the English writers and he was a champion of the liberalism in politics. His energetic spirit is reflected in his criticism and often he introduces the authors and their books to his readers through a narration of the story of his personal acquaintance with them. The mood that Hazlitt builds in his criticism spreads to the reader who moves along with the essayist in the process of reading. He is mainly remembered for his essays such as 'On Going a Journey', 'On Actors and Acting', 'On the Pleasures of Painting', which he contributed to several periodicals and later published in volumes such as *Table Talk* and *The Round Table*.

Charles Lamb: (1775–1834)

Charles Lamb achieved success with critical literature for the first time with his volume titled *Tales from Shakespeare* published in 1807 written in collaboration with his sister. However, he is given recognition not as a literary critic but especially as a commentator upon life, his amusing and fond remarks and as a mild egoist without a hint of vanity. It was the *Essays of Elia* published at intervals in the *London Magazine* in 1823, which established him as one of the most delightful essayists of England. These essays cover a wide variety of topics in which we witness the intimately personal voice of the essayist suggesting his lovable

personality that adds to the charm of essays. Some of his best-known essays include 'Imperfect Sympathies', 'Dream Children', while 'A Dissertation upon a Roast Pig received wide acclaim for its extravagance. Though his style is reminiscent of older writers, yet in his hands these essays emerge as highly individualistic renditions remarkable for their novelty.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What are the contributions of Hazlitt and Lamb as prose writers of the Romantic period?

Q 9: What are the two distinctive moods in P B Shelly's poetry?



13.6 LET US SUM UP

You must have understood by now that the Romantic Age roughly falls between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. During the first phase of this period, England experienced turmoil in both political and economic sphere of life. The core of all troubles raised in England was however, the French Revolution which had a tremendous impact on the life and literature of the period. You have learnt that literature of this age is predominantly poetical in form and intensely Romantic in spirit. You have also realised that the triumph of democracy in political arena is accompanied by the surge of Romanticism in literature. During the initial phase, especially in the literature of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, we note the reflection of the tumultuous spirit of the age and a violent desire for establishing of the ideals of democracy. You may summarise the chief literary characteristics of the age based on the predominance of Romantic poetry, the creation of historical novel by Walter Scott, the first appearance of women novelists such as Jane Austen, development of literary criticism, and the prose works of Hazlitt and Lamb.



13.7 FURTHER READING

1) Daiches, David. (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol IV. Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

2) Sanders, Andrew. (2000). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.



13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: American Declaration of Independence… …French Revolution… …influence of German philosophy.

Ans to Q 2: The first phase is characterised by a return to nature as found in Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott… …the second phase is chracterised by a disillusionment and revolt as available in Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Ans to Q 3: Romanticism favoured innovation over traditionalism in the materials, forms, and style …. …Wordsworth denounced upper-class subjects and the *poetic diction… …*This violated the very basic neoclassic rule of *decorum*—that serious genres of literatures should deal only with the momentous actions of royal or aristocratic characters in an elevated style.

Ans to Q 4: Experimentation with metre, verse form, rhythm and rhyme… …lyric poetry was sought to be made intensely musical expressions…. …Romantic odes were responsible for their harmonious flow of music and lofty idealism… …the sonnet was revived by Wordsworth and Keats.

Ans to Q 5: This type of novels represented a narrative that is specifically confined to the author's regional milieu… …the socio-political and cultural world is restricted strictly to the physical locale of the author.

Ans to Q 6: Periodicals and magazines like *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1802) and *The Spectator* (1828) became popular… …they published criticisms on

individual authors and their works…. …these magazines also encouraged relatively inferior writers to publish their works.

Ans to Q 7: Wordsworth's famous Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* discusses the nature and purpose of his 'Romantic' poetry and the kind of 'poetic diction' to be used… …Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* discusses the processes of human creativity, provides the definition of 'imagination' or 'the creative intelligence'… …John Keats introduced the term "Negative Capability" which refers to *aesthetic distance.*

Ans to Q 8: Hazlitt became a critic of art, literature and politics… …his criticism helped in introducing the authors to the readers in a mode of narration based on personal acquaintance… …Lamb on the other hand, mostly wrote personal essays… …the essays in *Essays of Elia* cover a wide variety of topics including the author's lovable personality as well as that of his acquaintances.

Ans to Q 9: Shelly as a reformer… …Shelly as a wonderful lyricist.



13.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the general tendencies of the age of English Romanticism?

Q 2: Why do you think poetry evolved as a predominant literary form during the romantic period?

Q 3: Write a comprehensive note on Romantic criticism with special reference to Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.

Q 4: What are the most important forms of Romantic prose? Trace the significance of William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb as Essay writers of the Romantic Age.

Q 5: Can you identify the two generations of Romantic poets? Provide an analysis of their poetry.

Q 6: What are the main concerns of the Romantic novelists? Elaborate with examples.

Q 7: Who are the "Lake Poets" of the Romantic Age? Why are they called so? Describe their contributions to Romantic poetry.

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UNIT 14: THE VICTORIAN AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 The Victorian Age: Intellectual Context

14.4 Victorian Novel

14.5 Victorian Poetry

14.6 Victorian Prose

14.7 Let us Sum up

14.8 Further Reading

14.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.10 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the intellectual context of the Victorian age
- explain the changes of English literary history in the Victorian period
- identify the major Victorian writers and their works
- trace the development of literary forms specific to the age
- find out how Victorian literature emerged from specific socio-historical conditions of Industrial England.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall help you to discuss the literature of the Victorian Age. The term “Victorian” briefly denotes the historical era in England roughly coinciding with the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. This is an age of rapid economic and social changes that had noticeable impact on the minds of writers. Historians often subdivide this long period into three phases: Early Victorian (to 1848), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901). Much poetic and prosaic writing of this period, whether imaginative or didactic, dealt with or reflected the pressing social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems of that era. Thus, in this unit,

we shall concentrate on some of the issues related to literature of the Victorian age, and try to examine how the writers reacted and responded to these variegated changes of the Victorian age.

14.3 THE VICTORIAN AGE: INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The term Victorian age generally refers to the period of Queen Victoria's reign stretching from 1837 to1901. An age of radical movements in terms of artistic styles, literary schools, as well as, social, political and religious movements, it also witnessed prosperity, broad imperial expansion, and great political reform. This extraordinarily complex age has often been loosely addressed as the 'Second English Renaissance' and may be considered the beginning of modern times. Historians generally attribute these changes and developments of the Victorian age to the growth of democracy, which seems to be a consequence of the Reform Bill of 1832 that placed the political power of England in the hands of the middle class. Rise and growth of democratic ideals in the English political scene facilitated on the, common suffrage on the one hand, and education for the masses, on the other. With an increase in readership, a large number of Victorian writers began an initiative to instruct and enliven the huge mass of society. However, political expansionism with its accompanying industrialisation instilled a desire for comfort in the people and deep-seated materialism affected the society significantly. It was against this outlook of contemporary society that the Victorian writers raised their voices in protest and warning.

The word 'Victorian' may also be understood to denote the contemporary scenario in the field of social, cultural, political and literary disciplines as well. When one speaks of the intellectual contexts of the Victorian period, it is imperative to acknowledge the profound influence of Charles Darwin's magnum opus *The Origin of Species* (1859). However, the fundamental ideas related to evolution and the process of natural selection were already circulating in the society and Darwin's theory served to strengthen the feeling of apprehensive emotions of the society thereby leading to the formation of the now clichéd *Victorian Faith and Doubt*

structure. We also need to keep in mind that during this period the thoughts pertaining to civilization and progress gained importance through a well-structured device of imperial policies exercised by the government and the commercial agencies as well. Another significant development of the period is the impact of Industrial Revolution, which was most intensely felt during this time. The outcome of the Industrial Revolution was felt in all spheres of human activity as there was a growth of industrialisation and mechanisation, which speeded up human life radically. With radical changes affecting the life and affairs of the Victorian period, new ideas and concepts evolved in cultural, intellectual and social realm. The distinction between social turmoil and change and the affirmation of ideals and values, had come to be recognised as the hallmark of Victorianism. It was a unique belief, which finds resolution in the idea of Victorian compromise which may be understood as a kind of double standard between exploitation (of working classes and the colonies overseas) and national success in terms of political and economic achievements.

Common Literary Features of the Victorian Age:

1. The writers and thinkers of this age protested against the effects of conventions.
2. The literary products were affected by newer ideas borrowed from science, religion and politics.
3. The New Education Acts made education almost compulsory and soon produced a huge reading public.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the major developments that affected the intellectual context of the Victorian age?

Q 2: What are the major concerns of Victorian literature in general?

14.4 VICTORIAN NOVEL

The Victorian age witnessed the predominance of the novel among other literary genres that were being cultivated during this period. The novel

became the primary literary form and throughout this period, one may see the novel being experimented with a variety of narratives by the great exponents ranging from Dickens to Hardy. One should need to keep in mind that there was an upsurge in the production of the novel because not only there was an increase in the number of writers but there was also an equivalent rise in the reading public for whom the writers consistently produced narratives. Thus, the novel became one of the most entertaining forms, and its easy accessibility, made it the most predominant form in the society of the times. The popularity of the novel may be attributed to realism, unlike the novels of the preceding age, and perhaps the use of the realistic mode enabled the reading public to identify themselves with the narratives and to closely associate them to the stories of real life.

