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TWO YEAR MARSTER'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER - II

18TH AND 19TH CENTURY NOVELS

ENGLISH

Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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DSC 4 : 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY NOVELS

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the first **Discipline Specific Course (DSC)** of Semester 2 of the Revised and updated MA English Programme. In this Course, learners are taken through the brief study of the theories of fiction and aspects of fiction writing, as well as six representative novels roughly covering the period stretching from the 18th century to the 19th. The learners are supposed to read and study these representative texts of English fiction in order that they comprehend the issues addressed and learn the proper modes of analysing the works of fiction from the perspectives of various critical approaches. Thus, this course is intended not just to introduce the learners to the various theoretical premises of narratives, but also to the contextual relations of the texts to the age out of which they actually emerged.

For the convenience of the learners, this Course is thematically arranged into three Blocks. **Block 1** shall deal with Theories of Fiction, **Block 2** shall deal with a study of English fiction from Henry Fielding to Charles Dickens, and **Block 3** shall help the leaners to discuss the fictional works of the Bronte sisters and Thomas Hardy in general.

It is very important to think what a narrative is or what the term narrative fiction signifies. We may tend to ask how does narrative fiction differ from other kinds of narratives, and what features turn a discourse into a narrative text. These are some important questions to be explored by the students like you while engaging yourselves with the idea of narrative fiction in course of your Postgraduate studies in English Literature.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

As mentioned already, **Block 1** is dedicated to the theories of fiction, and it contains four units, i.e. Units 1-4 the details of which are as the following:

Unit 1: Milan Kundera: *Art of the Novel* ("The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes") shall help us to discuss some aspects of the art of fiction writing as understood by Milan Kundera in his "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes" available in *The Art of the Novel.* Kundera explains how the history of the novel and the history of European culture are inextricably linked together. Kundera starts with Miguel de Cervantes, one of the greatest Spanish writers, and passes through the works of other authors such as Samuel Richardson, Honore´ de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Franz Kafka to discuss the history of fiction writing. Thus, in this unit, we shall try to examine the history of the European novel.

Unit 2: Wayne C. Booth: *"Telling and Showing"* from *The Rhetoric of Fiction* shall provide a discussion on Wayne C. Booth and the chapter entitled "Telling and Showing" from his much-acclaimed book *The*

Rhetoric of Fiction. Divided into three sections, Booth's discussion of narrative technique in "Telling and Showing" brings to our notice some of the fundamental conditions of fiction writing. Throughout the whole book, Booth views fictional writing s the art of communicating with the readers.

Unit 3: Narratology deals with a branch of studies devoted to the analysis of narratives, most specifically to the forms of narrations and the varieties of narrators and narratees. We shall take note of the fact that Narratology, as a modern theory of narratives is innately associated with the emergence of European structuralism, although older studies of narrative forms and devices can be dated back to Aristotle's 4thcentury BC work *Poetics.* In this unit, Narratology shall be discussed in terms of the different components.

Unit 4: Shlomith Rimmon Kenan: Concepts from *Narrative Fiction* is based on Rimmon Kenan's book *Narrative Fiction.* Widely acknowledged as one of the most significant contributions in its field, Rimmon Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* turns its attention to some important aspects of narrative fiction. Kenan organises this book around issues such as events, time, focalization, characterization, narration, the text and it's reading rather than individual theorists or approaches. It is expected that by the time we finish reading the unit, we shall be able to examine the important aspects of narrative fiction, which shall further help us to analyse the different fictional aspects of the novels prescribed for your study.

Block 2 shall providea discussion of three important novels from the period mentioned, which are namely *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding, *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen and *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. By the time we finish reading the units, we should be in a position to apply the different aspects of narrative fiction that they have read in Block 1, to our discussion of the novels prescribed in this course.This Block comprises 6 units, i.e. Units 5-10.

Units 5 & 6: Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (Part I)& (Part 2) shall introduce us to the novel *Tom Jones* written by Henry Fielding. Published in 1749, this novel is considered one of the masterpieces among the 18th and 19th century English novels. It recounts the metaphoric journey of a foundling named Tom Jones through the trials and tribulations of life which finally led him to an improved understanding of life and its vicissitudes. Through this novel, Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction which he outlined in the prefatory chapters to the Books of the novel, and which became a guiding force to his successive fiction writers.

Units 7 & 8: Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park* (Part I)& (Part 2) shall help us to discuss *Mansfield Park* a novel written by Jane Austen (1775-1817). Written at Chawton Cottage between 1812 and 1814, this novel explores certain attitudes, manners, morals, and conduct of the middle class or the bourgeois class people in England during Austen's time. Jane Austen, in this novel, portrays the quiet heroine Fanny Price and depicts the Mansfield Park Estate of Thomas Bertram as the theatre of action involving Fanny and Bertram's own sons and daughters.

Units 9 & 10: Charles Dickens: *Tale of Two Cities* (Part I)& (Part 2) shall introduce us to the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* written by Charles Dickens. It is a touching and harrowing human story of suffering and denial of justice for those at the receiving end aftermath of the French Revolution. We shall feel that Dickens in this novel provides the compelling juxtaposition of the parallel but the contrasting worlds of the two cities—London and Paris.

Block 3 shall provide a discussion of three other important novels namely *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, and *The Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas hardy. By the time we finish reading the units, like in case of the Units of Block 2, we should be in a position to apply the different aspects of narrative fiction that they have read in Block 1, to our discussion of the novels prescribed. This Block comprises 5 units, which are as the following.

Unit 11: Emily and Charlotte Brontë: Life and Works introduces us to the Brontë sisters whose literary contributions today have become important areas of research. The eldest sister Charlotte was a novelist and poet, and her novel *Jane Eyre* has become classics in the field of English Literature. Emily was also a novelist and poet, and she is known for her novel *Wuthering Heights.* Anne, the youngest of the three sisters, was also a writer and she published a volume of poetry with her two sisters under the title Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, and two novels namely *Agnes Grey*and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. This unit shall mostly deal with the life and works of the Brontë sisters in some details.

Unit 12: Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre* deals with Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) which has been regarded as one of the classic texts of Victorian literature. The novel is autobiographical in the sense that we find certain evident resemblance between some of the facts of the life of the protagonist and that of the author. This unit will tell us how a writer's personal life is, in some ways, related to the world of the novel. This unit will also enable us to examine the status of women in a male-dominated society of the 19thcentury.

Unit 13: Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* introduces us to *Wuthering Heights* a novel written by Emily Brontë in 1847. In order to understand the somewhat bewildering structure of the novel with its dark, gothic and supernatural he untamed countryside of eighteenth-century Yorkshire and deals primarily with the violent passions of the protagonist. The theme of love and its treatment in the novel have little in common with the main body of Victorian novels which were greatly influenced by the socio-political situation of the times. However, we shall find it interesting to note that the far-reaching changes sweeping across England and the world in the early 19th century seemed to have had little impact on the private world of *Wuthering Heights*.

Unit 14 & 15: Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Part I)& (Part 2) shall help you to discuss the novel *The Tess of the d'Urbervilles* written by Thomas Hardy. The late 19thcentury Victorian Era, in which

Hardy lived, was a time of great change and Hardy stands at this transitional period to reflect on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and the rise of modernity. Published in 1891 *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has been regarded as the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. Like in his other novels, in this novel too, Hardy has shown his deep sympathy towards the lower classes of England, especially the women.

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 strongly 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 READINGS" 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 and criticism is too big, we strongly 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 read the original texts of the authors prescribed as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 1: MILAN KUNDERA: *ART OF THE NOVEL* ("THE DEPRECIATED LEGACY OF CERVANTES")

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Milan Kundera: Life and Works

1.4 Reading the Text

1.5 Important Ideas in the Text

1.6 Reception of Kundera's Ideas

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

- *discuss* the life and works of Milan Kundera
- *explain* the main issues and ideas regarding fiction as discussed by Kundera in the chapter prescribed from his *Art of the Novel*
- *elaborate* Kundera's contributions to the writing
- *assess* Kundera's reception as a theorist of fiction.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 1 of the Course on 18th and 19th Century Fiction. The entire first Block of this course is dedicated to the theories of fiction. In this unit, we shall try to discuss some aspects of the art of fiction writing as understood by Milan Kundera. You will note that Kundera's *The Art of the Novel* is the most important nonfictional work, other than his novels. Published in 1988, this book outlines Kundera's theories of the novel. The book consists of three short essays, two

interviews, a list of sixty-three words and their definitions, and the text of a speech. In *The Art of the Novel,* Kundera explains how the history of the novel and the history of European culture are inextricably linked together. To discuss his experience of men's existence, he starts with Miguel de Cervantes, one of the greatest Spanish writers, and passes through the works of other authors such as Samuel Richardson, Honore´ de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Franz Kafka. However, our discussions in this unit shall be limited to the first part of the book namely "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes." This chapter was first published in 1984 in *The New York Review of Books* under the title of "The Novel and Europe". In this unit, we shall try to examine how the chapter outlines the history of the European novel.

1.3 MILAN KUNDERA: LIFE AND WORKS

Milan Kundera was born in 1929 in Brno, Czechosslovakia. His father Ludvik Kundera was a famous Czech musicologist and pianist, who served as the head of the Janacek Music Academy in Brno from 1948 to 1961. His mother's name was Milada Kunderová. Milan learned to play the piano from his father, and later studied musicology. He did his schooling in Brno in 1948. At the age of 19, Kundera realised that music was not his true vocation, although his love of music would influence the structure of his novels as he patterned them after musical compositions.

Emerging as a Reformer later, Kundera began his career with three volumes of poetry published in between 1953 and 1964. At the same time, he started writing his novels. His first novel *The Joke* was published in 1967. It was inspired by a true incident in 1950. He and another Czech writer, Jan Trefulka, had been expelled from the Communist Party for "anti-party activities." *Joke* was based on this incident and it helped Kundera to emerge as a leader in the reform movement that led to the Czech Republic's "Prague Spring" of 1968—a period known for reforms and relaxation of authority.

From the end of World War II until the late 1980s, Eastern Europe

was under the firm control of the Soviet Union. Any attempts by Eastern European countries to reject Soviet control were violently squashed. During the so-called "Prague Spring", the Czechoslovakian government allowed writers and other artists a level of freedom of expression that the communist country had previously not permitted. However, the reprieve from oppression was short-lived. Soviet tanks rolled into the city and the old "order" was restored. Kundera found himself in the same position as many of the other leaders of the reform movement. His books disappeared from libraries and bookstores; he lost his job at the academy, and his right to continue writing and publishing in his native country.

Though initially, he was not allowed to travel to the West, Kundera finally secured a teaching position in France. He served as an invited professor of comparative literature at the Universite´ de Rennes from 1975 to 1979. In 1980, he took a professorship at the 'E´cole des hautes e´tudes en sciences sociales' (School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) in Paris. The following year, he became a naturalized citizen of France.

Life Is Elsewhere (1974) is his first major work and it was published in the United States. He took revolutionary romanticism, and the volatility of the marriage among other things, as the subject matters of the book. His next book *The Farewell Party* (1976) was also published in the United States. This book satirizes a government-run health spa for women with fertility problems while simultaneously addressing serious ethical questions. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980) was republished a year later with an interview Kundera gave to American novelist Philip Roth. This book illustrates the need for memory to overcome forgetting in order for an individual to achieve self-preservation.

Kundera's most famous novel till date is *The Unbearable Lightness of Being,* which was published in 1984. In this book, he touched upon his experiences after the "Prague Spring." This novel delves deeper into the greatest existential problems that people are

faced with: love, death, transcendence, the sense of continuity or "heaviness" provided by memory, and the contrasting sense of "lightness" that is brought about by forgetting. The book was adapted as a movie in 1988. Kundera's theme in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is that life is unrepeatable; thus, one cannot go back and correct one's mistakes. This realization leads to a feeling of lightness, a total lack of responsibility. The idea of lightness, which Kundera takes from the Greek philosopher Parmenides, and which originally meant playfulness, here turns into 'lack of seriousness', or 'meaningless emptiness'. Kundera also takes over the concept of 'kitsch' from the German writer Hermann Broch: Kitsch is a beautiful lie that hides all the negative aspects of life and deliberately ignores the existence of death.

Kundera's other important works in between 1970s and 1980s are marked by his own feelings of estrangement and exile, and his homesickness for Prague. In 1989, however, the Soviet Union collapsed, and soon thereafter, the Eastern European countries were free to pursue democratic reforms and reopen their societies to the West. Kundera, a French citizen since 1981, remained in Paris. In 1995, he published a book-length essay of literary criticism called *Testaments Betrayed*, which is organised after Friedrich Nietzsche's books, with each of its nine parts divided into small sections. Its main theme focuses on Kundera's firm belief that writers and other artists' rights should be defended, and their intentions respected by editors, publicists, and executors. Kundera also wrote novels in French namely *Slowness* (1993), *Identity* (1998), and *Ignorance* (2000).



LET US KNOW

You will note that while writing his novels, Kundera followed a Musical Pattern. For him, novelistic unity does not exist in a predetermined set of rules. He uses a common theme and a structure based on musical polyphony—the use of many notes playing at the same time, usually in harmony—to tie

the sections of his novels together. The lengths and arrangements of chapters, subchapters, and sections are used to create mood and a sense of time, much like in a musical composition. Instead of following the linear story of a character or set of characters, Kundera connects seemingly unconnectable stories through their related themes and existential situations.

In a 1984 interview with the British writer Ian McEwan, Kundera stated:

"We constantly rewrite our own biographies and continually give matters new meanings. To rewrite history in this sense—indeed, in an Orwellian sense—is not at all inhuman. On the contrary, it is very human."

He also asserts his right as an author to exclude from his body of work "immature" and "unsuccessful" works. In his mature fiction, he creates a self-contained world that he constantly analyzes and questions, opening up a multitude of ways of interpreting the incidents he depicts. Kundera's style of fiction, interlaced with philosophical digression, is greatly inspired by the novels of Robert Musil and the philosophy of Nietzsche. He takes his inspiration, as he notes often enough, not only from the Renaissance authors such as Giovanni Boccaccio and Rabelais, but also from Laurence Sterne, Henry Fielding, Denis Diderot, Hermann Broch, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger and most significantly, Miguel de Cervantes, to whose legacy he considers himself most committed.

In 1990, Kundera published another book called *Immortality*. The novel, his last in Czech, was more cosmopolitan than its predecessors, and more explicitly philosophical and less political. It would set the tone for his later novels. His most recent novel is *The Festival of Insignificance* (originally published in 2013) that focuses on the musings of four male friends living in Paris.

Kundera continues to live and work in Paris.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is known as the Prague Spring? How was Kundera associated with what is known as the 'Prague Spring'?

Q 2: Mention the themes of Kundera's famous work *Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

Q 3: Why did Kundera write his novels following a musical pattern?