The Victorian novel as such appeared to be a mirror of the contemporary society reflecting the radical changes in the field of transport and communication, railways, industrialisation and the consequent shift of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation and rise in educational opportunities. These comprised the topics on which most of the novels were based. Another significant aspect of the Victorian novel was that while most of the reading public comprised of women there was also a surge of women writers who enriched the genre by depicting women's lives and issues which included domesticity, familial structures, marriage and morals of the times. Thus, women during the Victorian age were occupying prominence not only as producers and readers of novels but also as the subjects of the novel around whose lives the narratives were woven. However, it should be kept in mind that women became the subjects of novelistic art not only in the hands of women writers, but women also invited narrative focus even in the writings of male writers. These male writers perhaps attributed to the creation of stereotypes such as 'the angel of the house' and the 'fallen woman' whereby women were scrutinised under the predominant patriarchal ideology prevalent in the contemporary society and culture. During this period various categories of novels were being produced during the period, which included the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among

others were being produced. The following are some of the renowned Victorian novelists.

Charles Dickens: (1812-70)

One of the most prominent novelists representing the Victorian Age is Charles Dickens who had achieved remarkable success during his lifetime owing to his output of novels which include the famous *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times* among others. Dickens is famed for his caricatures, which he accomplishes with an unparalleled expertise that enabled him to bring his caricatures alive and closer to real life. His *Pickwick Papers* shall remain an illustration of Victorianism in its best while the characters come alive with their identifiable attitudes and manners. Another feature of Dickensian art was his ability to bring out the horror of living in the Victorian times illustrated best through his novels such as *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Oliver Twist* where we have a world of pain, sorrow and evil which excite not humour but loathing. A third category of characterisation prevalent in his novels is the individual visualised as the victim of society, especially a child. In novels such as *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*, you will come across child characters who fall prey to the vicious social practices. Dickens will be remembered as an artist endowed with the unique capability of portraying a vast and fascinating canvas. His novels represent a world replete with farcical characters, grotesque and terrible creatures and sensitive pictures of children.

William Makepeace Thackeray: (1811-63)

Another novelist who gained prominence during the Victorian age was William Makepeace Thackeray whose novelistic art catered to a representation of contemporary human life and nature. The realistic narratives of Thackeray reveal that he was more often an observer than an analyst, which consequently seemed to deprive a somewhat compact structure from his novels. His vision in his novels is that of a man who sees life through the wider prism of society and culture rather than studying characters as isolated, individual cases. His most famous work *Vanity Fair* illustrates very well his art in as far as it represents the contemporary Victorian

society through the central female characters Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp. Subtitled 'A Novel Without a Hero', the anti-heroic novel *Vanity Fair* satirises the materialistic inclinations of the middle class through the interweaving of the stories of its two heroines. The quest of crude materialism in the wake of an industrial and mechanised society and culture forms the object of satire in Thackeray's novel written in the genre of domestic fiction.

The Bronte Sisters:

Among the Victorian women novelists, the Bronte sisters were very prominent. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* captures the reader's imagination owing to the gothic atmosphere that it represents. Regarded as one of the classics of English literature, the novel works with an intensely passionate love story which has however, been subjected to a variety of interpretations through the passage of time. *Wuthering Heights* has also been viewed as a novel of revenge that justifies its gothic air. It is a novel that narrates the world of a unique love affair that puts into question the generally accepted paradigm of marriage and love. The narrative technique of this novel has received critical attention. The use of multiple narratorial voices was an innovative tool during the time when the novel was written. This established Emily Bronte's imaginative forte for years to come. Charlotte and Anne Bronte, both sisters of Emily also wrote novels that primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world that was gendered and thereby imposed limitations on their womanhood. In Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey*, you will come across the romantic imagination of the authors as they deal with issues pertaining to womanhood and femininity within the varied worlds of marital experience.

George Eliot: (1819-1880)

George Eliot is the other significant women novelist of the Victorian period. The world of her novels reveals the author's intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world. Her famous novels like *Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, Middlemarch, Silas Marner* have been regarded as examples of the realist novels, which revolve around the theme of human action in relation to the context of imminent social

change. Such juxtaposition of the individual and the social within a common context forms an interesting aspect of Eliot's novels. Eliot very often preoccupies herself with the individual personality, which is also the concern of the Bronte sisters. Often drawn from the lower strata of the society, her characters present the English country people in the fullest sense.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Why do you see the upsurge of novel writing in the Victorian period?

Q 4: What do the Victorian novels reflect?

Q 5: Which are Charles Dickens' major preoccupations as a Victorian novelist?

Q 6: Mention the important themes in the novels of the Victorian women writers.

Q 7: What are the causes behind the emergence of the novel as the most popular form of literature during the Victorian period?

14.5 VICTORIAN POETRY

Poetry of the Victorian age, unlike that of the preceding Romantic age, displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis which were an outcome of the upheavals in the social and cultural ethos of the time initiated by the changes wrought with rapid urbanisation, mechanised lives, changes in men and morals and the repeated tussle between faith and doubt, hope and despair. The ideas evinced from Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals while creating a value system that afflicted that society with a feeling of crisis and anxiety. Poetry of the age therefore, reveals the poet's persistent efforts to come to terms with the visible changes happening in every sphere of life. There was a variety of poetic forms that emerged ranging from the elegy to the dramatic monologue. A cluster of poets such as Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were among many others whose works are seen as representative of the Victorian ethos. Gerard Manley Hopkins

is another Victorian poet whose poetic oeuvre includes pieces that uniquely blend both Victorian and modern sensibilities.

Victorian poetry is probably best represented in the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson whose *In Memoriam* (1850) stands as the mouthpiece of Victorian dilemma, giving voice to the feeling of hope and despair which created a sense of crisis for the entire society. The poem was composed at the death of Arthur Henry Hallam who was Tennyson's close friend. From an intensely personal impulse of sorrow, the poem embraces larger universal questions of life and death, immortality of the soul in the context of contemporary scenario. Through states of doubt, desolation and tormented debates, the poem gradually moves on to the realm of solid though dismayed confidence and closes in a full hymnal music breathing hope and courage of heart. In Matthew Arnold, another poet representing the Victorian ethos one shall notice a blend of classical and modern tendencies. Besides being a poet, Arnold was also recognised as a prose writer and in both these genres; he imbued his moral consciousness into his creations. Arnold's famous poem *Dover Beach* may be understood as his response to an age-torn between numerous contradictions and dilemmas, and the poet stands disillusioned at the radical upheavals in all spheres of human life. More often than not, Arnold's poetry is influenced by an overwhelming moral vision under which the poetic sensibility seems to be suppressed.

14.6 VICTORIAN PROSE

The Victorian age saw a remarkable growth in prose with a variety of prose writings that were being published during this period, which includes rhetorical writings dealing primarily with the 'Condition of England' issue, debates on religion, scientific writing and philosophical writings. It is within this literary domain that the age saw a flourish of prose writers, the prominent among them being Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. Macaulay's skill as an essayist lies in his oratory style and clarity. The success of his historical volume titled *History of England* lies in its narrative and the manner in which he imbues a sense of romance to the factual events of history. His essays were written chiefly during a time when

England was witnessing various events of social, political and cultural significance such as the Reform Bill of 1832, and the industrial and commercial expansion of English lives and society, which brought the middle class into power. While reflecting on the general mood of the period Macaulay presents a complacent view of life in most of his essays Carlyle's essays on the other hand reflect his disappointment and intense moral indignation against anything that he found was weak and superficial. On the other hand, his spirited arguments were moral and sincere. Carlyle is known for *Sartor Resartus* and *Hero and Hero Worship*. Through *Sartor Resartus,* Carlyle professes his indignation at the pretentiousness of the society and critiques contemporary culture and social customs, which very often act as the veil to the shortcomings of actual life. The text is replete with idioms, astonishing pauses and radical inversions, which were aimed to gain the reader's attention.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Briefly state the tendencies prevalent in Victorian poetry.

Q 9: Name the authors who popularised Victorian prose.



14.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have found that both the Victorian Age represents a significant phase in English literary history. You have seen that the socially conscious writers of the Victorian age have addressed the havocs brought by capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. For example, writers like Charles Dickens had turned his fictions towards describing the social disparities brought by this change in society following Industrialism. The strange dualities, which afflicted the Victorian period, find sensitive expression in the literature of the time. You have seen that literature of this period is prominently characterised by a sense of strenuousness and

conscious purpose. The disease of the Victorian society, the struggle with science and material culture, the debates with religious faith find expression in the works of most of the poets and prose writers of the period. Thus, you have found that almost all writings of the period are replete with doctrines and preaching for the human soul in turmoil and therefore, the prevailing mood is one of earnest in confrontation with the crucial issues of life.



14.8 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Bangalore: Prism Books Pvt. Ltd.

2) Albert, Edward. (1975). *History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

3) Daiches, David. (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. IV. Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

4) Sander, Andrew. (2000). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.



14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Dualism between the religion and Victorian materialistic culture… …influence of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) that led to the dualism of Victorian faith and doubt… …impact of Industrial Revolution that affected all spheres of human activities.

Ans to Q 2: Victorian literature is steeped in strenuousness and social purpose… ...it addressed the intrusion of science and material culture… …debates over religious faith… …Victorianism startled men from their taken-for-granted attitude… …such tendencies helped in the development of poetry and novel.

Ans to Q 3: The novel became the primary literary form… …experimented with a variety of narratives by the great exponents ranging from Dickens to Hardy… …increase in the number of writers and rise in the reading public… …the popularity of the novel may be attributed to realism.

Ans to Q 4: Novel as a mirror of the contemporary society reflecting the radical changes in the field of transport and communication, railways, industrialisation and the consequent shift of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation and rise in educational opportunities.

Ans to Q 5: Dickens is famed for his caricatures… …presentation of the horror of living in the Victorian times… …depiction of the world of pain, sorrow and evil… …individual, especially a child, visualised as the victim of society,.

Ans to Q 6: The Bronte sisters were very prominent… …Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* captured the reader's imagination… …Emily's use of multiple narratorial voices as an innovative tool… …Charlotte and Anne Bronte, primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world… …George Eliot intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world.

Ans to Q 7: Novels not only increased the number of writers but also the reading public… …it became one of the most entertaining and easily accessible form of literature… …also emerged a number of women novelists concerned mainly with women's lives and issues… …soon there emerged various categories of novels.

Ans to Q 8: Victorian poetry displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis… …Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals of the poets like Tennyson… …poetry thus reveals the poet's efforts to come to terms with the changes in society.

Ans to Q 9: Thomas Babington Macaulay… …Thomas Carlyle… …Matthew Arnold.



14.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: State the implications of the term 'Victorian'. Can we really call it to be the "Second English Renaissance"?

Q 2: 'The Victorian age witnessed the predominance of the Novel form.' Explain with reference to any four major novelists of the Victorian age.

Q 3: How do you think the modernist poets deviated from the traditional modes of poetic expression? Elaborate with examples.

Q 4: What are the techniques used in modern drama? Explain with examples.

Q 5: What are the characteristics of Victorian prose writing in English? Explain with reference to the writers you have read.

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UNIT 15: THE MODERN AGE (TILL WW II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 The Modern Age: Intellectual Context

- 15.3.1 From 1890-1918
- 15.3.2 From 1918-1939

15.4 Major Literary Forms and Writers

- 15.4.1 Modern Novel
- 15.4.2 Modern Poetry
- 15.4.3 Modern Drama

15.5 Let us Sum up

15.6 Further Reading

15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints only)

15.8 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the intellectual contexts of Literature of the Modern age
- read about the literary activities first from 1890 to the end of World War I, and then from 1918 to the outbreak of the World War II
- indentify the important trends in modern novels
- explain the different aspects of modern poetry
- note down the important aspects of modern drama.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with modern literature until the occurrence of World War II. The application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style. The Modern age in literature and arts appears to have ensued towards the last decades of the 19th century when contemporary society and culture were exposed to

several challenges in the wake of a large number of changes affecting every sphere of human life. The conscience of modern man was torn between the ideas of faith and doubt, hope and despair. However, you need to remember that the experience of modernism was not confined to England alone. It was a unique condition that had spread to various parts of the Western world and thus, modern literature too, under such circumstances, did not remain confined to the English soil alone. There were a host of writers who began experimenting with forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols which were also equally being experimented in other genres of creativity especially the arts. However, for your convenience, in this unit, we shall discuss the various aspects of modern literature roughly from 1890-1918 and through 1945 when World War II ended.

15.3 THE MODERN AGE: INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT [Adapted from Edward Albert's History]

In the following subsections, you will be taken through a brief study of the intellectual contexts of the Modern Age out of which emerged a huge chunk of modern literature. First, we shall look at the contexts from 1890 to 1980 and then from 1918-1939.

15.3.1 From 1890-1918

You have learnt that the Modern Age in English Literature begins with the end of the long reign of Queen Victoria (1901), and with the stability, which the country had so long enjoyed. Following the shock left by the **Boer War** (1899-1902) and the experience of Victoria's reign in later years helped to divert attention from imperial expansion to social problems at home. This necessitated sweeping social reform and progress. The reawakening of a social conscience found its expression in the development of local government and the rapid extension of its influence upon the health, education, and happiness of the citizen. This period also saw the emergence and rapid growth of the Labour Party. Political passions ran high, and the years before the War, saw serious labour troubles, many of them

connected with the growth of Trades Unionism. Home Rule for Ireland, Free Trade or Protection, Votes for Women, the decline of agriculture and the growing urbanisation of the country were some of the major problems of the day. Thus, the intellectual contexts of the Modern Age can be seen in terms of the following points:

The Spread of Education:

The full effect of the Education Act of 1870, strengthened by the Act of 1902, began to make itself felt in the pre-War years. From elementary school to university, Educational opportunity was now available to the poorest of the poor who had the ability to take advantage of it. Thus, the literacy rate increased significantly. So increased the demand of literary works. Besides a larger market for the 'classics' and for all types of fiction, there arose an entirely new demand for works in science, history, and travel. As a profession and as a business, literature offered better financial prospects to the writers. Authors and publishers were always ready to supply the public with what they wanted, and there could be seen a pouring of new books from the presses with astonishing rapidity.

The Literature of Social Purpose:

The spread of literacy was accompanied by the awakening of the national conscience to the evils resulting from the Industrial Revolution. More than ever before, persons and writers with a reformist zeal pinned their faith on the printed word and on the serious theatre as the tool for social propaganda. Consequently, **problem or discussion play and the novel with a social purpose** became the two most typical literary products of the period. In view of the developments outlined above, it is not surprising that for the first time in its history, the novel became the dominant literary form in English. Similarly, after a hundred years of insignificance, drama reappeared as an important literary form, and the experienced men of the theatre succeeded in creating a live and significant drama out of the problems of their age.

Experiments in Literary Forms:

Long before 1918, it had become obvious that in poetry, novel and drama, the old traditional forms were outworn. Experimenters in all three fields were producing new forms to sustain the new demands being made upon them. Progress had been most rapid in the field of drama, but the novel too in the hands of the great masters underwent revolutionary changes. In the field of poetry too, experiments were less sensational, and the bulk of the poetry published was in the traditional manner. For the first time, after so many years, poetry regained significance.



LET US KNOW

Idea of Modernism:

Culturally speaking, modernism implied a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities, which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation. Thus, when we look at the Modern Age, we shall see that the reaction and responses to these variegated changes were mixed and contradictory. Human life became more materialistic and fast that visibly influenced the creative impulses of the time.

15.3.2 From 1918-39

This period was almost completely overshadowed by the two World Wars, the after effects of the First and the forebodings of the Second. After the Treaty of Versailles, much attention in England was laid on foreign affairs like the growing need of a new League of Nations, uncertainty in the Middle East, and troubles in India and Ireland. The General Strike of 1926 was a major manifestation of the post-War slump, which culminated in the ‘depression’ and its problems of want and unemployment. All these made the early thirties a period of great distress, particularly for the industrial areas. With

the rise of the Nazis in Germany, and from 1934 until 1939, there was mounting tension abroad and at home, new problems and tensions led to rearmament. Spiritually, the immediate post-War mood of desperate gaiety and determined frivolity, give way to doubt, uncertainty of aim, and a deeper self-questioning on ethical, social, and political problems. The following are some of the features of the period under consideration.

The Breakdown of Established Values:

The spirit of the age was perfectly reflected in the literature of the time. Novel, poetry, drama, and miscellaneous prose, all mirror the perplexity and uncertainty of aim, which sprang from the post-War breakdown of accepted spiritual values. The multiplicity of reactions to the contemporary situation was equalled by the variety of literary work. You should note that in this period, there could be seen an attempt to find new values in political thought. Besides that, politics and psychology became two most essential clues for the interpretation of the inter-War literary works.

The Resurgence of Poetry:

The pre-War years had seen a relative eclipse of poetry and the dominance of the novel and drama as literary forms. The demand, long before expressed by Yeats, for a new and living poetical tradition was met between the Wars in his own work, and in that of the new poets like T.S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, and Louis MacNeice and others. Poetry again became a vital literary form closely attached to life.

Variety of Technical Experiment:

It is doubtful whether any period of English literature saw experiments so bold and various as those of the inter-War years. A natural corollary of the quest for new values and for a new vital tradition was the desire for new forms and methods of presentation, and in all the major literary genres, the age produced revolutionary developments.

The Influence of Radio and Cinema:

The rapid development of two important media had an enormous impact on life and society. Radio brought literature into the household in the form of broadcast stories, plays, and literary discussion, which opened up an entirely new field for the authors. The same may be said of the cinema, which, for many people, became the main form of leisure activity. At the same time, it must be remembered that film techniques were the basis of a number of experiments in the novel.