1.4 READING THE TEXT

Kundera's discussions on fiction in *Art of the Novel* starts with a reference to a world of unlimited potential, the beginning of history, the shrinking of possibilities in the outside world, the search for infinity in the human soul, the futility of this search. He ends with a reference to history, which he terms a 'monster' that can offer nothing helpful. The following is an attempt to read the prescribed text.

"The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes"

Kundera begins the essay by referring to Edmund Husserl, who in 1935 gave lectures on the crisis of European humanity in Vienna and Prague. For Husserl, the adjective "European" meant the spiritual identity that extends beyond geographical Europe (to America, for instance), and that was born with ancient Greek philosophy. In his view, this philosophy, for the first time in History, apprehended the world (the world as a whole) as a question to be answered. It interrogated the world not in order to satisfy any of the practical needs but because "the passion to know had seized mankind." The roots of the crisis, lay for Husserl at the beginning of the Modern Era, in Galileo and Descartes, in the one-sided nature of the European sciences, which reduced the world to a mere object of technical and mathematical investigation and put the concrete world of life, *die Lebenswelt* as he called it, beyond their horizon.

Then he states that the rise of the sciences propelled man into the tunnels of the specialized disciplines. The more he advanced in

knowledge, the less clearly could he see either the world as a whole or his own self, and he plunged further into what Husserl's pupil Heidegger called, in a beautiful and almost magical phrase, "the forgetting of being." Then, referring to Descartes, he states that man has now become a mere thing to the forces (of technology, of politics, of history) that bypass him, surpass him, possess him. To these forces, man's concrete being, his "world of life" *(die Lebenswelt),* has neither value nor interest: it is eclipsed, forgotten from the start.

However, Kundera thinks that it would be naive to take the severity of this view of the Modern Era as a mere condemnation. He states that two great philosophers—Heidegger and Husserl laid bare the ambiguity of this epoch, which is decline and progress at the same time and which, like all that is human, carries the seed of its end in its beginning. According to Kundera, this ambiguity does not diminish the last four centuries of European culture, to which he feels attached. There he boldly asserted that '**the founder of the Modern Era is not only Descartes but also Cervantes.'** Perhaps, it is Cervantes whom the two phenomenologists neglected to take into consideration in their judgment of the Modern Era. By that, Kundera means: "If it is true that philosophy and science have forgotten about man's being, it emerges all the more plainly that with Cervantes a great European art took shape that is nothing other than the investigation of this 'forgotten being.'"

Kundera feels that the existentialist philosopher Heidegger in his book *Being and Time* unveiled, displayed, and illuminated all the great philosophical themes in four centuries of the European reincarnation of the novel. As in case of philosophy, the novel too, in its own way, discovered the various dimensions of existence one by one. He states that with Cervantes and his contemporaries, the novel inquired into the nature of adventure; with Richardson, it begins to examine "what happens inside," to unmask the secret life of the feelings; with Balzac, it discovers man's rootedness in history; with Flaubert, it explored the previously unknown territories of the everyday life; with Tolstoy, it focused on the intrusion of the irrational in human behaviour and decisions. The

novel probed time: the elusive past with Proust, the elusive present with Joyce. With Thomas Mann, it examined the role of the myths from the remote past that control our present actions.

The novel has accompanied man uninterruptedly and faithfully since the beginning of the Modern Era. It was then that the 'passion to know,' which Husserl considered the essence of European spirituality, seized the novel and led it to scrutinize man's concrete life and protect it against 'the forgetting of being.' That is the sense in which Kundera wants to understand and share Hermann Broch's insistence on the point that "The sole *raison d'etre* of a novel is to discover what only the novel can discover. A novel that does not discover a hitherto unknown segment of existence is immoral. Knowledge is the novel's only morality.'

Kundera asserts that the novel is Europe's creation; its discoveries, though made in various languages, belong to the whole of Europe. The *sequence of discoveries* (not the sum of what was written) is what constitutes the history of the European novel. It is only in such a supranational context that the value of a work can be fully seen and understood. He then reiterates that as God slowly departed from the seat whence he had directed the universe and its order of values, distinguished good from evil, and endowed each thing with meaning, Cervantes's character Don Quixote set forth from his house into a world he could no longer recognise. In the absence of the Supreme Judge, the world suddenly appeared in its fearsome ambiguity; the single divine Truth decomposed into myriad relative truths parcelled out by men. Thus, was born the world of the Modern Era, and with it the novel, the image and model of that world. Then, making a comparison between Descartes and Cervantes, Kundera opined that with Descartes, the *thinking self* became the basis of everything, and thus to face the universe alone, is to adopt an attitude that Hegel called **heroic**. However, with Cervantes, the world as ambiguity, the presence of a multiplicity of contradictory truths became the basis of everything.

Kundera observed that Cervantes' Don Quixote set off into a world that opened wide before him. He could go out freely and come

home as he pleased. The early European novels are journeys through an apparently unlimited world. The opening of Denis Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste* comes upon the two heroes in mid-journey; we do not know where they have come from or where they are going. They exist in a time without beginning or end, in a space without frontiers, in the midst of a Europe whose future will never end. Half a century after Diderot, in Balzac, the distant horizon has disappeared like a landscape behind those modern structures, the social institutions: the police, the law, the world of money and crime, the army, the State. In Balzac's world, time no longer idles happily by as it does for Cervantes and Diderot. It has set forth on the train called History. The train is easy to board, hard to leave. However, it is not at all fearsome yet, it even has its appeal; it promises adventure to every passenger and with it fame and fortune.

Kundera states that the path of the novel emerges as a parallel history of the Modern Era. Isn't that Don Quixote himself, after a three-hundred-year journey, returning to the village disguised as a land-surveyor? Once he had set out to seek adventures of his own choosing, but now in the village below the Castle he has no choice, the adventure is *imposed on him:* a petty squabble with the administration over a mistake in his file. So what, after three centuries, has happened to adventure, the first great theme of the novel? Has it become its own parody? What does that mean? That the path of the novel winds up in a paradox? Kundera then provides the example of another novel.

The Good Soldier Schweik by Jaroslav Hašek is perhaps the last great popular novel. Isn't it astonishing that this comic novel is also a war novel, whose action unfolds in the army and at the front? What has happened to war and its horrors if they have become laughing matters? In Homer and in Tolstoy, war had a perfectly comprehensible meaning: people fought for Helen or for Russia. Schweik and his companions go to the front without knowing why and, what is even more shocking, without caring to know.

What, then, as Kundera wants to explore, is the motor of war if not Helen or country? Sheer 'force' that wills to assert itself as force? Yet

hasn't that been behind all wars since the beginning of time? Yes, of course. However, this time, in Hasek, it is stripped of any rational argument. No one believes in the nonsense of the propaganda, not even those who manufacture it. Force is naked here, as naked as in Kafka's novels. Indeed, the Court has nothing to gain from executing K. Why did Germany, why does Russia today want to dominate the world? To be richer? Happier? Not at all. The aggressivity of force is thoroughly disinterested; unmotivated; it wills only its own will; it is pure irrationality.

Thus, according to Kundera, Kafka and Hasek help us confront an enormous paradox that is in the course of the Modern Era, Cartesian rationality has corroded all the values inherited from the Middle Ages. However, just when reason wins a total victory, pure irrationality seizes the world stage, because there is no longer any generally accepted value system to block its path. This paradox, masterfully illuminated in Hermann Broch's *The Sleepwalkers,* is called by Kundera terminal paradox. There are others. For example: The Modern Era has nurtured a dream in which humankind, divided into its separate civilizations, would someday come together in unity and everlasting peace. Today, the history of the planet has finally become one indivisible whole, but it is war, ambulant and everlasting war, that embodies and guarantees this long-desired unity of humankind. Unity of mankind means: No escape for anyone anywhere.

The time was past when man had only the monster of his own soul to grapple with, the peaceful time of Joyce and Proust. In the novels of Kafka, Hasek, Musil, Broch, the monster comes from outside and is called History; it no longer has anything to do with the train the adventurers used to ride; it is impersonal, uncontrollable, incalculable, incomprehensible— and it is inescapable. This was the moment (just after the First World War) when the pleiad of great Central European novelists saw, felt, grasped the *terminal paradoxes* of the Modern Era. However, it would be wrong to read their novels as social and political prophecies, as if they were anticipations of Orwell! What Orwell tells us could have been said just as well (or even much better) in an essay or

pamphlet. These novelists discover "what only the novel can discover": they demonstrate how, under the conditions of the "terminal paradoxes," all existential categories suddenly change their meaning: What is *adventure* if a K.'s freedom of action is completely illusory? What is *future* if the intellectuals of *The Man Without Qualities* have not the slightest inkling of the war that will sweep their lives away the next day? What is *crime* if Broch's Huguenau not only does not regret but, actually forgets the murder he has committed? And if the only great comic novel of the period, Hasek's *Schweik,* uses war as its setting, then what has happened to the *comic?* Where is the difference between *public* and *private* if K., even in bed with a woman, is never without the two emissaries of the Castle? And, in that case, what is *solitude?* A burden, a misery, a curse, as some would have us believe, or on the contrary, a supremely precious value in the process of being crushed by the ubiquitous collectivity?

Then Kundera ponders over the issue of death of the novel as discussed for a long time: notably by the Futurists, by the Surrealists, by nearly all the avant-gardes. They saw the novel dropping off the road of progress, yielding to a radically new future and an art bearing no resemblance to what had existed before. The novel was to be buried in the name of historical justice, like poverty, the ruling classes, obsolete cars, or top hats. However, if Cervantes were the founder of the Modern Era, then the end of his legacy ought to signify more than a mere stage in the history of literary forms; it would herald the end of the Modern Era. That is why the blissful smile that accompanies those obituaries of the novel strikes me as frivolous. Frivolous because Kundera himself lived through the death of the novel, a violent death (inflicted by bans, censorship, and ideological pressure), in the world where he spent much of his life and which is usually called totalitarian. At that time, it became utterly clear that the novel was mortal; as mortal as the West of the Modern Era. As a model of this Western world, grounded in the relativity and ambiguity of things human, the novel is incompatible with the totalitarian universe. This incompatibility is deeper than the one that

separates a dissident from an apparatchik, or a human-rights campaigner from a torturer, because it is not only political or moral but also *ontological.* By this, Kundera means—"The world of one single Truth and the relative, ambiguous world of the novel are molded of entirely different substances. Totalitarian Truth excludes relativity, doubt, questioning; it can never accommodate what I would call the *spirit of the novel.*"

Kundera then, by referring to an experience of reading the Russian novels, asks why hundreds and thousands of novels are still being published in huge editions and widely read in Communist Russia. Certainly; but these novels add nothing to the conquest of being. They discover no new segment of existence; they only confirm what has already been said; furthermore: in confirming what everyone says (what everyone must say), they fulfil their purpose, their glory, their usefulness to that society. By discovering nothing, they fail to participate in the *sequence of discoveries* that for me constitutes the history of the novel; they place themselves *outside* that history, or, if you like: they are *novels that come after the history of the novel.* About half a century ago, the history of the novel came to a halt in the empire of Russian Communism. That is an event of huge importance, given the greatness of the Russian novel from Gogol to Bely. Thus, the death of the novel is not just a fanciful idea. It has already happened. In addition, we now know *how* the novel dies: it's not that it disappears; it falls away from its history. Its death occurs quietly, unnoticed, and no one is outraged.

However, Kundera questions if the novel has come to the end of the road by its own internal logic? There are four appeals to which he seems to be responsive.

The appeal of play: Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Denis Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste* are for me the two greatest novelistic works of the 18th century, two novels conceived as grand games. They reach heights of playfulness, of lightness, never scaled before or since. Afterward, the novel got itself tied to the imperative of verisimilitude, to realistic settings, to chronological order. It abandoned the possibilities opened up by these two masterpieces, which could have led to a different

development of the novel (yes, it's possible to imagine a whole other history of the European novel. . .)

The appeal of dream: The slumbering imagination of the 19th century was abruptly awakened by Franz Kafka, who achieved what the Surrealists later called for but never themselves really accomplished: the fusion of dream and reality. This was in fact a longstanding aesthetic ambition of the novel, already intimated by Novalis, but its fulfilment required a special alchemy that Kafka alone discovered a century later. His enormous contribution is less the final step in a historical development than an unexpected opening that shows that the novel is a place where the imagination can explode as in a dream, and that the novel can break free of the seemingly inescapable imperative of verisimilitude.

The appeal of thought: Musil and Broch brought a sovereign and radiant intelligence to bear on the novel. Not to transform the novel into philosophy, but to marshal around the story all the means—rational and irrational, narrative and contemplative—that could illuminate man's being; could make of the novel the supreme intellectual synthesis. Is their achievement the completion of the novel's history, or is it instead the invitation to a long journey?

The appeal of time: The period of *terminal paradoxes* incites the novelist to broaden the time issue beyond the Proustian problem of personal memory to the enigma of collective time, the time of Europe, Europe looking back on its own past, weighing up its history like an old man seeing his whole life in a single moment. Whence the desire to overstep the temporal limits of an individual life, to which the novel had hitherto been confined, and to insert in its space several historical periods (Aragon and Fuentes have already tried this). But, I don't want to predict the future paths of the novel, which I cannot know; all I mean to say is this: If the novel should really disappear, it will do so not because it has exhausted its powers but because it exists in a world grown alien to it.

There he asks if the novel's *raison d'etre* is to keep "the world of life" under a permanent light and to protect us from "the forgetting of

being," is it not more than ever necessary today that the novel should exist? Kundera's answer is positive. But, the point is that the idea of the novels has faced a kind of reduction not only in terms of the meaning of the world but also in terms of the meaning of works of art. Like all of culture, the novel is more and more in the hands of the mass media; as agents of the unification of the planet's history, the media amplify and channel the reduction process; they distribute throughout the world the same simplifications and stereotypes easily acceptable by the greatest number, by everyone, by all mankind. This common spirit of the mass media, camouflaged by political diversity, is the spirit of our time. And this spirit seems to me contrary to the spirit of the novel, which is the spirit of complexity as well as of continuity. Every novel says to the reader: "Things are not as simple as you think." That is the novel's eternal truth. Besides, each work is an answer to preceding ones; each work contains all the previous experience of the novel. However, the spirit of our time is firmly focused on a present that is so expansive and profuse that it shoves the past off our horizon and reduces time to the present moment only. Within this system, the novel is no longer a *work* (a thing made to last, to connect the past with the future) but one current event among many, a gesture with no tomorrow.

Does this mean that, "in a world grown alien to it," the novel will disappear? That it will leave Europe to founder in "the forgetting of being"? That nothing will be left but the endless babble of graphomaniacs, nothing but *novels that come after the history of the novel?* I don't know. I merely believe I know that the novel cannot live in peace with the spirit of our time: if it is to go on discovering the undiscovered, to go on "progressing" as novel, it can do so only against the progress of the world.