The Speed of Life:

In the inter-War years, life generally was lived in an atmosphere of hustle and restlessness never known before. At work and at play, the demand was for more and faster action, stronger and more violent stimulus, and the general atmosphere thus created was by its very nature inimical to the cultivation of literary pursuits, which necessarily demanded a degree of calmness of spirit and leisure of mind.



LET US KNOW

How to Understand Modernism in Literature?

Modernism is a term often used to identify new and extraordinary features in form, content and styles of literature and other similar arts in the early decades of the 20th century mainly after the World War I of 1914. The ideals of modernism are signified by a radical break with some of the traditional bases of the Western art as well as the whole Western culture. Writers and Intellectuals influenced by Modernism questioned traditional modes of social organization, religion, and morality. The year 1922 is marked by the publication of remarkable experimental works like James's Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. These writers chose to 'experiment', as the catastrophe of the World War had shaken their faith in the continuity of Western civilization and raised doubts about the adequacy of the traditional literary modes to represent the harsh realities of the post-war world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What does the term 'Modernism' imply?

Q 2: Which are the important contexts that helped in spreading ideas of Modernism in literature between 1890-1918?

Q 3: Note down the important aspects of modern literature from 1918-1939?

Q 4: What were the changes brought about by Modernism to English literature of early 20th century?

15.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

The Modern Age is marked by a number of experiments in both form and content. In this section, you will read briefly about three most important literary forms—Novel, Poetry and Drama that emerged during the Modern period.

15.4.1 Modern Novel

From 1890-1918:

As you know, the form of the novel emerged as a serious rival to poetry and drama in the 18th century, but throughout the 19th, its status grew even more thanks to the Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, George Eliot, and George Meredith. In this period, for the first time, the novel gained an unprecedented popularity over all other literary forms. Its growing importance has been accompanied by serious study of the novelists' art of writing. Besides this, the problems, aim and scope of the novelists too are now seriously posed in England perhaps for the first time. Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, John Galsworthy and their ilk devoted themselves to these issues. Abandoning the direct loose biographical method, they were in favour of an indirect or oblique narrative, with great concern over pattern, composition

and characterisation based on the study of the inner consciousness. You should note that much modern fiction has been written in this manner.

This was also the period in which emerged the novel of Ideas and Social Purpose. Novelists like Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad proposed that the aim of the novel should be to interpret life. While novelists like Butler, Wells, and Galsworthy saw it as a means of social propaganda, or as a medium for disseminating their ideas on religion, shifting social values, family life etc. Another underlying strain of modern novel of this period was **Realism.** Many short story and fiction writers were influenced by the realist conception of fiction, which also makes itself felt in the works of the novelists of social purpose. However, **French and Russian Influences** from the likes of Flaubert (1821-80), Zola (1840-1902), Maupassant (1850-93), and Balzac (1799-1850), too was clearly felt as the English writers learned about the art of minutely accurate portrayal of everyday life with special emphasis on the structure, pattern, style, and finish. The Russian authors like Dostoevsky (1821-81), Turgenev (1818-83), and Tolstoy (1828-1910), found a new interest in the darker hidden sides of human nature, which influenced the form and structure of English novels. Besides this, the growing popularity of the Short Story writing could be seen everywhere. Writers like Hardy, Bennett, Conrad, Gissing, Kipling, Wells, and Moore—all used this medium with great success.

From 1918-39:

During this period, the form of the novel became an Interpreter of Life. The disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment following World War II are nowhere to be seen so clearly than in the novel. That is why perhaps, the inter-War generation of writers looked to the novel to be an interpretation of contemporary scene. They sought to portray the complexities of inter-War life with no attempt at deeper purpose. However, the members of a third group of writers found themselves driven by focussed attention on the impact of life

on individual consciousness. Character, rather than action, became the sole preoccupation of this group.

The novelists of this period experimented with new forms of fiction. The most significant novelists of the pre-War novelists had been Henry James; and of the inter-War years James Joyce. These novelists moved away from the controlled, finished, artistic form advocated by Henry James to a novel more loose, fluid, and less coherent. In place of Impressionism, they resorted to expressionism by which they sought to present, not the outward appearance, but the inner realities of life. The presentation of the 'Stream of Consciousness', the use of the interior monologue and an allusive style were the main characteristics of the novelists attempting to write from within the mind of his character. You will find that novelists like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, and Dorothy Miller Richardson excelled in this type of novels.



LET US KNOW

You must also pay attention to the fact that before the War, the rapid development of the science of psychology had already done much to deepen and enrich the study of human character in the novel, but its full impact was not felt until the inter-War period, when the works of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) most specifically his *Interpretation of Dreams* became a handbook for all interested in the study of personality. Freud's study of the subconscious and the unconscious encouraged the novelist's tendency to dwell more and more within the mind of his character. D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf were among major writers whose work reflects strongly the influence of modern psychology.

The growth of the American novel is one of the striking features of the period we call 'modern'. The American writers have been among the boldest so far as experiments in fictional techniques are concerned. The most famous writer is Ernest Hemingway (1898-1962), who published between the Wars *The Sun Also Rises* (1926),

Men without Women (1927), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). For him, violent action brings out the essentials of manliness, especially comradeship, endurance and the acceptance of danger as a way of life; in the world of Hemingway women are of little importance. Yet, for all his concern with the harshness of reality, he was extremely sensitive to beauty. His stark, emphatic, often almost curt language influenced a whole generation of writers. William Faulkner (1897-1962), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), John Dos Passos (1896-1970), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) were the most important American novelists of the time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the status of novel writing during 1890-1918?

Q 6: What charges occurred in the field of novel writing in between 1918-1939?

Q 7: What is the nature of Modern literature in terms of technique?

15.4.2 Modern Poetry

Modern poetry displays an experience of experiments that were introduced following the changes in the first decades of the 20th century. We may begin with a reference to the War Poets whose compositions reflected the experience of war and their response to it. In most of their compositions, they employed their first-hand experience of the war to depict a reality that very well created a sense of meaninglessness associated with the entire experience of war. These poets brought to light the futility associated with conflict and war, and the tragic destiny of mankind compelled to suffer within the given context. Moreover, the experience of the World War I was so overwhelming within the creative community that it initiated new trends in the world of poetry through the works of W. B. Yeats and

T.S. Eliot. In the poems of these poets, the readers shall notice significant departures from the available modes of poetic expression. Yeats' early poems for instance, are remarkable for their romantic vein combined with the influence of Irish folklore, country theme and an appeal for nature. His 'Lake Isle of Innisfree' is one of the most famous poems where the poet juxtaposes country life with that of an urban world to bring out the points of conflict between the two. His later poems reveal his engagement with issues related to Irish nationalism skilfully displayed in poems such as 'Easter 1916'. Yeats' poetic sensibility moves on to attain philosophical heights in his Byzantium poems where we find him toying with the challenges of form, culture, time, language in the context of contemporary culture. In T.S. Eliot's poems, you will come across the poet's effort to debate the notion of subjectivity situated within the modern and contemporary life and culture. His monumental *The Waste Land* represents the anxiety of living in the society seeped in gross material culture. The following is an attempt to discuss different groups of poets that emerged during the periods mentioned.

Poetry From 1890-1918

1. The Decadents: The poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne, Morris, and the Rossettis gave way to the decadents of the 1890's. They adopted the motto of "art for art's sake" propounded by Walter Pater. Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) and Lionel Johnson (1867-1902), with a number of other poets, formed "The Rhymers' Club" of which W. B. Yeats was also a member. This group had little to say anything worthwhile, but they introduced a new and racy vigour into English poetry.

2. The Georgians: The decadent conception of poetry, so unhealthy and devitalised, had little hope of long survival, and by 1900, the search for a more natural type of verse had already begun. It resulted in the poetry of the Georgian School, much of which appeared in the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry.* In addition to the works of Rupert Brooke, Edmund Blunden, W. H. Davies, Walter de

la Mare, and Lascelles Abercrombie, these collections included works of poets like Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948), John Drinkwater (1882-1937), James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915) and so on. These poets were famous for their rejection of the ideas of the decadents, their quest for simplicity and reality, their love of natural beauty, especially as found in the English landscape, and their adherence to the forms and techniques of the main traditions of English poetry. They were in some sense escapists because for the most part their work shows little awareness of the industrial world around them.

3. The Imagists: Then emerged the Imagists Poetry in Reaction to the Georgians. Before the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* appeared, the seeds of revolt against its ideals were being sown in the lectures of T. E. Hulme (1883-1917), who exercised a profound influence on English poetry. Reacting against the facility and looseness of texture of much Georgian poetry, Hulme insisted that poetry should restrict itself to the world perceived by the senses, and to the presentation of its themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualised, concrete images, accurate in detail and precise in significance. He also advocated the use of *vers libre,* with its unlimited freedom, and its rhythms approaching more closely to those of everyday speech than to those of conventional verse patterns. Hulme's ideas were quickly taken up, particularly by the Americans, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Ezra Pound, who coined the name Imagism for this movement.