The avant-garde saw things differently; it was possessed by an ambition to be in harmony with the future. It is true, avant-garde artists did create works that were courageous, difficult, provocative, ridiculed, but they did so in the conviction that "the spirit of the time" was with them and would soon prove them right.

Kundera winds up the chapter by stating that his answer is as ridiculous as it is sincere. He is attached to nothing but the depreciated legacy of Cervantes.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What, according to Kundera, is Edmund Husserl's legacy?

Q 5: How did the novel, according to Kundera, come to discover various dimensions of existence one by one?

Q 6: Why is the character of Don Quixote so important for Kundera?

Q 7: How does Kundera start his discussions on the art of fiction?

1.5 IMPORTANT IDEAS IN THE CHAPTER

In the chapter "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes", Kundera is found to have traced the adaptations that the novel has made over the four centuries, and different changes were enabled by an ever-evolving society. Paraphrasing Edmund Husserl, Kundera tries to argue that the modern age began when Galileo Galilei and René Descartes elevated the importance of that which can be measured, resulting in a degradation of those things that were not scientific or technical. With the sciences becoming more and more concentrated, specialised and exclusive, the world too became more and more fragmented. As men failed to comprehend the world, they failed to comprehend themselves. In *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Miguel de Cervantes opposed this trend, as he gave due emphasis on the forgotten self of man. Kundera's argument is that it is the novel, which illuminates various aspects of man's existence.

In Kundera's view, the great novelists throughout history have modified the novel to accommodate the changes in society. Cervantes encountered a world that had lost its sense of certainty as God failed to retain the supreme position He had held in the Middle Ages. Consequently, focussing on the ambiguity confronting man, Cervantes realized that there are no absolutes, and therefore, he found himself

faced with unrestrained freedom. Thus, the world of Don Quixote is one of adventure where anything was possible. A hundred years later, Samuel Richardson examined the interior life of the individual. In the 19th century, Gustave Flaubert faced a world bounded by institutions and government; he chronicled the trivial events of daily existence. In the 20th century, Marcel Proust explored the effect of the past on the individual, and James Joyce questioned the ability to know the present. Kundera's argument is that soon all accepted value systems will be discredited and abolished, resulting in a total dominance of irrationality. In addition, he asserts his views by referring to modern novelists, including Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, and Hermann Broch. Of all the genres, Kundera states, only the novel has been able to reflect the changes accompanying the emergence of modern man.

Then Kundera almost asserts that the future of the novel lies in its continuing ability to evolve. Because of the novel's inclusiveness and adaptability, the death of the novel as many would have liked to accept, cannot be foreseen. Although declared dead or at least dying by various avant-garde groups, such as the Surrealists and Futurists, and by some academicians, the novel is strong. Arguing that in a sense only censorship can destroy the novel, Kundera links the health of the genre to the vitality of Western culture.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What are the main issues raised by Kundera in the chapter "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes?"

1.6 RECEPTION OF KUNDERA'S IDEAS

Many critics tend to discuss the political disillusionment of Kundera's work, particularly in the context of his fight against Czechoslovakian social and cultural repression. But, some critics go beyond the thematics, focusing on his unique style and marking his fragmented plotting, episodic structure, and authorial intrusions as

distracting. Still, many other critics praise Kundera's approach, appreciating his use of humour, his erotic themes, and his sense of narrative play.

When *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* appeared in 1984, it immediately became an international best seller, garnering awards throughout the world, including a Los Angeles Times Book Award. Contemporary reviews of the novel were largely positive. Paul Gray, in a Time review, calls the book "a triumph of wisdom over bitterness, hope over despair." Thomas DePietro observed that it is a work of "burning compassion, extraordinary intelligence, and dazzling artistry." DePietro also noted that the book "leaves us with many questions, questions about love and death, about love and transcendence. These are our burdens, the existential questions that never change but need to be asked anew." However, not all reviewers were enchanted with the book. Christopher Hawtree, for example, in the *Spectator*, raised some reservations against Kundera's titles and finds problems with the "elliptical structure" of the work. Thus, scholarly interest in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* continues unabated.



1.7 LET US SUM UP

Milan Kundera is one of the few Czech writers who have achieved wide international recognition. In his native Czechoslovakia and the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia, Kundera has been regarded as an important author and intellectual since his early 20s. Each of his creative works and contributions to the public political and cultural discourse has provoked a lively debate in the context of its time. In his *Art of Fiction*, Kundera dispassionately explains how novels are made and why. For this, he starts with Cervantes, passes through Richardson Honore´ de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Leo Tolstoy, Marcel Proust, and ends with Ftantz Kafka, James Joyce and Hermann Broch. In the chapter prescribed, Kundera mostly reiterates that the novel and its history

constitute a specific form of knowledge not to be confused with philosophy, politics or psychology.



1.8 FURTHER READING

1) Kundera, Milan. (1988). *The Art of the Novel.* (*Trans from the French by Linda Asher*). Grove Press, Inc.

2) Milne, Ira Mark. *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature. Vol III.*

Web Resource:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan_Kundera

https://www.enotes.com/topics/art-novel-milan-kundera



1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: During 'Prague Spring', the Czechoslovakian government allowed writers and artists freedom of expression which the communist country had previously not permitted… …the old "order" was soon restored… …Kundera found himself tied to the same position as many of the other leaders of the reform movement… …His books disappeared from libraries and bookstores, and he lost his job at the academy.

Ans to Q 2: Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being* exhibits an experience of the "Prague Spring" further exploring existential problems such as love, death, transcendence, the sense of continuity or "heaviness" provided by memory, and the contrasting sense of "lightness" that is brought about by forgetting.

Ans to Q 3: Kundera viewed the novel in terms of a unity not in terms of predetermined set of rules… …He believed in musical polyphony… …he used many notes playing at the same time, usually in harmony… …The lengths and arrangements of chapters,

subchapters, and sections are used to create mood and a sense of time, much like in a musical composition.

Ans to Q 4: The meaning of the term "European" for Husserl… …how his philosophy, apprehended the world as a question to be answered… …his philosophy interrogated the world because "the passion to know had seized mankind".

Ans to Q 5: With Cervantes and his contemporaries, the novel inquired into the nature of adventure… …with Richardson, it begins to examine the secret life of the feelings… …with Balzac, it discovers man's rootedness in history… …with Flaubert, it explored the previously unknown territories of the everyday life… …with Tolstoy, it focused on the intrusion of the irrational in human behaviour and decisions… …with Thomas Mann, it examined the role of the myths from the remote past that control our present actions.

Ans to Q 6: Don Quixote set forth into a world he could no longer recognise… the world suddenly appeared in its fearsome ambiguity… …the single divine Truth decomposed into myriad relative truths parcelled out by men… …thus, was born the world of the Modern Era, and with it the novel, the image and model of that world.

Ans to Q 7: Kundera's discussions on fiction in *Art of the Novel* starts with a reference to a world of unlimited potential, the beginning of history, the shrinking of possibilities in the outside world, the search for infinity in the human soul, the futility of this search… ..he ends with a reference to history, which he terms a 'monster' that can offer nothing helpful.

Ans to Q 8: In the chapter Kundera traces the adaptations and changes that the novel has made over the four centuries… …with the sciences becoming more and more concentrated, specialised and exclusive, the world too became more and more fragmented… …in *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, Cervantes opposed this trend giving due emphasis on the forgotten self of man… …Kundera states that the novel illuminates various aspects of man's existence.



1.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: In what ways, does Milan Kundera, discuss the state of fiction in the chapter "The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes" from his *Art of the Novel*.

Q 2: How does Kundera address the broader questions concerning fiction, such as its uniqueness of form, its vitality, and future in his *Art of Fiction.*

Q 3: "Kundera almost asserts that the future of the novel lies in its continuing ability to evolve." Justify your views.

Q 4: How does Kundera outline the history of the European novels? Discuss the ways in which Kundera acknowledges the contributions of the novelists starting with Cervantes with their specific form and technique.

Q 5: Why, according to Kundera, is the nature of European science one-sided? What importance does Kundera assign to the Spanish writer Cervantes? Explain.

Q 6: What are the four appeals that have influenced the novel's own internal logic? Discuss.

Q 7: "The founder of the Modern Era is not only Descartes but also Cervantes." Justify your views with regard to the deliberations by Kundera.

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UNIT 2: WAYNE C. BOOTH: *"TELLING AND SHOWING"* FROM *THE RHETORIC OF FICTION*

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Wayne C. Booth: Life and Works

2.4 About the Book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*

2.5 Some Excerpts from the text of "Telling and Showing"

2.6 Reading the Text

2.7 Let us Sum up

2.8 Further Reading

2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

2.10 Possible Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will able to-

- discuss W. C. Booth's contributions to narrative fiction
- explain the important concepts of narrative fiction mentioned by Booth in the chapter prescribed
- identify the important ideas contained in the text(s) selected
- use some of these ideas in your own interpretation of narrative texts that you are required to study.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit provides a discussion on Wayne C. Booth and the chapter entitled "Telling and Showing" from his much acclaimed book *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Wayne Clayson Booth (1921- 2005) was an American literary critic based in Chicago, Illinois. He was the George M Pullman Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in English Language & Literature at the Chicago University. His work followed largely from

the Chicago School of Literary Criticism. Divided into three sections, Booth's discussion of narrative technique in the chapter "Telling and Showing" brings to our notice some of the fundamental conditions of fiction writing. Throughout the whole book, Booth views fictional writing as the art of communicating with the readers. However, for the purpose of this unit, we shall take the introduction and the first section of the comparatively long essay to discuss Booth's ideas on Telling and Showing.

2.3 WAYNE C. BOOTH: LIFE AND WORKS

Born at American Fork, Utah, in 1921, Booth was brought up as a Mormon (A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) by his parents. Booth undertook missionary works in his youth for the Mormon Church, which might have influenced his professional life. He was renowned for being an intense advocate of the moral and social value of studying literature. Throughout his career, he had been an outstanding and inspiring teacher.

Booth graduated in English, having switched from Chemistry, at Brigham Young University (a Mormon institution) in Provo, Utah, in 1944. Then, he served as an infantryman in the United States army between 1944 and 1946, before completing both his MA (1947), and his PhD (1950) at the University of Chicago. After a period of ten years or so of teaching in small colleges, Booth was appointed George M. Pullman Professor of English at the University of Chicago in 1962.

Wayne C. Booth played a full part in the American professional arena, acting as president of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 1982. He was also the man behind establishing the quarterly academic journal *Critical Inquiry* of the 1970s, which soon became the forefront of debates about literary theory and criticism. Like Lionel Trilling, Booth had also to deal with the student protests of the late 1960s. When he was Dean of the College (where the undergraduate teaching took place in Chicago) from 1964 until 1969, he had to undergo one of the most turbulent periods in the history of American universities. Booth believed

that failures of communication at all levels were partly responsible for the problems. As a result, he wrote *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (1970) and *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (1974), arguing that understanding texts, or people, on their own terms in the first instance is the only respectable intellectual position to adopt. This is also very much the informing principle of both *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974) and *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988).

Booth's graduate work at Chicago took place mostly under the supervision of the critic R. S. Crane (1886–1967). Like the New Critics, the Chicago School critics emphasised the need to focus on the text, and to move away from context (history and biography, for example). But whereas the concentration in New Criticism was on language, and hence mostly on poetry, critics such as Crane were equally, if not more, interested in the text as a system of communication in which plot, characterisation, and overall structure played a part. Members of the Chicago School were often referred to as Neo-Aristotelians because, under the influence of Aristotle, they saw every element of the text, and the text as a whole, as mimetic, as an enactment of the experience or reality being represented. Above all, advocating a "Pluralist approach" Crane and his fellow critics argued that there could be no single way of approaching a literary text.

In his influential first book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; rev. ed., 1983), Booth presented a detailed examination of narrative technique and introduced such terms as "implied author" and "reliable narrator." In 1974, he produced *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, a plea for reasoned assent in the educational community that was prompted by events on the Chicago campus. *The Company We Keep* (1988), offers a discussion of the place of ethics in literary criticism. In addition to writing further works of criticism, Booth cofounded (1974) and co-edited from 1974 to 1985 the quarterly *Critical Inquiry*. His other books include *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (1970), *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974), *Critical Understanding: The*

Powers and Limits of Pluralism (1979), *The Vocation of a Teacher* (1988), and *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004).

Wayne C. Booth died on 10th October 2005.



LET US KNOW

The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961), his most significant and influential contribution to critical thinking, had been published a year earlier to widespread critical acclaim. It was awarded two prestigious prizes: the Phi Beta Kappa's Christian Gauss Award (1962), and the David H. Russell Award of the National Council of Teachers (1966). In 1970, the University of Chicago bestowed on Booth the title of Distinguished Service Professor.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: On what ground, did the Chicago critics differ from the new critics?

Q 2: Name some of Booth's critical texts.

2.4 ABOUT THE BOOK *THE RHETORIC OF FICTION*

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, which is also Booth's most recognised and acclaimed work, he argued that all narrative is a form of rhetoric. He states that beginning roughly with Henry James, critics began to emphasise the difference between "showing" and "telling" in fictional narratives, and have placed more and more of a dogmatic premium on "showing." Booth opined that despite the realistic effects that modern authors had achieved, an attempt to distinguish narratives in that way was simplistic and deeply flawed, because authors invariably both 'show' and 'tell'. Booth observed that the authors appear to choose between the techniques based upon decisions about how to convey their various "commitments" along various "lines of interest."

Booth's criticism can be viewed as distinct from traditional biographical criticism, and the new criticism that argued that one can talk

only about what the text says, and the modern criticism that argues for the "eradication" of authorial presence. Booth claimed that it is impossible to talk about a text without talking about an author, because the existence of the text implies the existence of an author. He also argued that it does not matter whether an author—as distinct from the narrator—intrudes directly in a work, since readers will always infer the existence of an author, behind any text they encounter. Besides, the readers will always draw conclusions about the beliefs and judgments (and conclusions about the skills and "success") of a text's implied author, along the text's various lines of interest, as he states:

"However impersonal he may try to be, his readers will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner—and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values. Our reaction to his various commitments, secret or overt, will help to determine our response to the work."

This implied author, as Booth would like to use (whom he also called an author's "second self") is the one who "chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices." In this book, Booth also coined the term "unreliable narrator"—a narrator whose credibility has been seriously compromised.

In *Rhetoric of Fiction,* Booth spent several chapters using a series of illustrations that include numerous references to and citations from widely recognised works of fiction, and describing the various effects that implied authors achieve along the various lines of interest that he identifies, depending upon whether the implied author provides commentary, and upon the degree to which a story's narrator is reliable or unreliable, personal or impersonal. He detailed three "Types of Literary Interest" that are "available for technical manipulation in fiction:"

Intellectual or Cognitive: One may have, or can be made to have, strong intellectual curiosity about "the facts," the true interpretation, the true reasons, the true origins, the true motives, or the truth about life itself.