4. The War Poets: World War I brought to public notice many poets, particularly among the young men in the armed forces, while it provided a new source of inspiration for writers of established reputation. Many of the war poets were either killed or died in the struggle. A representative selection of the work of poets of this War is to be found in *Anthology of War Poetry,* edited by Robert Nichols (1943). Broadly, two phases in War Poetry may be distinguished—the patriotic fervour and rejoicing in the opportunity of self-sacrifice in the cause of human freedom, and a revival of the romantic conception

of the knight-at-arms. Poets like Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), and Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) are some of the most renowned of the war poets. Brooke is usually considered typical of the early group of war poets and wrote with a youthful, healthy joy in life. While Siegfried Sassoon based nearly all his important works on his experiences in the War. A lover of the countryside, of rural sports, of music and painting, Sassoon represented a class, which was fast disappearing, and his work provides an admirable picture of a life of cultured leisure. Wilfred Owen was the greatest of the war poets. With a frankness, Owen set out to present the whole reality of war—the boredom, the hopelessness, the futility, the horror, occasionally the courage and self-sacrifice, but, above all, the pity of it. He himself wrote: "I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How did the World War influence the modern poets?

Q 9: Which are the main groups of modern poetry from 1890-1918?

Poetry From 1918-39

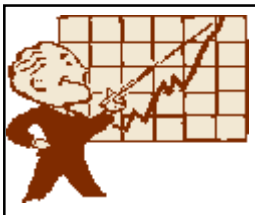
A brave new world torn apart by the disillusionment and despair of the World War found their supreme expression in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925). The modern tension, so different from the complacency of the mid-Victorian period or of the Georgians, clearly demanded a new poetic technique. The new poets now turned to free verse. The development of a new medium also owed much to the poetry of Hopkins, with its sprung rhythms, complex verbal patterns, and disregard for normal syntax. Such an emphasis on the evolution of new forms had obvious dangers, chief among them a lack of proportion, which elevated form above substance, and a glorification of eccentricity for its own sake. The freedom of *vers*

libre encouraged licence and the pursuit of novelty increased the obscurity, which came from the attempt to communicate complex states of mind. Much of the poetry of the period is admittedly difficult, and poetry was in danger of becoming an art for the initiated few. This trend was emphasised by the popularity of the metaphysical conceit, which accompanied the rebirth of interest in Donne and his fellows, the growing use of symbolism under the influence of Yeats and the French Symbolists, and the imitation of the allusiveness of the early Eliot. On the question of difficulty, Eliot himself wrote: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."

Already in the 1920s, the new interest in psychological research had turned poets to a deeper investigation of the hidden impulses of man. In the early Eliot, for instance, we have that rather inconsequential revelation of the most secret thoughts of the character, which became known as the internal monologue. It was, in fact, in psychology and politics that the poets of the 1930s, led by W. H. Auden, sought a solution to the world problems. Auden and his followers, basing their thought on left-wing political ideals, took up the cause of the masses, whose lives they studied with sympathy and often with striking realism. Some of them actively supported the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, and their proletarian sympathies led to some rather cheap satire on contemporary England. In the poorer poets, political writing deteriorated into mere pamphleteering; in the best, we have a serious attempt to produce something positive and constructive. Though Eliot and Hopkins were among their acknowledged masters in matters of technique, the poets of the 30s were strongly critical of the conception of poetry for

the few. In an attempt to make contact with a wider audience, they abandoned the academic style for a more colloquial expression, and used the vocabulary, idiom, and rhythms of everyday speech with considerable force and vigour. They found much to admire, not only in the simple diction and rhythmical subtleties of Yeats, but also in the variety of his themes, and the fresh constructive outlook, which lay behind them. The impact of psychology on the poets of this decade is seen in the importance attached to sex in such writers as Auden and Dylan Thomas, and in the interest in the individual personality seen in such poets as Spender. Freud's revelation of the importance of the subconscious and his development of psychoanalysis lent greater depth to this study.

The picture of the inter-War years is, then, one of continued uncertainty and experiment in an age well described in the title of Auden's collection, *The Age of Anxiety,* which was not, however, published until 1948. There was still no strongly established poetic tradition to compare in stability with that of the Victorian age, but at least the inter-War poets had passed through the despair of the middle twenties and had produced something like a constructive approach to life. In such an age, it is natural to find a great proportion of didactic verse, but even in the work of those poets who devoted themselves most whole-heartedly to finding a solution to the problems of a perplexed generation, we find lyric poetry of great intrinsic value.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: How did the modern poets evolve new poetic techniques during 1918-39?

Q 11: What did T S Eliot state about poetry and poets of his generation?

Q 12: In what ways, did the poets of the 30s react to those of the previous times?

15.4.3 Modern Drama

From 1890-1918

From the dramatic point of view, the first half of the 19th century was almost completely barren. Although many of the major poets had tried drama, none of them had achieved any success. The greater part of their work never saw the stage. The professional theatre of the period was in a low state. Among the respectable middle classes, it was despised as a place of vice. Audiences did nothing to raise the standard, which remained deplorably low. The popular pieces of the day were melodrama, farces, and sentimental comedies, which had no literary qualities whatever, were poor in dialogue and negligible in characterisation, and relied for their success upon sensation, rapid action, and spectacle.

However, within the melodrama itself, there could be traced a significant development from romantic and historical themes to more domestic themes, and this movement toward realism received considerable impetus from the work of T. W. Robertson (1829-71), a writer of comedies, who introduced the idea of a serious theme underlying the humour, and characters and dialogue of a more natural kind. This trend was later continued by Henry Arthur Jones and Sir A. W. Pinero. It was not until the 90s, when the influence of Ibsen was making itself strongly felt, and Shaw produced his first plays, that the necessary impetus was there to carry the serious drama over into the field of social, domestic, or personal problems. A period so keenly aware of social problems was an admirable breeding-ground for the drama of ideas, and the themes of drama became the problems of religion, of youth and age, of labour and capital, and above all, now that Ibsen had torn down the veil which had kept the subject in safe obscurity, of sex. In widening the scope of the drama Ibsen and then Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville-Barker were of paramount importance, and they did much to create a tradition of natural dialogue. New psychological investigations reinforced the interest in character as distinct from plot, and the realistic drama of

our period aimed at the impartial presentation of real life, contemporary rather than historical.

However, some of the important theatrical developments outside London at that time were the creation of the Irish National Theatre in Dublin. The idea of a national drama was born in the minds of Yeats and some of his contemporaries. Then, in 1904, the Abbey Theatre, of which Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory were directors, was formed. Of the dramatists, who wrote for this theatre, Yeats and Synge looked onto the drama as a thing of the emotions, and, reacting against realism, sought their themes among the legends, folklore, and peasantry of Ireland. You should pay particular attention to the fact that despite the efforts of the major Victorian poets, there was no tradition of poetic drama at the beginning of our period. By 1920, there were signs of a rebirth, but the atmosphere in which realistic, naturalistic drama throve was uncongenial to poetic drama. At the Abbey Theatre, Yeats attempted to revive poetry on the stage, but he lacked the essential qualities of the dramatist. Stephen Phillips (1864-1915) wrote a number of blank-verse plays, but he had little popular appeal. Masefield, too, experimented in poetic drama with but limited success, while Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948), who wrote a number of quite powerful poetical dramas, saw hope for this form only in the amateur theatre.

From 1918-39

The playwrights and directors during this period explored alternative ways of expressing the modernist vision. In around 1920, the English theatre was in poor condition. From 1890 to 1920, the pursuit of realism and naturalism had dominated the work of most of the important English dramatists, though for Synge and Shaw ‘mere’ realism had always been inadequate. By 1920, Yeats’ dissatisfaction with that drama, which was an objectively accurate portrayal of the surface of life, was felt by the theatre-going public as a whole. It had had more than enough of realism, and the time was ripe for change. Of the older dramatists, Shaw and Galsworthy

continued in the realistic tradition. However, the most influential practitioner of Modern English drama is George Bernard Shaw who infused the modernist spirit into standard theatrical forms. Nearly all his plays address prevailing social problems. But, the underlying vein of comedy makes their stark themes more palatable. Shaw examined education, marriage, religion, government, health care, and class privilege. He was most angered by what he perceived as the exploitation of the working class. An ardent socialist, Shaw wrote many brochures and speeches for the 'Fabian Society'.

However, the revival of poetic drama is another development of the inter-War period, which illustrates the dissatisfaction with realism, and the tradition of naturalistic prose dialogue. Experiments in verse drama were made by a number of eminent poets, but their success on the commercial stage was very limited, though the plays of T. S. Eliot attracted considerable attention. In his later drama, Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948) frankly abandoned hope for poetry in the professional theatre, and designed his work for amateurs. In the thirties, the verse plays of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood achieved some success. T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral written* for performance in Canterbury Cathedral, is one of his greatest theatrical achievements.

However, the reaction against realism soon began to be felt and by 1920s, experimental drama from Russia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and France began to influence the drama word wide. Important dramatists contributing to the new movement were Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)—*Six Characters in Search of an Author*; and Karel Capek (1890-1938), Jean Cocteau, Georg Kaiser, and Ernst Toller. Of the experiments, by far the most influential was 'expressionism'. 'Expressionist' drama was concerned not with society but with man. It aimed to offer a deep, subjective, psychological analysis, not so much of an individual as of a type, and it made much of the subconscious. For such a study, established dramatic forms and methods of expression were inadequate, and the expressionists

threw overboard the conventional structure in favour of an unrestricted freedom. Their dialogue was often cryptic and patterned, now verse, now prose, and was in every way as far removed from the naturalistic prose of the realist school as can well be imagined. Symbolic figures, embodiments of inner, secret impulses, were introduced on the stage in the attempt to make clear the psychological complexities of character. Of the expressionist dramatists writing in English, the most important was undoubtedly the American, Eugene O'Neill.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Discuss briefly the significance of Bernard Shaw as a modern dramatist.

Q 14: What were the issues that addressed in Drama of Ideas? Name some of the greatest exponents of such drama?

Q 15: What is meant by experimental drama? Give examples.



15.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing. The Modern age in literature and arts appears to have ensued towards the last decades of the 19th century when the society and culture were exposed to several challenges in the wake of different changes affecting every sphere of human life. From the discussions made in the unit, you must have learnt that modernism implies a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities, which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation, and most importantly the World Wars. There were a host of writers who began experimenting with forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols which were also equally being experimented in genres like Novels, Poetry and Drama. Thus, in this unit, you have also read about the

important trends in modern novels with particular reference to some of the important novelists of the time, have gained some ideas about modern poetry and its practitioners, and have noted down the various important aspects of modern drama with particular reference to some of the modern dramatists.



15.6 FURTHER READING

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2) Albert, Edward. (1975). *History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

3) Daiches, David. (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*.Vol. IV.Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

4) Sanders, Andrew. (2000). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.



15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Modernism implied a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation.

Ans to Q 2: The Spread of Education that significantly increased the demand for literary works… …emergence of literature of Social Purpose… …experiments in producing new literary forms to suit the experience of the age.

Ans to Q 3: Breakdown of established values due to the post war breakdown of values… …resurgence of poetry… …technical experiments of various sorts… …the Influence of Radio and Cinema… …increase in the speed of life.

Ans to Q 4: Life became more material and faster and this got reflected in

the creative impulse of the time... ...Western authors began experimenting with forms and methods, techniques and subjects… …the approach to arts was conditioned by new ideas.

Ans to Q 5: The novel gained an unprecedented popularity over all other literary forms… …serious study of the novelists' art of writing like an indirect or oblique narrative… … emergence of novels of Ideas and Social Purpose… …Realism as an important underlying theme… …French and Russian Influences and so on.

Ans to Q 6: The novel became an Interpreter of Life… …the disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment following World War II got reflected… …novel was used as an interpretation of contemporary scene… …novels to portray the complexities of inter-War life… …Character, rather than action, became the sole preoccupation of this group.

Ans to Q 7: Modern novelists experimented with different novelistic genre to address new situations and perspectives…. …implies new and experimental features in form, content and styles… ….writers and Intellectuals influenced by Modernism questioned traditional modes of social organisation, religion, and morality… …doubts on the traditional literary modes to represent the harsh realities of the post-war world.

Ans to Q 8: The war poets reflected the experience of war… …they employed their first-hand experience of the war, the sense of meaninglessness… …the tragic destiny of mankind compelled to suffer within the given context.

Ans to Q 9: The Decadents who introduced a new and racy vigour into English poetry… …The Georgians famous for their rejection of the ideas of the decadents, their quest for simplicity and reality, their love of natural beauty … …The Imagists who presented their themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualised, concrete images, accurate in detail and precise in significance … …War Poetry providing the whole reality of war—the boredom, the hopelessness, the futility, the horror

Ans to Q 10: The new poets now turned to free verse… …the freedom of

vers libre encouraged licence, and the pursuit of novelty increased the obscurity which came from the attempt to communicate complex states of mind.

Ans to Q 11: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."

Ans to Q 12: In an attempt to make contact with a wider audience, they abandoned the academic style for a more colloquial expression, and used the vocabulary, idiom, and rhythms of everyday speech with considerable force and vigour. They found much to admire, not only in the simple diction and rhythmical subtleties of Yeats, but also in the variety of his themes, and the fresh constructive outlook which lay behind them.

Ans to Q 13: George Bernard Shaw infused the modernist spirit into standard theatrical forms… …he mostly examined social problems like education, marriage, religion, government, class consciousness… …he was enraged by the exploitation of the working classes… …he became famous for his drama of ideas.

Ans to Q 14: A period so keenly aware of social problems was an admirable breeding-ground for the drama of ideas, and the themes of drama became the problems of religion, of youth and age, of labour and capital, and above all, now that Ibsen had torn down the veil which had kept the subject in safe obscurity, of sex. In widening the scope of the drama Ibsen and then Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville-Barker were of paramount importance, and they did much to create a tradition of natural dialogue.

Ans to Q 15: Experimental drama emerged as a reaction against realism… …experimental drama from Russia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and France rendered influence… …Expressionist drama aimed to

offer a deep, subjective, psychological analysis… …emergence of symbolic figures, embodiments of inner, secret impulses etc.



15.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1. Provide a detailed sketch of the intellectual contexts of modern literature during 1890-1918.

Q 2. Attempt a brief definition of 'modernism' with reference to its intellectual contexts and its cultural manifestations.

Q 3. Show how 'modern' literature reflected the dominant concerns of the period.

Q 4. To what extent is the modernist movement in its various forms, a creation of a new form of metropolitan culture?

Q 5. Which are the important aspects of modern novels? Discuss critically.

Q 6. Explain the methods adopted by modernist poets to articulate their departure from older traditions.

Q 7. World War I and II had a profoundly disturbing effect on Western society. How did the modern poets react to these effects?

Q 8. Briefly compare the main themes of the poets written before the First World War and after it.

Q 9. Write a note on major tendencies of the different groups of modern poetry in general with reference to some important poets from each group.

Q 10. Write about the important trends in modernist drama with particular reference to some major exponents and their works.

Q 11. Discuss the significance of the important poets who capture the mood of the inter-war years? Justify your answer with textual examples.

Q 12. Would agree with the view that the metropolis predominates as a theme of modern poetry? Give specific instances to illustrate your answer.

Q 13. In what ways, do you think, modern novels reflect on the experiences of the early 20th century. Elaborate with appropriate examples.

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UNIT 16: THE MODERN AGE (AFTER WW II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

16.1 Learning Objectives

16.2 Introduction

16.3 Novels

16.4 Poetry

16.5 Drama

16.6 Let us Sum up

16.7 Further Reading

16.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

16.9 Possible Questions

16.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- describe the contexts of literature at the end of World War II
- indentify the important trends in novel writing after World War II
- describe the aspects of poetry after World War II
- note down the various important aspects of drama following World War II.

16.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of this course. In the previous unit, you have learnt that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing. In this unit however, we shall try to examine the nature of modern English literature following World War II. During this period, there emerged a host of writers who further began experimenting with the various forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols in genres like Novels, Poetry and Drama. Thus, in this unit, you will read about some of the important trends in modern novels, modern poetry and modern drama following World War II as well as their exponents with particular reference to some of their important works.

16.3 NOVELS

The havocs caused by World War I and II, and the uncertainties of post-War years are reflected in the response of many novelists towards the disintegration of society. You should not be surprised to find the frequency with which violence and sadism appear as themes in the works of these novelists because of their experience in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction. However, many of the younger writers were involved in the new psychological problems arising from the bizarre and contradictory nature of an affluent society, which is discontented with itself, and yet is interested chiefly in retaining or acquiring material comforts. A mixture of realism, cynicism, dark comedy, shrewd comment, and satire is used to express their search for stability and basic values. Because of technological advances, space exploration, and the threat of nuclear and germ warfare, there has been a tremendous increase in science Action novels about the future on other planets, or on an earth catastrophically altered. However, English novel of this period has been affected to an inestimable extent by three entirely new influences, which are as the following.

1. The novels from the USA were read so widely like never before. Many of these have been characterised by detailed realism, lack of reticence, brutality, disillusion, and criticism of the national and international scene. In a penetrating manner, they dealt with the frustrations and emotional storms largely caused by urban-commercial life. Outstanding among such writers, and much admired and hugely read, are Henry Miller [*Tropic of Cancer* (1931)], John Steinbeck [*The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *Cannery Row* (1945), *East of Eden* (1952)], Saul Bellow, [*The Adventures of Augie March* (1953)]; Norman Mailer [*The Naked and the Dead* (1948)], John Barth [*The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960)]; John Updike [*Rabbit, Run* (1960)], V. S. Naipaul [*A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), and *The Mimic Man* (1967)].

2. The emergence of best seller novels which had rendered specific impacts because of their literary achievements, for example – *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison; *Lolita* (1955) by the Russian Vladimir Nabokov;

To Kill a Mockingbird (1960) by Harper Lee; *Catch-22* (1961) by Joseph Heller; and *The Pawnbroker* (1962) by Edward Lewis Wallant.