Qualitative: One may have, or can be made to have, a strong desire to see any pattern or form completed, or to experience a further development of qualities of any kind. One might call this kind "aesthetic", if to do so did not suggest that a literary form using this interest was necessarily of more artistic value than one based on other interests.

Practical: One may have, or can be made to have, a strong desire for the success or failure of those we love or hate, admire or detest; or one can be made to hope for or fear a change in the quality of a character.

It may be important to note that in the 1983 edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth included a lengthy addendum to the original 1961 edition. There, he outlined various identities taken on by both authors and readers: 'The Flesh-and Blood Author', the 'Implied Author', 'the Teller of This Tale', 'the Career Author', and the "Public Myth"; and, the Flesh-and-Blood Re-Creator of Many Stories, the Postulated Reader, the Credulous Listener, the Career Reader, and the Public Myth about the "Reading Public." In the preface to the first edition of the book, Booth writes:

"In writing about the rhetoric of fiction, I am not primarily interested in didactic fiction, fiction used for propaganda or instruction. My subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers—the rhetorical resources available to the writer of epic, novel, or short story as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader. Though the problems raised by rhetoric in this sense are found in didactic works like Gulliver's Travels, Pilgrim's *Progress,* and *1984,* they are seen more clearly in non-didactic works like Tom Jones, Middlemarch, and Light in August. Is there any defence that can be offered, on aesthetic grounds, for an art full of rhetorical appeals?"

From this quotation, we come to know about Booth's main ideas that become explicit in the book *Rhetoric of Fiction.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What does Booth state about the concepts of Telling and Showing in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*?

Q 4: How is Booth's criticism distinct from traditional biographical criticism and New Criticism?

Q 5: What are the three different types of literary interests as Booth stated?

2.5 SOME EXCERPTS FROM THE TEXT OF "TELLING AND SHOWING"

In his 1979 study, *Critical Understanding: the Powers and Limits of Pluralism*, Booth argues that there are five ways of approaching novels, or literary texts. The critic James Phelan summarizes these as follows: as an imitation of the world external to it (the mimetic approach), as an event in time (the historical approach), as an autotelic object (the objective), as an expression – and revelation – of its author's psychology or experience (the expressive or biographical), as a communication to an audience (rhetorical or reader-response). (Phelan 1988: 63) The next chapter will concentrate on the first, the mimetic. The New Critics saw the text as autotelic, as a structure of words independent of its context, but Booth's emphasis is on a textual environment of communication and reception. In his 'Afterword' to the second edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C. Booth makes it clear that (unlike Trilling's) his project is trans-historical and non-political: 'studying the rhetoric of fiction is one thing and studying the political history of novels…is another' (Booth 1983a: 413). Whether such a project is possible, productive, or welcome is another matter. Booth's entire approach to the novel is determined by his conviction that '[t]he novel comes into existence as something communicable' (1961: 397). It is, or rather should be, an 'essentially public' form (1961: 395). Throughout *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and *The Company We Keep*, the focus is on fiction 'viewed as the art of

communicating with readers' (1961: xiii). In terms of our communication model of narrative (p. 16), itself mainly derived from Booth, it is not just that the key elements in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* are the author, text, and reader; the concentration is on how these interact (or are thought of as interacting) in the process of writing and reading a novel.

As Booth acknowledges, 'James began at a different place entirely, with the effort to portray a convincing mind at work on reality' (1961: 43). It is worth issuing a health warning at this point: an enormous amount of fiction is discussed or referred to by Booth, and there can be no expectation that his readers (or the readers of this book) can have read and assimilated all this material. Everything is to be gained, however, by reading more of the novels that surface in his argument. Booth sees the author's central task as that of transmitting to the reader a clear sense of a fictional world and its moral problems. Crucial to this act of communication is the extent to which the forms of rhetoric it adopts are effective to its purpose. There is no time in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* for what Booth projects as solitary, self-regarding, experimental novels that privilege the complex and meandering visions of idiosyncratic writers. Retreating to a 'private world of values' may be one response to a 'fragmented society', but the purpose of the novel in such a world should be to 'mold a new consensus' (1961: 393). If Trilling's antagonists in The Liberal Imagination are novels committed to social realism and political propaganda, Booth's are works of fiction that offer peculiar and confused social and moral perspectives, or novels that distinguish themselves as 'pure' because they strive for a seemingly impersonal style with no detectable perspective at all. The reader is offered little guidance in a world of moral complexity often intensified, for the sake of entertainment and technical display, by the multiplication of unresolvable ambiguities and interminable symbolism. Booth has in mind novels such as the Austrian Franz Kafka's (1883–1924) The Castle (1937) where '[n]o one tells us . . . what K's goal is, or whether it is attainable, or whether it is a worthwhile goal in the first place' (Booth 1961: 287). He saw 'deliberate confusion' (1961: 285) as a disease of the modern novel, and

the Irish writer James Joyce (1882–1941) as one of its first proponents.

Booth also criticizes James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) for its muddled and muddling narrative and absence of any clear moral position. It will become clear as the book proceeds, however, that Booth's enduring legacy is less his rather inflexible views on morality, and much more the vocabulary and concepts he developed in order to explore what he sees as the gains and losses of impersonal narration. For Booth, the main tool for the writer and critic of the novel is rhetoric, the means by which a particular author's fictional world. The French novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821–80) is identified by Booth as an initiator of the fashion in the later 19th century for less intrusive narrators in fiction, and for novels (to use Booth's terms) that 'show' rather than 'tell' (Booth 1961: 3–20); a distinction Booth rejects. This is sometimes referred to as a 'dramatic' method because the emphasis is often on scene (or dialogue) and panoramic summary, or pictorial presentation, rather than on narrative commentary and explanation. This fashion hardened into dogma after Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (1921), a book that teased out of Henry James's prefaces (mistakenly, as we shall see in Chapter 4) a systematic theory of impersonal narration. Its moral norms are communicated to the reader. Booth sets out to consider 'whether rhetoric is compatible with art' (1961: xiv) and ends up concluding that every move a writer makes is rhetorical: fiction is rhetoric. Booth demonstrates that despite the claims of the purists, each element of a novel (including dialogue, setting, symbolism, and so on) is part of its system of persuasion. As we have seen, there are two extremes in the spectrum of rhetoric available to the novelist: the use of garrulous narrators who obstruct at every opportunity the reader's own access to the fictional world; and the elimination of such narrators to the point where the reader is left drifting. An example of the former would be the narrator in Henry Fielding's (1707–54) novel, *Tom Jones* (1749), and the French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet's (1922–) *Jealousy* (1957) is offered by Booth as an example of the latter (1961: 62). Although Booth feels able (grudgingly) to 'endure' its 'unmediated, mindless sensation or emotion' because it is

'less than 35,000 words long' (1961: 63), he was generally repelled by the development in the 1950s of the nouveau roman in France. By the mid 20th century, in the culmination of that process which started with Flaubert and others in the mid-19th century, only novels in the 'pure' category were regarded by many critics and readers as 'realistic', or convincing.

What *The Rhetoric of Fiction* sets out to deny is the validity of any distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' fiction. For Booth, ultimately, distinctions between 'pure form', 'moral content', and the 'rhetorical means of realizing for the reader the union of form and matter' are arbitrary because novels are 'human actions', and 'moral judgments…are implicit whenever human beings act'. It is almost impossible to detach any move Booth makes on the novel from his overriding moral concerns. It is worth noting here, however, that the inseparability. Novelists in this tradition include French authors such as—Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922–2008), Michel Butor (1926–2016), Marguerite Duras (1914–96), and Claude Mauriac (1914–96). Rejecting explicit moral, social, or psychological commentary, they focus instead on the detailed description of mental states, of form and content and form and morality, as inherent to novels that communicate successfully. This inseparability is formulated in organic terms ('the unions of form and matter') shared by Trilling and that reach back to James's 'The Art of Fiction'.

For those who abhor 'the modern love of generalization' (1961: 29), and Booth is at one with James and Trilling here, the novel is the most appropriate form of art. Booth endorses James's insistence on the absurdity of applying general laws to the writing of fiction. Novelists are not, or should not be, bound by one method. They can create 'peculiar literary kinds', each of which, like James's 'subjects' in 'The Art of Fiction', entails its own appropriate technique. In a biological framework – also occupied, again, by James – a novel is like an organism whose shape is determined by its purpose (not the other way round); a purpose that also includes the effect it is designed to have on its readers. The three main 'variables' of the novel are 'subject-matter, structure, and

technique', and these 'depend finally on notions of purpose or function or effect'. In the same way that James refuses to accept any pre-existing, predetermining ways of writing the novel, and Trilling repudiates Parrington's insistence on political and social relevance, Booth argues that only the novel's purpose within the context of its specific conception can define and shape its form and content. This sense of the limitless possibilities of novels restricted only by their initial choice of subject seems to correspond with Trilling's celebration of the variety to which the form gives rise. However, Booth sees Trilling's recommendation of the 'novel of ideas' in The Liberal Imagination as an example of exactly the kind of extraneous constriction, or 'normative' approach, he wants to resist in favour of being 'descriptive'. There is an incoherence here, however, that comes close to wrecking the whole edifice of The Rhetoric of Fiction, and to which we shall return at the end of the book. Booth is close to rejecting rules established elsewhere in order to smuggle in his own. 'The ultimate problem in the rhetoric of fiction', he asserts, is 'that of deciding for whom the author should write'. But regardless of whether he writes for his peers, or fellow-novelists, 'himself as imagined reader', or his wider audience, he is involved in an act of communication that cannot be other than moral because, again, the human activity of communication can only ever be a moral act; one available, that is, for approval or condemnation. Towards the end of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, the approach hardens into the normative view that technical innovation should always be subordinate to the 'obligation to be as clear about' the 'moral position' as possible. It seems at this point as if Booth is much more interested in a 'conscious moral purpose' for the novel than either James or Trilling. Booth is certainly a long way here from Trilling's commitment to the liberating potential of ambiguity. Although he shared a belief in the need for novels to conduct a complex investigation of the disparities between illusion and reality, he had a firm view of the moral certainties such an investigation ought to yield. 'Pure' narration has 'fouled' our 'lines of communication': 'we have looked for so long at foggy landscapes reflected in misty mirrors that we have come to like fog'. The

task of the novel, as Booth insists on it, is not to create the fog but to issue fog warnings. The 'deliberate confusion' of 'fundamental truths' ought not to be the purpose of the novel.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What does Booth take the novel to be?

Q 7: What is the central task of the author as seen by Booth?

Q 8: Why does Booth laud the French novelist Gustave Flaubert?

Q 9: Why is Booth not ready to distinguish between pure and impure fiction?

Telling and Showing

The text of Authoritative "Telling" in Early Narration

One of the most obviously artificial devices of the storyteller is the trick of going beneath the surface of the action to obtain a reliable view of a character's mind and heart. Whatever our ideas may be about the natural way to tell a story, artifice is unmistakably present whenever the author tells us what no one in so-called real life could possibly know. In life, we never know anyone but ourselves by thoroughly reliable internal signs, and most of us achieve an all too partial view even of ourselves. It is in a way strange, then, that in literature from the very beginning we have been told motives directly and authoritatively without being forced to rely on those shaky inferences about other men, which we cannot avoid in our own lives.

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil." With one stroke, the unknown author has given us a kind of information never obtained about real people, even about our most intimate friends. Yet it is information that we must accept without question if we are to grasp the story that is to follow. In life if a friend confided his view that *his* friend was "perfect and upright," we would accept the information with qualifications posed by our knowledge of the speaker's character or of the general fallibility of mankind. We could never trust

even the most reliable of witnesses as completely as we trust the author of the opening statement about Job.

We move immediately in Job to two scenes presented with no privileged information whatever: Satan's temptation of God and Job's first losses and lamentations. However, we conclude the first section with another judgment, which no real event could provide for any observer: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." How do we know that Job sinned not? Who is to pronounce on such a question? Only God himself could know with certainty whether Job charged God foolishly. Yet the author pronounces judgment, and we accept his judgment without question.

It might at first appear that the author does not require us to rely on his unsupported word, since he gives us the testimonial of God himself, conversing with Satan, to confirm his view of Job's moral perfection. In addition, after Job has been pestered by his three friends and has given his own opinion about his experience, God is brought on stage again to confirm the truth of Job's view. However, clearly, the reliability of God's statements ultimately depends on the author himself; it is he who names God and assures us that this voice is truly His.

This form of artificial authority has been present in most narrative until recent times. Though Aristotle praises Homer for speaking in his own voice less than other poets, even Homer writes scarcely a page without some kind of direct clarification of motives, of expectations, and of the relative importance of events. Though the gods themselves are often unreliable, Homer—the Homer we know—is not. What he tells us usually goes deeper and is more accurate than anything we are likely to learn about real people and events. In the opening lines of the Iliad, for example, we are told, under the half-pretence of an invocation, precisely what the tale is to be about "the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus and its devastation." We are told directly that we are to care more about the Greeks than the Trojans. We are told that they were "heroes" with L Trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, 1951). All quotations are from this translation. "strong souls." We are told that it was the will of Zeus that

they should be "the delicate feasting of dogs." And we learn that the particular conflict between Agamemnon, "the lord of men," and "brilliant" Achilles was set on by Apollo. We could never be sure of any of this information in real life, yet we are sure as we move through the *Iliad* with Homer constantly at our elbow, controlling rigorously our beliefs, our interests, and our sympathies. Though his commentary is generally brief and often disguised as simile, we learn from it the precise quality of every heart; we know who dies innocent and who guilty, who foolish and who wise. And we know, whenever there is any reason for us to know, what the characters are thinking: "the son of Tydeus pondered doubtfully/... Three times in his heart and spirit he pondered turning . . ." (Book VIII, 11.167-69).

In the *Odyssey* Homer works in the same explicit and systematic way to keep our judgments straight. Though E. V. Rieu is no doubt correct in calling Homer an "impersonal" and "objective" author, in the sense that the life of the real Homer cannot be discovered in his work,2 Homer "intrudes" deliberately and obviously to insure that our judgment of the "heroic," "resourceful," "admirable," "wise" Odysseus will be sufficiently favourable. "Yet all the gods were sorry for him, except Poseidon, who pursued the heroic Odysseus with relentless malice till the day when he reached his own country."