3. Novels translated from foreign languages and made available in large numbers also influenced contemporary writers. The effect of the translated works of Frantz Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Andre Gide has continued over many years, but a later generation of writers is making itself felt—men like Gunter Grass, Heinrich Boll, Alberto Moravia, the Russians Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, Jean Genet, and the all-important existentialists from France – Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir. This treasury of novels has been made available chiefly because of the revolution in publishing.

However, the best-known English novelist of the period under consideration is **Graham Greene** (1904-1991) whose imaginative construction of characters made his famous. Another essentially English novelist is **Charles Percy Snow** (1905-1980), who provides an insight into the English society from the 1920s onward while describing the moral development of his hero, Lewis Eliot, the narrator of a whole series of novels. Next to them, **Evelyn Waugh** (1903-66) became the outstanding satirist of the 30s. His heroes were virtuous but naive young men who suffered embarrassment and hardship. Examples are *Decline and Fall* (1928), *Vile Bodies* (1930), *Black Mischief* (1932), *Scoop* (1938), and *Put out More Flags* (1942). His later novels, beginning with *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), had a new feeling of concern, though still illuminated by wit and sardonic comment.

Besides the above mentioned novelists, considerable praise has been given to **Lawrence George Durrell** (1912-1990) for his *The Alexandria Quartet;* **Joyce Cary** (1888-1957) and his portrayal of exuberant, bizarre figures who existed according to a code of their own; **William Cooper** (1910-2002) who may be considered the originator of the “Angry Young Man” who revolts against the system which has nurtured him; **John Barrington Wain** (1925-1994), whose *Hurry On Down* (1953) provides a more carefully considered portrait of the Angry Young Man and so on. In Wain’s novels, the anti-hero wants to opt out of a society he despises and yet stay in it without any responsibilities. Then, mention may be made of **Kingsley Amis** (1922-1995) whose novel *Lucky Jim* (1954) is about a man who claims that he wants little

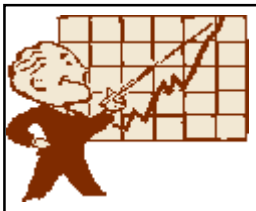
from life but a few simple pleasures, but has no dislike for the material benefits to be culled from rising above himself; **Anthony Burgess** (1917-1993) who spent a number of years in Malaysia, from which he derived inspiration for his *Malayan Trilogy* (1956-59), a picture of that country at the end of imperial rule and a study of the relationships between races and so on.

George Orwell (Eric Hugh Blair) (1903-50) was a typical novelist of the inter-War years. However, it was only after the World War II that Orwell became a figure of outstanding importance. His *Animal Farm* (1945), an expression of his own disillusion, *Nineteen Eighty-*

Four (1949), a terrifying prognostication of the hatred, cruelty, fear, loss of individuality, and lack of human love that the future would bring are some of his greatest creations. When so many writers find almost nothing to commend the present and the near future, it is not surprising that some have retreated from actuality and created their own worlds. The best known of these was John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973), whose novels became something of a cult, especially among intellectuals. *The Hobbit* (1937), ostensibly a children's book, and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) present a world that is an amalgam of fairy lore, Norse mythology, epic, and Arthurian legends. Each book is an epic, a romance, a comedy, a Gothic fairytale, a horror story, an allegory made even more effective by inspired irony.

Finally, we must also consider some of the many outstanding novelists who are women and seem proud to assert themselves as such. Of them, we may mention the name of **Muriel Sarah Spark** (1918-2006), the creator of bizarre situations illustrating contemporary life in works like *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), and *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974); of **Jean Iris Murdoch** (1919-1999), the writer of the novel *Under the Net* (1954) which provides a typical view of the Angry Young Man; of **Doris May Lessing** (1919-2013) who spent part of her life in Africa, picturing the situation of the black people subjected to the authority of whites.

Therefore, you find that following the World War II, one can see the emergence of a number of important novelists whose works help us to understand the spirit of the time and society in which they lived.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is your experience of modern novels following World War II?

Q 2: Which are the three new influences in English novel following World War II?

Q 3: Why is George Orwell famous as a post-war novelist?

16.4 POETRY

As you know, the period of the War produced much poetry in anthologies like *Poems from the Forces* (1942, 1943), edited by Keidrych Rhys. Some poets, of course, dealt with the War in the most obvious ways- the boredom and frustration of Service life, the waste, the appreciation of friendship, a deep understanding of the English landscape, and the possibility of violent death. Some other young poets turned to writing poetry because of their experiences during the War. One of them was **Roy Broadbent Fuller** (1912-1991) who became a poet because of his service with the Royal Navy in the Middle East. His war poetry was published in *The Middle of a War* (1942) and *A Lost Season* (1944). Later came *Epitaphs and Occasions* (1949) which by its disciplined forms, spare language, and analytical approach, began to be seen as a counterblast to the so-called 'romantic' poetry inspired by **Dylan Thomas** immediately after the War. **Charles Stanley Causley** (1917-2003) was another writer from the Navy, as is suggested by the titles of his early volumes—*Hands to Dance* (1951) and *Farewell, Aggie Weston* (1951). What mattered to him most was the lost innocence of youth, country life, social groups and their habits, due to the War.

During the War, the individual and not the community became the centre of interest for poets, even for Auden and Spender. This new attitude was evident in the **Apocalyptic Movement**, led by J. F. Hendry (1912-), Henry Treece (1912-66), and G. S. Fraser (1915-) whose poetry appeared in three anthologies they compiled—*The New Apocalypse* (1940), *The White Horseman* (1941), and *The Crown and the Sickle* (1945). The movement

proclaimed its hatred of the Machine Age, its faith in the individual as the hope of humanity, and its belief in myth. The poet's aim was to express 'his own private perspective on the. World, though not in an immediately intelligible way. Before long the members of the group went their own ways, and its influence w s lost.

Dylan Marlais Thomas (1914-53) may be described as the originator of **neo-roman poetry** in the forties and the enemy of intellectualism in verse. He was deeply passionate, and drew upon the human body, sex, and the Old Testament for much of his imagery and complex word play, and his verse was splendidly colourful and musical. His work appeared in *18 Poems* (1934), *Twenty-five Poems* (1936), *The Map of Love* (1939), and *Deaths and Entrances* (1946), but he is best known for *Under Milk Wood* (1954), a verse 'play' written specially for radio and at times presented as a solo reading by the author himself. The post-War years was influenced more by Thomas rather than the Apocalyptic. In some ways, there was a return to the spirit of the 18th century.

Two other poets who began writing in the inter-War years but established themselves afterwards are **George Barker** (1913-1991) and **David Gascoyne** (1916-2001); both are antipathetic to the intellectual approach, both were originally surrealists. Barker was very conscious of the failure of the world. *Eros in Dogma* (1944), *News of the World* (1950), *A Vision of Beasts and Gods* (1954), and *The Golden Chains* (1968) are characterised by stream of consciousness techniques, which engender evocative but often over-complex imagery. Gascoyne, on the other hand, has a high seriousness and a religious conviction, which helps him to endure the world's agony; latterly he has become more descriptive and less effective, and involved in nightmare imagery, as in *Night Thoughts* (1956). His best poetry appeared in *Poems* (1948) and *A Vagrant, and Other Poems* (1950).

Very much different was what became known as **The Movement** resulting from *Poets of the 50's* (1950) edited by Dennis Joseph Enright (1920-) and another collection from largely the same poets, *New Lines* (1956, 1963) edited by **Robert Conquest** (1917-2015). The Movement professed no interest in stylistic innovation, and in neo-classic mood concerned itself

with reality. Most of the poets concerned were academics—Wain, Amis, Holloway, Davie, Enright himself; with them were Larkin, Gunn, and Jennings. Enright's own poems, such as *Laughing Hyena* (1953), *Some Men Are Brothers* (1960), *The Old Adam* (1965), deal with individual man in all his conditions, showing pity and indignation for his sufferings, and faith in his innate dignity. His language is based on colloquial speech stripped of elaborations, a style that well suits his ironical disgust of hypocrisy and cruelty. Robert Conquest's poetry is devoted more to a view of landscape with Man as an integral part. The approach is intellectual and the subject matter is reality. Some of his best poems are included in *Poems* (1955), *Between Mars and Venus* (1962) and *Arias for a Love Opera* (1969). Another important poet is **Donald Alfred Davie** (1922-1995), primarily concerned with the use of language, which in his early poems was extremely difficult, and with style, which is characterised by gracefulness. His works include *A Winter Talent* (1957) and *Events and Wisdoms* (1964). Poets like John Wain gives a moral dignity to his verse, as in *Mixed Feelings* (1951) and *Weep before God* (1961), but too often he is prosaic and unambitious. **Thomas William Gunn** or Thom Gunn (1929-2004) wrote of the multitudinous forms of energy which characterise our cities, and of self-destructive violence. Gunn is best known for *Fighting Terms* (1954), *The Sense of Movement* (1957), *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Touch* (1967), and *Moly* (1971).