Indeed, the major justification of the opening scene in the palace of Zeus is not as mere exposition of the facts of Odysseus' plight. What Homer requires of us is sympathetic involvement in that plight, and Athene's opening reply to Zeus provides authoritative judgment on what is to follow. "It is for Odysseus that my heart is wrung—the wise but unlucky Odysseus, who has been parted so long from all his friends and is pining on a lonely island far away in the middle of the seas." To her accusation of neglect, Zeus replies, "How could I ever forget the admirable Odysseus? He is not only the wisest man alive but has been the most generous in his offerings. . . . It is Poseidon . . . who is so implacable towards him.

When we come to Odysseus' enemies, the poet again does not

hesitate either to speak in his own person or to give divine testimony. Penelope's suitors must look bad to us; Telemachus must be admired. Not only does Homer dwell on Athene's approval of Telemachus, he lays on his own direct judgments with bright colors. The "insolent," "swaggering," and "ruffianly" suitors are contrasted to the "wise" (though almost helplessly young) Telemachus and the "good" Mentor. "Telemachus now showed his good judgment." Mentor "showed his good will now by rising to admonish his compatriots." We seldom encounter the suitors without some explicit attack by the poet: "This was their boastful way, though it was they who little guessed how matters really stood." And whenever there might be some doubt about where a character stands, Homer sets us straight: " 'My Queen,' replied Medon, who was by no means a villain . . . ." Hundreds of pages later, when Medon is spared from Odysseus' slaughter, we can hardly be surprised.

The result of all this direct guidance, when it is joined with Athene's divine attestation that the gods "have no quarrel" with Telemachus and have settled that he "shall come home safe," is to leave us, as we enter upon Odysseus' first adventure in Book Five, perfectly clear about what we should hope for and what fear; we are unambiguously sympathetic toward the heroes and contemptuous of the suitors. It need hardly be said that another poet, working with the same episodes but treating them from the suitors' point of view, could easily have led us into the same adventures with radically different hopes and fears.

Direct and authoritative rhetoric of the kind we have seen in Job and in Homer's works has never completely disappeared from fiction. But as we all know, it is not what we are likely to find if we turn to a typical modern novel or short story.

Jim had a great trick that he used to play w'ile he-was travelin'. For instance, he'd be ridin' on a train and they'd come to some little town like, well, like, we'll say, like Benton. Jim would look out of the train window and read the signs on the stores.

For instance, they'd be a sign, "Henry Smith, Dry Goods." Well,

Jim would write down the name and the name of the town and when he got to wherever he was goin' he'd mail back a postal card to Henry Smith at Benton and not sign no name to it, but he'd write on the card, well, somethin' like "Ask your wife about that book agent that spent the afternoon last week," or "Ask your Missus who kept her from gettin' lonesome the last time you was in Carterville."

And he'd sign the card, "A Friend."

Of course, he never knew what really come of none of these jokes, but he could picture what probably happened and that was enough. . . . Jim was a card.

Most readers of Lardner's "Haircut" (1926) have recognized that Lardner's opinion of Jim is radically different here from the speaker's. But no one in the story has said so. Lardner is not present to say so, not, at least, in the sense that Homer is present in his epics. Like many other modern authors, he has effaced himself, renounced the privilege of direct intervention, retreated to the wings and left his characters to work out their own fates upon the stage.

In sleep she knew she was in her bed, but not the bed she had lain down in a few hours since, and the room was not the same but it was a room she had known somewhere. Her heart was a stone lying upon her breast outside of her; her pulses lagged and paused, and she knew that something strange was going to happen, even as the early morning winds were cool through the lattice. . . .

Now I must get up and go while they are all quiet. Where are my things? Things have a will of their own in this place and hide where they l i k e . . . . Now what horse shall I borrow for this journey I do not mean to take? . . . Come now, Graylie, she said, taking the bridle, we must outrun Death and the Devil. . . .

The relation between author and spokesman is more complex here. Katherine Anne Porter's Miranda ("Pale Horse, Pale Rider" [1936]) cannot be simply classified, like Lardner's barber, as morally and intellectually deficient; the ironies at work among character, author, and reader are considerably more difficult to describe. Yet the problem for the

reader is essentially the same as in "Haircut." The story is presented without comment, leaving the reader without the guidance of explicit evaluation.

Since Flaubert, many authors and critics have been convinced that "objective", "impersonal", or "dramatic" modes of narration are naturally superior to any mode that allows for direct appearances by the author or his reliable spokesman. Sometimes, as we shall see in the next three chapters, the complex issues involved in this shift have been reduced to a convenient distinction between "showing," which is artistic, and telling, "which is inartistic." "I shall not *tell* you anything," says a fine young novelist in defence of his art. "I shall allow you to eavesdrop on my people, and sometimes they will tell the truth and sometimes they will lie, and you must determine for yourself when they are doing which. You do this every day. Your butcher says, 'This is the best,' and you reply, 'That's you saying it/ Shall my people be less the captive of their desires than your butcher? I can show much, but show only…You will no more expect the novelist to tell you precisely *how* something is said then you will expect him to stand by your chair and hold your book."

However, the changed attitudes toward the author's voice in fiction raise problems that go far deeper than this simplified version of point of view would suggest. Percy Lubbock taught us forty years ago to believe that "the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be *shownf* to be so exhibited that it will tell itself." He may have been in some sense right—but to say so raises more questions than it answers.

Why is it that an episode "told" by Fielding can strike us as more fully realized than many of the scenes scrupulously "shown" by imitators of James or Hemingway? Why does some authorial commentary ruin the work in which it occurs, while the prolonged commentary of Tristram Shandy can still enthral us? What, after all, does an author do when he "intrudes" to "tell" us something about his story? Such questions force us to consider closely what happens when an author engages a reader fully with a work of fiction; they lead us to a view of fictional technique which

necessarily Mark Harris, goes far beyond the reductions that we have sometimes accepted under the concept of "point of view."

2.6 READING THE TEXT

The chapter called "Telling and Showing" in W C Booth's book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is divided into three sections. In these sections, Booth with the help of a series of illustrations, provides a discussion on narrative technique and brings to our notice some of the fundamental aspects of fictional writing. Booth's view is that when we read creative texts, the way things are narrated often hides the processes through which the author creates the effect. Following this, our attention is fixed on the story element, theme and content. Therefore, Booth tends to argue that a work of fiction effectively directs the attention of the readers to the story or the protagonist through different elements of artifice which are at work. Thus, the impression created by the author is carefully done through a systematic arrangement of words on a page to suit the sequences of the plot. This means that there is always a method involved in the process of writing a fiction.

In this chapter, Booth is perhaps trying to relate to an understanding of the method through which effect is created. And, that is created by a careful organisation of information relating to characters' lives, circumstances in which the characters live, besides orchestrating things in a way that spans across the narrative plane of the text. This is also a process of making things real, but, which does not adhere to our experience in actual life, because in a fictional work, everything is controlled by a sense of authority which in turn grants credibility to the narrative. It is in against this background that Booth is seen discussing how 'showing' and 'telling' work. In the first section entitled "Authoritative 'Telling' in Early Narration", Booth brings in the reference of the Bible and the Iliad together. His purpose is to suggest that there is something common in all narratives—that is the making the 'story' credible to all the readers.

The book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* starts with the idea that Henry James, Lionel Trilling, and Wayne C. Booth shared an interest in the relation between fiction and the world, especially in the moral and artistic values of the novel and its effects on senses of the self. If the novel is to be considered a communication process, consisting in part of a real author, text, and reader, then there is also the question, as Booth seeks to explore, of what version of the author (the 'implied author') is projected in the text, or what composite sense ('career author') we develop as we read two or more novels by the same writer, how the story is told (what kind of narrator or narrative method is used), any characters who may 'listen' to or 'read' the story in the text (the 'narratees'), and the type of reader constructed or implied in the text, as distinct from any actual reader. Framing all this are the societies inhabited by author and reader. After *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth calls the real author and the real reader the 'flesh-and-blood author' and the 'flesh-and-blood reader' in order to detach them even more emphatically from their 'career' and 'implied' versions. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and, later, in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Booth makes explicit many of the elements involved in the production and reception of fiction implicit in the criticism of James and Trilling.

Significance of Booth's Ideas

Peter Rawling, in his book *American Theorists of The novel: Henry James, Lionel Trilling*. Wayne C. Booth provides important readings of three American theorists from which we can find access to the some larger issues of narratives. Rawling's book is anchored in Henry James's *The Art of Fiction* (1884) and his prefaces to the New York Edition of his *Novels and Tales* (1907–9), in Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), *The Opposing Self* (1955), *Beyond Culture* (1965), and *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972), and Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) and *The Company We Keep.* A reading of this book may provide a comprehensive understanding of concepts of these three critics, which shall help you to understand the aspects of narrative fiction in a far better way.

The following reference to the chapters of Rawling's book shall help us to discuss the contributions of Booth to the discussions of narrative fiction.

Chapter 1 "Three Perspectives on the Novel" make a survey of the ways in which James, Trilling, and Booth define the novel and its purpose, and on how all three attempt to rescue the form from its compromising popularity by elevating it to the level of an art.

Chapter 2 "Realism and Representation" makes a reference to Booth who wanted to ask a few important questions:

- What role can the writer have if the main purpose of a novel is faithfully to depict experience? Can there be any agreement about what 'faithful depiction' amounts to?
- What happens if a novelist abandons realism?
- Is it possible to strike a balance between being excessively concerned with formal, structural properties, in fiction and the commitment to some form of representation?

Chapter 3 deals with ideas about 'Authors, Narrators, and Narration' and the views of James, Trilling, and Booth on the troublesome boundary between life (including the lives of authors) and fiction are sought to be explored. How far, should authors obtrude in their fiction? Is their detachment necessarily healthy for the reader? Should fiction, or critical approaches to it, be biographical?

Chapter 4 deals with 'Points of view and centres of consciousnesses', where Booth opines that the all-important narrative device for James is point of view. Booth explores if James advocated restricting the point of view from which the story is told to one character. Are there any correspondences here with the early twentieth-century fashion for relativity and multiple perspectives? Is Booth right to be concerned about the moral consequences of multiplied perspectives and narrative ambiguities, or confusions?

Chapter 5 concentrates on 'Readers, reading, and interpretation'. The important issues that Booth deals with are: Should the writer aim for a wide readership if the responsibilities of the novel are seen in social

and political terms? What conflicts might there be between more artistic, aesthetic, approaches to writing fiction? Can interpretation be controlled? Should it be controlled? Is this what Booth means, for example, by 'understanding?' What responsibilities, if any, does the reader have when it comes to interpretation and criticism?

Chapter 6 "Moral Intelligence", consolidates much of the previous deliberations by exploring, and encouraging debate about how James, Trilling, and Booth discuss the moral and ethical dimensions of the writing and reading of fiction. If rule-bound, didactic novels are condemned as inartistic, are the alternatives moral relativism and anarchy? James and Trilling seem to argue that the best guarantee of responsible behaviour lies in the cultivation of individual intelligence, of flexible thinking, whereas Booth is often more interested in advocating a much less flimsy framework of clear moral principles in which communication and consensus are among the controlling elements. Is a resolution of these conflicts between Booth on the one hand, and James and Trilling on the other, desirable, or even possible?



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: How does Booth make a distinction between 'showing' and 'telling'?

Q 11: What are the questions that should occur to us 'when an author engages a reader fully with a work of fiction'?



2.7 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that with *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth became established as a "Chicago Critic". The neo-Aristotelian critics such as R S Crane and Booth himself believed that art must contribute something to life beyond immediate pleasure. Art has a function to both instruct and entertain. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* finally discusses the way in which the author's meaning in a narrative fiction is

expressed and conveyed to the reader. You have learnt that in this influential book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* Booth presented a detailed examination of narrative technique and introduced such terms as "implied author" and "reliable narrator."



2.8 FURTHER READING

1) Booth Waine C. (1983). *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. (2nd Edition). University of Chicago Press.

2) Choudhury, Bibhash. (Ed). (2010). *Different Strokes: A Prose Selection.* Papyrus.

3) Rawling, Peter. (2006). *American Theorists of The novel: Henry James, Lionel Trilling*. Wayne C. Booth. Routledge.

Web Resources :

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Wayne-C-Booth

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayne_C._Booth



2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The New Critics concentrated on the language of poetry… …but the Chicago critic like Crane was interested in the text as a system of communication in which plot, characterisation, and overall structure played a part… …unlike the New Critics, the Chicago School saw the text as a whole, as mimetic, as an enactment of the experience or reality being represented.

Ans to Q 2: *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; 1983)… … *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (1974)… …*The Company We Keep* (1988)… … *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (1970)… … *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974)… …*Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of*

Pluralism (1979)… …*The Vocation of a Teacher* (1988)… …*The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004).

Ans to Q 3: Roughly with Henry James, critics began to emphasise the difference between "showing" and "telling" in fictional narratives… …Booth viewed that despite the realistic effects that modern authors had achieved, an attempt to distinguish narratives in that way was simplistic and deeply flawed, because authors invariably both 'show' and 'tell'.

Ans to Q 4: Traditional biographical critics and the New Critics argued that one can talk only about what the text says… …Booth's claim is that the existence of the text implies the existence of an author… …Booth viewed that the author intrudes directly into a work, since readers will always infer the existence of an author.

Ans to Q 5: Intellectual or Cognitive… …Qualitative… …Practical.

Ans to Q 6: Novel is the art of communicating with readers… …novel is 'essentially public'… …novel comes into existence as something communicable.

Ans to Q 7: Booth sees the author's central task as that of transmitting to the reader a clear sense of a fictional world and its moral problems. Crucial to this act of communication is the extent to which the forms of rhetoric it adopts are effective to its purpose.

Ans to Q 8: For Booth, the main tool for the writer and critic of the novel is rhetoric, the means by which a particular author's fictional world. The French novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821–80) is identified by Booth as an initiator of the fashion in the later 19th century for less intrusive narrators in fiction.

Ans to Q 9: For Booth, ultimately, distinctions between 'pure form', 'moral content', and the 'rhetorical means of realizing for the reader the union of form and matter' are arbitrary because novels are 'human actions', and 'moral judgments…are implicit whenever human beings act.'

Ans to Q 10: Booth states that **'**Showing' is artistic, and 'Telling' is inartistic

Ans to Q 11: According to Booth, the way things are narrated in creative texts, often hides the processes through which the author creates the effect. Thus, the attention of the reales is fixed on the story element, theme and content. The author creates this effect through different elements of artifice which are at work. This means that there is always a method involved in the process of writing a fiction.



2.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: In the chapter "Telling and Showing" Booth brings to our notice some of the fundamental conditions of fiction writing. Discuss.

Q 2: How is the idea of a 'text' conceived by the Chicago critics? Write a note on the contributions of the Chicago critics to the interpretations of the narrative texts.

Q 3: How, according to a critic like Peter Rawling, James, Trilling and Booth could address the larger issues associated with a narrative?

Q 4: W. C. Booth invariably states that 'the novel comes into existence as something communicable or fiction needs to be viewed as the art of communicating with readers.' Justify your views with reference to Booth's essay "Telling and Showing."

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UNIT 3: NARRATOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Narratology: Meaning and Scope

3.4 Important concepts in Narratology

- 3.4.1 Story and Plot
- 3.4.2 Narrative, Narrator, Narratee
- 3.4.3 Point of View

3.5 Let us Sum up

3.6 Further Reading

3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

3.8 Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the meaning and scope of Narratology
- make the differences between a story and a plot
- identify the narrator and the narrates in a narrative
- explain point of view as an important aspect of narratives.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Narratology is the term used since 1969 to denote that branch of studies devoted to the analysis of narratives, most specifically to the forms of narrations and the varieties of narrators and narratees. Narratology as a modern theory of narratives is innately associated with the emergence of European structuralism (about which you will read in detail in Semester 3), although older studies of narrative forms and devices can be dated back to Aristotle's 4th century BC work *Poetics*, which can also be seen as a narratological work. Modern discussions on Narratology can be said to have started from the Russian critic Vladimir

Propp's work *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) with its emphasis on narrative Functions. However, for this present unit, we are not going to discuss Narratology in terms of theory, but in terms of the different components discussed under the area of Narratology. For your convenience, in this unit, the terms and concepts of Narratology shall be adapted from Gerard Prince's very handy book entitled *A Dictionary of Narratology*.

3.3 NARRATOLOGY: MEANING AND SCOPE

Different critics and theorists have divided the meaning and scope of Narratology differently. M. H. Abram's in his *Glossary,* refers to Narratology denotes recent concerns with the general theory and practice of narrative in all literary forms. It deals especially with types of narrators, the identification of structural elements and their diverse modes of combination, recurrent narrative devices, and the analysis of the kinds of *discourse* by which a narrative gets told, as well as with the narratee—that is, the explicit or implied person or audience to whom the narrator addresses the narrative. In general, Narratology has been seen as the set of general statements on narrative genres, on the systematic of narrating (or telling a story) and on the structure of the plot. For the convenience of our reading, the history of Narratology can be divided into three periods: pre-structuralist (until 1960), structuralist (1960-1980), and post structuralist (recent developments of Narratology into an interdisciplinary pursuit).

Current narratological theory picks up and elaborates upon many topics in traditional treatments of fictional narratives, from Aristotle's *Poetics* in the fourth century BC to Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961); current theory, however, applies to such topics concepts and analytic procedures which derive from recent developments in Russian Formalism and especially in French Structuralism. Narratologists, accordingly, do not treat a 'narrative' in the traditional way, as a fictional representation of life, but as a 'systematic formal construction'.

A primary interest of structural narratologists is in the way that narrative discourse fashions a story—the mere sequence of events in time—into the organized and meaningful structure of a literary *plot.* (The Russian formalists had made a parallel distinction between the fabula—the

elemental materials of a story—and the syuzhet, the concrete representation used to convey the story.) The general undertaking is to determine the rules, or codes of composition, that are manifested by the diverse forms of plot, and also to formulate the "grammar" of narrative in terms of structures and narrative formulae that recur in many stories, whatever the differences in the narrated subject matters. In *Narrative Discourse* (1980), followed by *Figures of Literary Discourse* (1982), the French structuralist critic Gérard Genette presented influential analyses of the complex interrelations between a story and the types of discourse in which the story is narrated, and greatly subtilised the treatment of *point of view* in narrative fiction.

Hayden White is a historian who, in works like *Metahistory* (1973) and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987) sets out to demonstrate that the narratives written by historians are not simple representations of a sequence of facts, nor the revelation of a design inherent in events. Instead, White analyzes historical narratives as shaped by the imposition on events of cultural patterns similar to the narratological, *archetypal,* and other structural concepts that had been applied in the criticism of literature.

A book, which did much to inaugurate modern narratology, was *The Morphology of the Folktale* by the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (trans., 1970). For later developments in narrative theory, other than Gerard Genette's book, mention may be made of Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (trans., 1977); Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Nanative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978); Robert Alters, *Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981); Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (1986); Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (1987); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (3 vols., 1984-88); and Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction*

to the Theory of Narrative (rev. ed., 1997) and so on.

In recent years, some cognitive psychologists and literary and cultural theorists have proposed that narrative, or the telling of diverse "stories" about how one thing leads to another, is the basic means by which we make sense of the world, provide meaning to our experiences, and organize our lives. See Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (1990), and *Actual Worlds, Possible Minds* (1986); and Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind* (1996).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How has the field of Narratology developed?

Q 2: What is the primary interest of the Structuralist narratologists?

3.4 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN NARRATOLOGY

Gerald Prince in his *Dictionary* refers to the different ways the various aspects of narratology need to be understood.

3.4.1 Story and Plot

1. The Story is the *content* plane of a narrative as opposed to its *expression* plane or discourse, the 'what' of a narrative as opposed to its 'how'. The Story is a casual sequence of events pertinent to a character or characters seeking to solve a problem or reach a goal. As such, though every story is a narrative (the recounting of one or more events), not every narrative is necessarily a story.
2. The Story is the "Fabula" (or the basic materials arranged into the plot) as opposed to the "Sjuzet" or plot. The Plot as opposed to Story, refers to the main incidents of a narrative, the outline of situations and events. These situations and events can constitute a structure the main parts of which are

chracterisable in terms of Freytag's Pyramid.

3. The Story is a narrative of events with an emphasis on chronology, as opposed to plot, which is a narrative of events with an emphasis on causality. Gerald Prince here cites the famous example of the distinction between a story and a plot from E M Forster. He viewed that "The king died, and then the queen died" is a story, whereas "The king died and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. Thus, the Plot is the arrangement of incidents, the situations and events as presented to the receiver.

Plot Typology

This refers to the systematic determination of Plot types according to structural or other similarities. Traditional examples of plots are: Euphoric Plot (Things change for the better), Dysphoric Plot (Things change for the worse), External Plot (based on outer events and experiences), Internal Plot (based on inner feelings and transactions), Epic Plot (episodic, loosely woven or episodic) and so on. Among the modern Plot Types, as devised by American critic R. S. Crane, mention may be made of Plots of Action (involving a change in the protagonist's situation: The Brothers Karamazov), Plot of Character (Involving a change in the protagonist's moral character: The Portrait of a Lady), and Plot of Thought (Involving a change in the protagonist's thought and feeling: Marius the Epicurean. However, critic like Norman Friedman proposes an even more detailed and inclusive classification of Plot by making further distinctions as to whether the protagonist succeeds or fails, whether the protagonist is responsible and attractive or not, and as to how this complex of factors is supposed to affect the receiver's feelings.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Explain briefly the basic difference between 'story' and 'plot'?

Q 4: What are the different types of traditional plots?

3.4.2 Narrative, Narrator, Narratee

Narrative:

The Narrative is the representation of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two or more narrators to one, two or more narratees. Some narratologists, such as Gerard Genette, have argued that a narrative is essentially a mode of verbal presentation and involves the linguistic *recounting* or *telling* of events, rather than their performance or enactment on stage. Other narratologissts such as William Labov, Gerald Prince, and Shlomith Rimmon Kenan, in order to distinguish narrative from mere event description, have defined it as the representation of at least two real or fictive events neither of which logically presupposes or entails the other. Finally, in order to distinguish it from the representation of a random series of situations and events, narraatologists such as Arthur Danto, A. J. Greimas and Tzvetan Todorov, have also argued that narrative must have a constituent subject and constitute a whole.

Narrative Closure:

A conclusion giving the feeling that a narrative or narrative sequence has come to an end, and providing it with an ultimate unity and coherence, an end creating in the receiver a feeling of appropriate completion and finality.

Narrativity:

A set of properties characterising narrative and distinguishing it from nonnarrative, the formal and contextual features making a (narrative) text more or less narrative, as it were. The degree of narrativity of a narrative depends partly on

the extent to which that narrative fulfils a receiver's desire by representing temporal wholes (prospectively from the beginning to the end, and retrospectively from the end to beginning), involving a conflict, consisting of discrete , specific and positive situations and events, and meaningful in terms of a humanised project and world.

Narrator :

The narrator is the one who narrates, as inscribed in the text. There should be at least one narrator in each narrative. In a given narrative however, there may be several different narrators, each addressing in turn a different narratee or the same one. A narrator may be more or less overt, knowledgeable, ubiquitous, self conscious, and reliable, and she/he may be situated a greater or lesser distance from the situation and events narrated, the characters, and/or the narrate. The distance can be temporal (I narrate events that occurred three hours or three years ago), discursive (I narrate in my own words what a character said, or I use his or her words), intellectual (I am intellectually superior to my narratee, or equal or inferior to him or her), moral (I am more or less virtuous than the characters), and so on. It is to be noted that the narrator, who is imminent to the narrative, must be distinguished from the real or concrete author. For examples, Jean Paul Sartre is the author of works like *Nausea,* 'Intimacy', 'The Wall' and 'Erostratus', but the narrators in such works are not Sartre. The narrator must also be distinguished from the 'implied author' who is not supposed to recount situations and events, but is taken to be accountable for their selection, distribution and combination. Moreover, she/he is inferred from the entire text rather than inscribed in it as a teller.



LET US KNOW

We ordinarily accept that what a narrator tells us is authoritative. The **fallible** or **unreliable narrator,** on the other hand, is one whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share. (read about reliable and unreliable narrators in Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 1961.)

While discussing the idea of the narrator, you should note that the narrator is the speaking 'voice', which takes responsibility over the act of narration or telling the story as 'true fact.' In case of non-fictional narration, the narrator is the actual speaker who physically produces the narrative. In case of fiction however, things are different. The actual sender—or the author—is located in the actual world and transmits a fiction to another member of the actual world— the reader. The narrator is part of the textual world and communicates a narrative to another member of the textual world, who is known as the narrate. Therefore, you should remember that the communicative pairs formed by author/reader and narrator/narrate are located in separate systems of reality.

Narratee:

The concept of the narratee was first proposed by Gerard Genette, but was further developed by Gerald Prince. As you have already read, the narratee is the communicative partner of the narrator, or the filler of the receiver position in a narrative. As is the case with narrators, narratees are actual individuals in non-fictional narratives, but textual constructs in fictional narratives.

So, the narratee is the one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text. In each narrative, there is at least one (more or less overtly represented) narratee. In a given narrative, there may be several different narratees, each addressed in turn by the

same narrator or by a different one. Like in case of the narrator, the narratee may be represented as a character, playing a more or less important role in the situation and events recounted (as one can see in case of works like *Heart of Darkness* or *The Immoralist*). Very often however, the narratee is not represented as a character (as in case of *Tom Jone*s, *Crime and Punishment*). Here, another point that you all must keep in mind is that the narratee is purely a textual construct and should not be confused with the real reader or receiver. Because, the same real reader can read different narratives (each having different narratees), and the same narrative (which always has the same set of narratees) may have an indefinitely varying set of real readers. The narratee must also be distinguished from the 'Implied Reader': the former constituting the narrator's audience and is inscribed as such in the text; the latter constitutes the implied author's audience (and is inferable from the text).

As discussed by David Macey, a narratee may be 'extraddiegetic' or outside the story, and is then addresses directly by the narrator. This can be explained in terms of a few examples, such as the Sultan who is told stories by Scheherazade in the *Arabian Nights,* but who never appears in the stories, or the sailors who listen to Marlowe's story in Conrad's famous novel *Heart of Darkness.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is known as the narrative?

Q 6: Mention the different types of 'distance' that a narrator needs to maintain in a narrative?

Q 7: How would you explain the idea of a narratee?

3.4.3 Point of View

It refers to the perceptual or conceptual position in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented. The

viewpoint adopted may be that of an omniscient narrator whose position varies and is sometimes unlocatable and who is, by and large, not subject to perceptual restrictions (as in case of the omniscient point of view in *Vanity Fair, Adam Bede*). Or, it may be situated in a character (Internal Point of View: everything is presented strictly in terms of the knowledge, feelings, and perceptions of the same character or different ones). Thus, according to M. H. Abram, Point of View signifies the way a story gets told—the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events which constitute the *narrative* in a work of fiction. The question of point of view has always been a practical concern of the novelist, and there have been scattered observations on the matter in critical writings since the emergence of the modern novel in the 18th century. Henry James' prefaces to his various novels, however—collected as *The Art of the Novel* in 1934—and Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (1926), which codified and expanded upon James comments, made point of view one of the most prominent and persistent concerns in modern treatments of the art of prose fiction.

Authors have developed many different ways to present a story, and many single works exhibit a diversity of methods. However, First Person and Third-person point of view are the most common modes. In a **Third person narrative,** the **narrator** is someone outside the story proper who refers to all the characters in the story by name, or as 'he', 'she', 'they'. Thus, Jane Austen's *Emma* begins: "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her." In a **first person narrative,** the narrator speaks as "I", and is, to a greater or lesser degree, a participant

in the story.

The **Omniscient Point of View** is a common term in the discussion of the works of fiction that follows the *convention* that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents, actions, and events, and has privileged access to the characters' thoughts, feelings, and motives. Also that such a narrator is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character, and to report (or conceal) their speech, doings, and states of consciousness. Within this mode, the **intrusive narrator** is one who not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters, and sometimes expresses personal views about human life in general.

You will find that most works are written according to the convention that the omniscient narrator's reports and judgments are to be taken as **authoritative** by the reader, and so serve to establish what counts as the true facts and values within the fictional world. This is the fashion in which many of the greatest novelists have authored their novels including Fielding (*Tom Jones*), Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy. On the other hand, the omniscient narrator may choose to be unintrusive (alternative terms are impersonal or objective).

The **limited point of view** is one when the narrator tells the story in the third person, but stays inside the confines of what is perceived, thought, remembered and felt by a single character (or at most by very few characters) within the story. Henry James, who refined this narrative mode, described such a selected character as his 'focus', or 'mirror', or 'center of consciousness.' In a number of James' later works, all the events and actions are represented as they unfold before, and filter to the reader through, the particular perceptions, awareness, and responses of

only one character. Later writers developed this technique into *stream-of-consciousness* narration, in which we are presented with outer observations only as they impinge on the continuous current of thought, memory, feelings, and associations, which constitute a particular observer's total awareness. The limitation of point of view represented both by James' "center of consciousness" narration and by the "stream-of-consciousness" narration used by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and others, is often said to exemplify the "self-effacing author," or "objective narration," more effectively than does the use of an unintrusive but omniscient narrator.