Perhaps more influential a post war poet is **Ted Hughes** (1930-1998), especially because of *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957). His 'verbal belligerence,' partly influenced by his interest in the Yorkshire dialect and traditional oral literature, gives positivity to his views. He sees power and vitality as essential principles always contending against death, the failure of God to create a satisfactory universe, the ever-present strength of evil, and personal survival as the only goal to achieve. Hughes had the unique gift for describing the Yorkshire landscape, and for understanding animals in an unsentimental manner. In animals, he sees the certainties, the pointlessness, and the violence that are part of man's life, and he uses them to clarify and intensify human experience. His important recent works are *Woodwo* (1967), *Crow* (1970), *Crow Wakes* (1971), and *Eat Crow* (1972).

Very much a loner is **Philip Larkin** (1922-1985). He accepts defeatism and rootlessness as part of existence. There is in his work a sense of loss, of beauty, departed, of the changing qualities of English life. He obtains his pleasures (though often melancholy ones) from his observation of little situations and places, and from dwelling on their associations, all very personal, and he expresses them in a clear, easily comprehended fashion. *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), and *High Windows* (1974) are representative works, but he also edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What did the Apocalyptic Movement proclaim?

Q 5: How did Dylan Thomas practise his Neo-Roman poetry?

Q 6: Write a note on 'Movement poetry'?

Q 7: What are the qualities of Ted Hughes as a modern poet?

16.5 DRAMA

The immediate result of the wartime blackout was the closing down of London theatres for some time. Soon it was reopened. A great step forward was made as companies sponsored by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) and Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) took drama into the provinces, to the smallest villages, and wherever Army camps and workers' hostels were situated. They created a vast new public, which was responsible for the boom, which immediately followed the War. However, in 1963, the Old Vic became the temporary home of the National Theatre Company. Another aspect of subsidised drama is the considerable number of annual festivals, aimed largely at tourists but offering splendid opportunities even to small enterprises 'on the fringe.' One must also stress the importance of the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford**, and its sister-company based in London, as well as the steady increase in university theatres and theatres sponsored by local authorities,

many of which so that to encourage future audiences by educating children to appreciate all forms of drama.

However, for some time English dramatists seemed to have nothing in common with the leading foreign writers whose influence suddenly made itself felt in the early 1950's. First and foremost was the German playwright **Bertolt Brecht** (1898-1956), with his uncompromising views on production, his use of songs and music, his humanitarian communism, and his insistence on the alienation of the audience and the actor from the character even as he projects the play into the midst of the onlookers. After Brecht, the most important influence was **Samuel Beckett** (1906-1989), formerly James Joyce's secretary, who wrote in French. His *Waiting for Godot* (1952; Eng. trans. 1954) is a static representation without structure or development, using only meandering, seemingly incoherent dialogue to suggest despair of a society which is destroying itself and of mankind unsuspectingly surrendering its natural liberties. Other important dramatic devices of Beckett are *Endgame* (1955) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958). Some foreign writers wielding great influence at the present are, from the U.S.A., Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee; from Germany, Weiss and Hochhuth; from Switzerland, Diirrenmatt; from Italy, Ugo Betti; from France, Cocteau, Genet, Ionesco, Anouilh, Sartre; and from Spain, Arrabal.

English drama took an entirely new turn with the establishment in 1956 of the **English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre.** It aimed to present the best foreign plays and to encourage new native writers; its private productions without decor gave inestimable help to young actors and writers, and helped to disseminate new ideas. Outstanding among its products was **John James Osborne** (1929-1994), whose *Look Back in Anger* (1956) gave the strongest fillip to the concept of the "Angry Young Man"; the tragi-comic depiction of the failure, the liar, and the irresponsible showed him bolstered up with optimism and nostalgia for a past that always seemed better than the present.

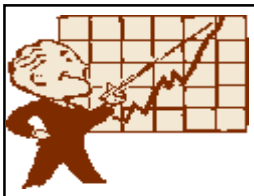
John Arden (1930-2012) achieved success at the Royal Court with *Live Like Pigs* (1958), a Brechtian survey of behaviour by means of words,

music, song, and symbolism. *The Happy Haven* (1960) was an expressionist farce with masks. Ann Jellicoe (1927-) is best known for her plays about the violent, unorganized world of the teenager expressed in semi-articulate dialogue which illustrates the insecurity and meaninglessness of a frivolous world; these plays are *The Sport of My Mad Mother* (1956) and *The Knack* (1961).

Not many English writers have attempted to follow Arrabal, Ionesco, and Albee into the theatre of the absurd, but one who retreats from reason and deals with the logic of the non-sequitur is **Norman Frederick Simpson** (1919-2011) author of *A Resounding Tinkle* (1957), *One-Way Pendulum* (1959), *The Cresta Run* (1965) and a number of one-act farces of words without action. Other Royal Court productions of note were *The Mulberry Bush* by Angus Wilson, *Love from Margaret* by Evelyn Ford, *The Long and the Short and the Tall* by Willis Hall, and Nigel Dennis's *Cards of Identity,* a witty onslaught on the dogmatism, which restricts modern man.

The influence of Beckett is immediately seen in the plays of **Tom Stoppard** (1937-), a Czech who eventually settled in England. His characters are suspended in isolation; they do nothing but philosophise; they know less about themselves than the audience does; words, acts, ideas all seem part of a stream of irrelevancies. He made a name for himself with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), followed by *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), but more recent plays—*Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), and *Dirty Linen* (1976)—have extended his reputation in the commercial theatre.

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) conveys the rambling ambiguities and silences of everyday conversation, which are marked by a visible influence of Beckett. Pinter uses them to build up the sense of menace and scarcely restrained violence, which characterise plays like *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Dumb Waiter* (1960), and *The Caretaker* (1960). The plays are quite short and set in an enclosed, claustrophobic space; the characters are always in doubt about their function, and in fear of someone or something 'outside'. *A Night Out* (1961) and *The Homecoming* (1965) are two of his later plays.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What role did Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) & Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) play for popularising drama following World War II?



16.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have seen that the uncertainties following World War I and II are reflected in the response of many writers towards the disintegration of society. The frequency with which violence and sadism appear as themes in the works of the poets, novelists as well as dramatists in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction, have influenced the development of literature following the World Wars. The English novels of the stated period have been affected by new factors like the influences from the USA and from other continents, as well as translations of different foreign works into English. In case of poetry however, most poets dealt with the War in terms of the boredom and frustration of Service life, the waste, the appreciation of friendship, a deep understanding of the English landscape, and the possibility of violent death etc. However, there can be seen two distinct groups—Apocalyptic Poetry and Movement Poetry during this period. You have learnt that although due to the wartime black out London Theatre was closed for some time, soon reopened. However, for some time English dramatists seemed to have nothing in common with the leading foreign writers whose influence suddenly made itself felt in the early 1950's. Of these mention must be made of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Eugene Ionesco, and so on. However, playwrights like Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter struggled so hard for the cause of English drama.



16.7 FURTHER READING

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16.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Novels reflected the havocs and uncertainties caused by World War I and II… …violence and sadism in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction… …a mixture of realism, cynicism, dark comedy, shrewd comment, and satire… …tremendous increase in science Action novels about the future on other planets, or on an earth catastrophically altered.

Ans to Q 2: Influence of the novels from the USA… …emergence of best seller novels… …novels translated from foreign languages.

Ans to Q 3: George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is an expression of his own disillusion… … *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1948) presents a terrifying prognostication of the hatred, cruelty, fear, loss of individuality, and lack of human love.

Ans to Q 4: Hatred of the Machine Age… …faith in the individual as the hope of humanity, and its belief in myth… …aim was to express one's own private perspective on the world.

Ans to Q 5: Dylan Thomas's neo-roman poetry reflected a deeply passionate poetry drew upon the human body, sex, and the Old Testament for much of his imagery and complex word-play… …splendidly colourful and musical verse.

Ans to Q 6: Movement Poetry professed no interest in stylistic innovation and in neo-classic mood… …poetry dealt with individual man in all his conditions, showing pity and indignation for his sufferings, and faith in his innate dignity… …Language was colloquial stripped of elaborations, the style suit ironical disgust of hypocrisy and cruelty.

Ans to Q 7: Hughes saw power and vitality contending against death, the failure of God… he sought to create a satisfactory universe, the ever-present strength of evil, and personal survival as the only goal to achieve… …in animals, he saw the certainties, the pointlessness, and the violence that are part of man's life.

Ans to Q 8: CEMA and ENSA took drama into the provinces, to the smallest villages, and wherever Army camps and workers' hostels were situated. They created a vast new public, which was responsible for the boom which immediately followed the War.



16.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Attempt a brief outline of the intellectual contexts and its cultural manifestations in Literature following World War II.

Q.2. Show how 'modern' literature reflected the dominant concerns of the period following the year 1939.

Q.3. Explain the methods adopted by modernist poets to articulate their departure from older traditions since 1940s.

Q.4. World War II had a profoundly disturbing impact on Western society. Discuss.

Q.5. Briefly compare the main themes of the poets written before the First World War and after World War II.

Q.6. Provide a detailed Sketch of the novelistic responses following World War II.

Q.7. Write in detail about the important trends in modernist drama after World War II with particular reference to some of the representative works.

Q.8. What role did the Royal Court Theatre play in spreading the cause of drama? Discuss.

Q.9. Discuss the intellectual contexts of modern literature in between 1890-1939.

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