First-person points of view limits the matter of the narrative to what the first-person narrator knows, experiences, infers, or can find out by talking to other characters. We distinguish between the narrative "I" who is only a fortuitous witness and auditor of the matters he relates (Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and other works by Joseph Conrad); or who is a participant, but only a minor or peripheral one, in the story (Ishmael in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick,* Nick in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby);* or who is himself or herself the central character in the story (Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders,* Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette,* Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations,* Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye).*

In Second-person points of view, the story is told solely, or at least primarily, as an address by the narrator to someone he calls by the second-person pronoun "you." This form of narration occurred in occasional passages of traditional fiction, but has been exploited in a sustained way only during the latter part of the 20th century and then only rarely; the effect is of a virtuoso performance. This second person may turn out to be a specific fictional character, or the reader of the story, or even the narrator himself or herself, or not clearly or consistently the one or the

other; and the story may unfold by shifting between telling the narratee what he or she is now doing, has done in the past, or will or is commanded to do in the future. Italo Calvino uses the form to achieve a complex and comic form of *involuted fiction,* by involving 'you', the reader, in the fabrication of the narrative itself. His novel opens: "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's novel, *If on a winter's night a traveller."*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What is usually known as the 'point of view'?

Q 9: State briefly the meaning of Omniscient Point of View.

Q 10: What kind of a narrator is found in a first person narrative?



3.5 LET US SUM UP

You have learnt from this unit that Narratology can be broadly defined as the study of a narrative. However, it is sometimes described as the structuralist study of narrative plots. Narratology denotes recent concerns with the general theory and practice of narrative in all literary forms. You have learnt that a Narrative is the representation of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two or more narrators to one, two or more narratees. The narrator is the one who narrates, as inscribed in the text. There should be at least one narrator in each narrative. The narratee, on the other hand, is the one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text. Discussions on the distinction between the story and plot as well as of Point of View constitute an integral part of Narratology.



3.6 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. United States: Thomson Learning.

2) Bartens, Hans. (2001). *Literary Theory: The Basics*. London: Routledge.

3) Macey, David. (2000). *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Penguin Books.

4) Makaryk, Irena R. (1993). Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholar and Terms. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

5) Prince, Gerald. (2003). *A Dictionary of Narratology*. London: University of Nabraska Press.



3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Narratology has been seen as the set of general statements on narrative genres, on the systematic of narrating (or telling a story) and on the structure of the plot… …the history of Narratology can be divided into three periods: pre-structuralist (until 1960), structuralist (1960-1980), and post structuralist (recent developments of Narratology into an interdisciplinary pursuit).

Ans to Q 2: The structural narratologists make a distinctions between the story—the mere sequence of events in time—and plot—the organized and meaningful structure… … The same has been viewed by the Russian formalists as fibula and syuzhet… …the general undertaking is to determine the rules, or codes of composition… …formulation of the “grammar” of narrative in terms of structures.

Ans to Q 3: The story is the *content* plane of a narrative as opposed to its *expression* plane or discourse, the 'what' of a narrative as opposed to its 'how'… …the Story is the "Fabula" or the basic materials arranged into the plot, as opposed to the "Sjuzet" or plot which refers to the main incidents of a narrative, the outline of situations and events… …the Story is a narrative of events with an emphasis on chronology, as opposed to plot, which is a narrative of events with an emphasis on causality.

Ans to Q 4: Euphoric Plot (Things change for the better), Dysphoric Plot (Things change for the worse), External Plot (based on outer events and experiences), Internal Plot (based on inner feelings and transactions), Epic Plot (episodic, loosely woven or episodic) and so on.

Ans to Q 5: The Narrative is the representation of one or more real or fictive events communicated by one, two or more narrators to one, two or more narratees… …narrative is a mode of verbal presentation and involves the linguistic *recounting* or *telling* of events, rather than their performance or enactment on stage.

Ans to Q 6: The distance can be temporal (I narrate events that occurred three hours or three years ago), discursive (I narrate in my own words what a character said, or I use his or her words), intellectual (I am intellectually superior to my narratee, or equal or inferior to him or her), moral (I am more or less virtuous than the characters), and so on.

Ans to Q 7: The narratee is the communicative partner of the narrator, the receiver position in a narrative… …narratees are actual individuals in non-fictional narratives, but textual constructs in fictional narratives… …the narratee is the one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text… …in each narrative, there is at least one narratee… …in a given narrative, there may be several different narratees.

Ans to Q 8: It refers to the perceptual or conceptual position in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented… ...the

viewpoint may be that of an omniscient narrator whose position varies, unlocatable and is not subject to perceptual restrictions.

Ans to Q 9: A common term in the discussion of the works of fiction… …it is the viewpoint of a narrator who is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character, and to report (or conceal) their speech, doings, and states of consciousness… … example is that of an intrusive narrator who not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters… …sometimes also expresses personal views about human life in general.

Ans to Q 10: First-person narratives refer to what the first-person narrator knows, experiences, infers, or can find out by talking to other characters… …distinguished by the "I" who is only a fortuitous witness and auditor of the matters he relates (Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and other works by Joseph Conrad)… … may be one who is a participant in the story (Ishmael in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*)… …the central character in the story (Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders,* Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre.*



3.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Explain the meaning and scope of Narratology.

Q 2: Discuss the idea of a narrative with reference to the various components under encompassed by the field of Narratology.

Q 3: Write a detailed note on narrative point of view with examples. How do you think 3rd person narrative is different from 1st and 2nd person narrative.

Q 4: In what ways, do the narrator and the narratee get involved in the act of communication? Discuss in detail.

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UNIT 4: SHLOMITH RIMMON KENAN: CONCEPTS FROM *NARRATIVE FICTION*

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 About Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan:

4.4 What is a Narrative?

4.5 Important Concept of the Book

- 4.5.1 Idea of the Story: Events/Character
- 4.5.2 Idea of Time (Order, Duration, Frequency)
- 4.5.3 Characterisation
- 4.5.4 Focalisation
- 4.5.5 The Role of the Reader

4.6 Let us Sum up

4.7 Further Reading

4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

4.9 Possible Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the different important aspects of narrative fiction as found in Kenan's book *Narrative Fiction*
- explain the ideas of the story in terms of the events and characters
- explain the idea of time in terms of concepts like Order, Duration and Frequency
- discuss the issues related to focalisation and characterisation
- discuss the role of the reader.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of Block 1. In the previous unit on Narratology,

we have already discussed some of the important components of narratives in general. This unit, based on Rimmon Kenan's book *Narrative Fiction*, shall help you to learn about narrative fiction in some detail. Being students of literature, it is very important for you to think what a narrative is or what the term narrative fiction signify. You may tend to ask how does narrative fiction differ from other kinds of narrative? What features turn a discourse into a narrative text? These are some important questions to be explored by the students like you while engaging themselves with the idea of narrative fiction. Widely acknowledged as one of the most significant contribution in its field, Rimmon Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* turns its attention to these questions. You will find that Kenan organises this book around issues—such as events, time, focalization, characterization, narration, the text and its reading—rather than individual theorists or approaches. It is expected that by the time you finish reading the unit, you will be able to examine the important aspects of narrative fiction, which shall further help you to analyse the different fictional aspects of the novels prescribed for your study.

4.3 ABOUT SHLOMITH RIMMON KENAN:

Shlomith Rimmon Kenan is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her most recent publications include *A Glance Beyond Doubt: Narration, Representation, Subjectivity* (1996) and *Re-Reading Texts: Re-Thinking Critical Presuppositions* (edited, 1997). Her book *Narrative Fiction* concerns the concept of narrative in different disciplines (psychoanalysis, historiography, legal studies and the medical humanities).

In *Narrative fiction*, Kenan addresses key approaches to narrative fiction, including New Criticism, Formalism, Structuralism and Phenomenology, but also offers views on the modifications to these theories. While presenting an analysis of the system governing all fictional narratives, whether in the form of novel, short story or narrative poem, she also suggests how individual narratives can be studied

against the background of this general system. A broad range of literary examples illustrate key aspects of the study. *Narrative Fiction* remains an ideal starting point for anyone new to narrative theory.

4.4 WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

In the Introduction to the Book *Narrative Fiction*, Kenan provides an important reference to the idea of a narrative. She writes:

Newspaper reports, history books, novels, films, comic strips, pantomime, dance, gossip, psychoanalytic sessions are only some of the narratives which permeate our lives. One species of narrative will be the subject of this book: the species called 'narrative fiction', whether in the form of novel, short story or narrative poem. However, what is a narrative? What makes the following limerick a narrative?

There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

How can we differentiate between this limerick and the following discourse?

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet
And so are you.

Why isn't the latter a narrative?

And, what is narrative fiction? How does it differ from other kinds of narratives? In what sense is a newspaper report, a narrative but not narrative fiction? What are the features that turn a given discourse into a narrative text? What are the basic aspects of narrative fiction and how do they interact with each other? How does one make sense of a specific narrative text, and how can it be described to others?

Poetics is the systematic study of literature as literature. It deals with the question 'What is literature?' What are the forms and kinds of

literature? What is the nature of one literary genre or trend? What is the system of a particular poet's 'art' or 'language'? How is a story made? What are the specific aspects of works of literature? How are they constituted? How do literary texts embody 'non-literary' phenomena? etc.

From this introduction, Renan makes it clear that a narrative fiction must have certain qualities. By 'narrative fiction', Kenan means the narration of a succession of fictional events. She further states that the term *narration* suggests:

(1) A *communication* process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee, and

(2) The verbal nature of *the medium used* to transmit the message.

It is this that distinguishes narrative fiction from narratives in other media, such as film, dance, or pantomime. The definition further suggests how narrative fiction differs from other literary texts, such as lyrical poetry or expository prose. Unlike the latter, narrative fiction represents a *succession of events.* Kenan believes that the fictional status of events is a pragmatic issue. It is arguable that history books, news reports, autobiography are in some sense no less fictional than what is conventionally classified as such. In fact, some of the procedures used in the analysis of fiction may be applied to texts conventionally defined as 'non-fiction'.

The definition of narrative fiction also gives rise to a classification of its basic aspects such as –the events, their verbal representation, and the act of telling or writing. In the spirit of Genette's distinction between 'histoire', 'récit' and 'narration', Kenan then labels these aspects 'story', 'text' and 'narration' respectively. 'Story' designates the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events. Whereas 'story' is a succession of events, 'text' is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling. Put more simply, the text is what we read. In it, the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout,

and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective ('focalizer'). Since the text is a spoken or written discourse, it implies someone who speaks or writes it. The act or process of production is the third aspect—'narration'. Narration can be considered as both real and fictional. In the empirical world, the author is the agent responsible for the production of the narrative and for its communication. The empirical process of communication, however, is less relevant to the poetics of narrative fiction than its counterpart within the text. Within the text, communication involves a fictional narrator transmitting a narrative to a fictional narratee. Of the three aspects of narrative fiction, the text is the only one directly available to the reader. It is through the text that he or she acquires knowledge of the story (its object) and of the narration (the process of its production).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What distinguishes narrative fiction from the narratives in other media, such as film, dance, or pantomime?

Q 2: What is the basic difference between story and text, according to Kenan?

Q 3: How does Kenan take the idea of 'narration'?



You will note that, according to Kenan, the narrative text is itself defined by these two other aspects: unless it told a story it would not be a narrative, and without being narrated or written it would not be a text. Indeed, story and narration may be seen as two metonymies of the text, the first evoking it through its narrative content, the second through its production.

4.5 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS OF THE BOOK

4.5.1 Idea of the Story: Events/Character

Events:

Story has been defined as the narrated events. In fact, story is one axis within the larger construct: the axis of temporal organization. Being an abstraction, a construct, the story is not directly available to the reader. Far from seeing story as raw, undifferentiated material, story has structured character, its being made of separable components, and hence having the potential of forming networks of internal relations. Such a view justifies

attempts to disengage a form from the substance of the narrated content, a specific narrative form. The theoretical possibility of abstracting story-form probably corresponds to the intuitive skill of users in processing stories: being able to re-tell them, to recognise variants of the same story, to identify the same story in another medium, and so on. Kenan argues that a story is an abstraction from:

(1) The specific style of the text in question

(2) The language in which the text is written (English, French, Hebrew)

(3) The medium or sign-system (words, cinematic shots, gestures)

Starting with story, rather than with the text from which it is abstracted, the former may be grasped as transferable from medium to medium, from language to language, and within the same language.

Character:

Kenan claims that although the study of the story's events and the links among them has been developed considerably in contemporary poetics, that of character has not. The elaboration of a systematic, non-reductive but also non-impressionistic theory of character remains one of the challenges poetics has not yet met. Virginia Woolf, for example, saw character (and life in general) as a flux and wanted to 'record the atoms as they fall upon the mind.'

The Structuralist critics tend to state that the notion of character is a myth. But, can we suppose that the character as 'dead'? Moreover, even if we grant the 'death' of character in contemporary literature, can we also retrospectively 'kill' him in 19th century fiction? Should a nonhumanist, anti-bourgeois ideology lead us to ignore that which is plainly central in a given corpus of narratives? The development of a theory of character, Kenan believes, has been impeded not only by the ideology of

this or that 'school' of poetics, or this or that 'fashion' in literature.

In order to discuss the classification of characters we can refer to E.M. Forster, who in 1927, made a distinction between 'flat' and 'round' characters. Flat characters are analogous to 'humours', caricatures, types: "In their purest form, they are constructed around a single idea or quality" and therefore 'can be expressed in one sentence.' Furthermore, such characters do not develop in the course of the action. As a consequence of the restriction of qualities and the absence of development, flat characters are easily recognised, and easily remembered by the reader. Round characters are defined by contrastive implication, namely those that are not flat. Not being flat involves having more than one quality and developing in the course of the action. Forster's distinction is of pioneering importance.

(1) The term 'flat' suggests something two-dimensional, devoid of depth and 'life', while in fact many flat characters, like those of Dickens, are not only felt as very much 'alive' but also create the impression of depth.

(2) The dichotomy is highly reductive, obliterating the degrees and nuances found in actual works of narrative fiction.

(3) Forster seems to confuse two criteria which do not always overlap. According to him, a flat character is both simple and undeveloping, whereas a round character is both complex and developing. Although these criteria often co-exist, there are fictional characters which are complex but undeveloping (e.g. Joyce's Bloom) and others which are simple but developing (e.g. the allegorical Everyman). Moreover, the lack of development can be presented as arrested development resulting from some psychic trauma, as in the case of Miss Havisham in Dicken's *Great Expectations* (1860/61), thus endowing a static character with complexity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What is the idea of a story?

Q 5: How did E. M. Forster make a distinction between 'flat' and 'round' characters?

4.5.2 Idea of Time (Order, Duration, Frequency)

Time is one of the most basic categories of human experience. The validity of considering time to be a constituent of the physical world is open for discussions. But, individuals and societies continue to experience time and to regulate their lives by it. Some of our notions of time, Kenan observes, are derived from natural processes: day and night, a solar year with its four seasons (but not in the arctic zone), etc. A person shut off from all perception of the outside world would still presumably continue to experience the succession of his own thoughts and feelings. In between these two extremes—the natural and the personal—is the mainstream of temporal experience: time as an intersubjective, public, social convention which we establish in order to facilitate our living together.

Then she states that our civilization tends to think of time as uni-directional and irreversible flow, a sort of one-way street. Such a conception was given metaphoric shape by Heraclitus early in western history: 'You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters and yet other waters go ever flowing on.' Today we might add that not only the object of experience but also the experiencing subject is in a constant flux. To become socialised, the flux must be made measurable. It can become measurable only when a repetitive pattern is discerned within it (e.g. the solar year) or imposed upon it by machines constructed too this end (calendar, clock, metronome-time). Time 'is', paradoxically, repetition within irreversible change. The repetitive aspect of time is sometimes taken one step further and seen as

a refutation of Heraclitan unidirectionality, as in Nietzsche's and Borges's concepts of 'circular time'.

Like any other aspect of the world, the experience of time may be represented in a narrative text, as (for example) in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). However, time is not only a recurrent theme in a great deal of narrative fiction, it is also a constituent factor of both story and text. The peculiarity of verbal narrative is that in it time is constitutive both of the means of representation (language) and of the object represented (the incidents of the story). Thus time in narrative fiction can be defined as the relations of chronology between story and text. Story-time, conceived of as a linear succession of events, is no more than a conventional, pragmatically convenient construct. Text-time is equally problematic. Strictly speaking, it is a spatial, not a temporal, dimension. The narrative text as text has no other temporality than the one it metonymically derives from the process of its reading. What discussions of text-time actually refer to is the linear (spatial) disposition of linguistic segments in the continuum of the text. Thus, both story-time and text-time may in fact be no more than pseudo temporal. Nevertheless, as long as we remember their 'pseudo' nature they remain useful constructs for the study of an important facet of the story-text relations.

The disposition of elements in the text, conventionally called text time, is bound to be one-directional and irreversible, because language prescribes a linear figuration of signs and hence a linear presentation of information about things. We read letter after letter, word after word, sentence after sentence, chapter after chapter, and so on. There are some modern attempts to liberate narrative fiction from these constraints, but the liberation is never complete because a complete one, if possible, will destroy intelligibility. Thus, in Beckett's *Watt* there are a few sections where Watt, at least partly demented, reverses the order of words in the sentence, letters in the word, sentences

in the paragraph, etc. However, the narrator explains these inversions to the reader before reproducing them, thus making it possible for him to recuperate the original order. Similarly, in *Hopscotch* the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar defies linearity by making the order of the *chapters* variable. In a 'Table of Instructions' preceding the novel, he writes: "In its own way this book consists of many books, but two books above all. The first can be read in a normal fashion and ends with chapter 56….The second should be read by beginning with chapter 73 and then following the sequence indicated at the end of each chapter…"

In the discussion of narrative fiction, time in general may be viewed in three respects: **order, duration and frequency**. Statements about *order* would answer the question 'when?' in terms like: first, second, last; before, after, etc. Statements about duration would answer the question 'how long?' in terms like: an hour, a year; long, short; from x till y, etc. Statements about *frequency* would answer the question 'how often?' in terms like: x times a minute, a month, a page. Kenan refers to Gerard Genette who set out to examine the relations between story-time and text-time. Under *order* Genette discusses the relations between the succession of events in the story and their linear disposition in the text. Under *duration* he examines the relations between the time the events are supposed to have taken to occur and the amount of text devoted to their narration. Under *frequency* he looks at the relations between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated in the text.

Order

The main types of discrepancy between story-order and text-order ('anachronies' in Genette's terms) are traditionally known as 'flashback' or 'retrospection' on the one hand and 'foreshadowing' or 'anticipation' on the other. Here, Kenan follows Genette in renaming them 'analepsis' and 'prolepsis' respectively. An *analepsis* is a narration of a story-event at a point in the text

after later events have been told. The narration returns, as it were, to a past point in the story. Conversely, a *prolepsis* is a narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned. The narration, as it were, takes an excursion into the future of the story. If events a, b, c figure in the text in the order b, c, a then 'a' is analeptic. If on the other hand, they appear in the order c, a, b then 'c' would be proleptic. Both analepsis and prolepsis constitute a temporally second narrative in relation to the narrative onto which they are incorporated and which Genette calls 'first narrative'. Analepses provide past information either about the character, event, or story-line mentioned at that point in the text, or about another character, event, or storyline.

But, I would like to stress, prolepsis can also be effectively used in so called omniscient narration, as the following example from Muriel Spark's The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie shows:

'Speech is silver but silence is golden. Mary, are you listening?

What was I saying?'

Mary Macgregor, lumpy, with merely two eyes, a nose and a mouth like a snowman, who was later famous for being stupid and always to blame and who, at the age of twenty-three, lost her life in a hotel fire, ventured, 'Golden'. (1971, pp. 14–15. Orig. publ. 1961)

Duration

As Genette points out, the difficulty inherent in the notion of text-time is perhaps more disturbing in connection with duration than it is in connection with order and frequency. The last two can be quite easily transposed from the *time* of the story, regardless of the conventional nature of this time, to the linearity *(space)* of the text. It is not awkward to say that episode A comes after episode B in the linear disposition of the text or that episode C is told twice in the text; and such statements are quite similar to those we can make about the story: event A precedes event B in

the chronology of the story; event C happens only once, etc. But it is much more difficult to describe in parallel terms the *duration* of the text and that of the story, for the simple reason that there is no way of measuring text-duration. The only truly temporal measure available is the time of reading and this varies from reader to reader, providing no objective standard. For this reason, it is also more difficult to find a 'norm' against which to describe changes of duration than it was to find such a point of reference for order.

Since it is impossible to describe the varieties of duration on the basis of an inaccessible 'norm' of identity between story and text, it is advisable to attempt a re-definition of the relations between the two 'durations' and posit a different type of 'norm' accordingly. The relations in question are, in fact, not between two 'durations' but between duration in the story (measnred in minutes, hours, days, months, years) and the length of text devoted to it (in lines and pages), i.e. a temporal/spatial relationship. The measure yielded by this relation in general is pace (or speed). Genette therefore proposes to use constancy of pace, rather than adequation of story and text, as the 'norm' against which to examine degrees of duration. Constancy of pace in narrative is the unchanged ratio between story-duration and textual length, e.g. when each year in the life of a character is treated in one page throughout the text.

Taking constant pace as a 'norm', we can discern two forms of modification: acceleration and deceleration. The effect of acceleration is produced by devoting a short segment of the text to a long period of the story, relative to the 'norm' established for this text. The effect of deceleration is produced by the opposite procedure, namely devoting a long segment of the text to a short period of the story. The maximum speed is ellipsis (omission), where zero textual space corresponds to some story duration. In Fielding's *Tom Jones,* for example, the narrator makes a point of

giving the reader 'an opportunity of employing the wonderful sagacity, of which he is master, by filling up these vacant spaces of time with his own conjectures' and then leave him 'a space of twelve years' in which to exercise his talents On the other hand, the minimum speed is manifested as a *descriptive pause,* where some segment of the text corresponds to zero story duration.

Frequency

Frequency, was not treated as a component of narrative theory before Genette. It is the relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the text. Frequency, then, involves repetition, which is a mental construct attained by an elimination of the specific qualities of each occurrence and a preservation of only those qualities which it shares with similar occurrences. Strictly speaking, no event is repeatable in all respects, nor is a repeated segment of the text quite the same, since its new location puts it in a different context which necessarily changes its meaning. This paradox is developed by Borges in 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*' (1974. Orig. publ. in Spanish 1956). In this text, ostensibly an obituary article on a little known French symbolist writer, we are informed that his most ambitious literary project consisted in writing again *Don Quixote*. Before his untimely death, Pierre Menard managed to produce only Chapters 9, 38 and a fragment of Chapter 22, all identical in every word to the corresponding portions of Cervantes's text (orig. publ. in Spanish 1605–1616). As the fictional narrator comments, the very same text coming from a French Decadent esthete and from a retired Spanish soldier takes a completely different sense, the former gaining in richness from the intervening changes in history and culture. Considered as mental constructs, repetition-relations between story events and their narration in the text can take the following forms:

Singulative, i.e. telling once what 'happened' once. This is the

most common narrative form. To the same category belongs the less common phenomenon of narrating n times what 'happened' n times, since here too each mention in the text corresponds to one occurrence in the story. This practice is parodied in *Don Quixote* when Sancho tells the story of a fisherman who had to transport three hundred goats in a boat that had room only for one. As Sancho narrates, it becomes clear that he intends to tell the event three hundred times, corresponding to the number of journeys the fisherman undertook. Quixote impatiently comments: ***Repetitive,*** i.e. telling n times what 'happened' once. Thus, the main event in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*! (1936), the murder of Charles Bon by Henry Sutpen, is narrated thirty-nine times, sometimes with, sometimes without changes of narrator, focalizer, duration, narrative subject, style, etc.

Iterative*,* i.e. telling once what 'happened' n times. Such is the opening of Lawrence's *The Rainbow,* narrating in one time the recurrent activities of the Brangwen men over the years: Their life and interrelations were such, feeling the pulse and the body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying and responsive when the crops were shorn away…. They took the udder of the cows, the cows yielded milk and pulse against the hands of the men, the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men. The passage is clearly iterative, prefiguring thereby the cyclic nature of the relationship between the generations and within each generation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Explain briefly the main role of time in a narrative fiction?

Q 7: In which respects, may we discuss the idea of time in a narrative fiction?

4.5.3 Characterisation

Character, as one construct within the abstracted story, can be described in terms of a network of character-traits. These traits, however, may or may not appear as such in the text. How, then, is the construct arrived at? By assembling various character-indicators distributed along the text-continuum and, when necessary, inferring the traits from them. It is these indicators that Kenan seeks to define under the heading of 'characterization'. In principle, any element in the text may serve as an indicator of character and, conversely, character-indicators may serve other purposes as well. But, there are elements which are most frequently, though not exclusively, associated with characterisation. In the study of particular texts, it should be remembered that the same means of characterization may be used differently by different authors or in different works by the same author and sometimes even within the same work. However, in this general presentation of characterization such differences cannot be explored. There are two basic types of textual indicators of character: direct definition and indirect presentation. The first type names the trait by an adjective (e.g. 'he was goodhearted'), an abstract noun ('his goodness knew no bounds'), or possibly some other kind of noun ('she was a real bitch') or part of speech ('he loves only himself'). The second type, on the other hand, does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply. You are advised to think about characterisation in the novels that you are to study as part of your course.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Which are the two types of textual indicators of character?

4.5.4 Focalisation

The story is presented in the text through the mediation of some 'prism', 'perspective', 'angle of vision', verbalised by the narrator though not necessarily his. However, many Anglo-American critics are likely to associate 'prism', 'perspective', or 'angle of vision' with the more common term 'point of view'. But, that the term 'focalization' is not free of optical-photographic connotations, and— like 'point of view'— its purely visual sense has to be broadened to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation. Most studies of point of view treat two related but different questions as if they were interchangeable: 'who sees?' and 'who speaks?' Obviously, a person (and, by analogy, a narrative agent) is capable of both speaking and seeing, and even of doing both things at the same time— a state of affairs which facilitates the confusion between the two activities. Moreover, it is almost impossible to speak without betraying some personal 'point of view', if only through the very language used. But, a person (and, by analogy, a narrative agent) is also capable of undertaking to tell what another person sees or has seen. Thus, speaking and seeing, narration and focalization, may, but need not, be attributed to the same agent. The distinction between the two activities is a theoretical necessity, and only on its basis can the interrelations between them be studied with precision.

Kenan cites an example from James Joyce's novel *A Portrait* to clarify both the reasons for the confusion and the implications of the distinction. In Joyce's novel, almost everything is seen through Stephen's eyes. According to Booth, 'any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator'. If this is accepted, Stephen becomes not only a vehicle of focalization (a 'focalizer') but also a narrator. However, even in passages where

the language gets as close as possible to a 'translation' of Stephen's perceptions, verbal communication and non-verbal focalization remain separate. Take, for example, the opening of the novel:

"Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo…His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face. He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt."

The language not only conveys the perceptions of the child, it also contains childish expressions. Yet it is not Stephen's language, nor is Stephen the narrator in this passage. For one thing, a baby who still wets the bed (see the next paragraph in the novel) is incapable of formulating complete sentences like those quoted above. For another, in this passage, Stephen is referred to in the third person ('he', 'him'), an unlikely procedure if he himself were the narrator of his story (although one could perhaps argue that children often do this). Similarly, focalization and narration are separate in so-called first person retrospective narratives, although this is usually ignored by studies of point of view. Pip, in Dickens's *Great Expectations,* narrates events that happened to him in the past:

'You are to wait here, you boy', said Estella and disappeared and closed the door. I took the opportunity of being alone in the court-yard, to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. Although this is a record of things as the child saw, felt, understood them, words like 'accessories' and 'appendages' are clearly not within a child's vocabulary. The narrator is Pip, the adult, while the focalizer is Pip, the child.

From the above discussion, the following may be seen as the distinction between narration and focalisation, in Kenan's view.

1. In principle, focalization and narration are distinct activities.
2. In so-called 'third-person centre of consciousness' (James's *The Ambassadors,* Joyce's *Portrait*), the centre of consciousness (or 'reflector') is the focalizer, while the user of the third person is the narrator.
3. Focalization and narration are also separate in first-person retrospective narratives.
4. As far as focalization is concerned, there is no difference between third-person centre of consciousness and first-person retrospective narration. In both, the focalizer is a character within the represented world. The only difference between the two is the identity of the narrator.
5. However, focalization and narration may sometimes be combined, as will be shown in the next section.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What is meant by the term 'focalisation'? Give an example.

4.5.5 The Role of the Reader

The Anglo-American New Critics and the French Structuralists treated the text as more or less an autonomous object. However, a new orientation, according to Kenan, stresses the reciprocal relations between text and reader: a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader. The written text is conceived of as having a virtual dimension which calls for the reader's construction of the unwritten text. This virtuality contributes to the dynamic character of the reading process and gives the reader a certain degree of freedom (but only a certain degree, since the written text does exercise some control over the

process). Just as the reader participates in the production of the text's meaning, so the text shapes the reader. On the one hand, it 'selects' its appropriate reader, projects an image of such a reader, through its specific linguistic code, its style, the 'encyclopedia' it implicitly presupposes. On the other hand, just as the text pre- shapes a certain competence to be brought by the reader from the outside, so in the course of reading, it develops in the reader a specific competence needed to come to grips with it, often inducing him to change his previous conceptions and modify his outlook. The reader is thus both an image of a certain competence brought to the text and a structuring of such a competence within the text.

So, in Kenan's deliberations on a narrative, the 'reader' is seen as a construct, a 'metonymic characterization of the text', an 'it' rather than a personified 'he' or 'she'. Such a reader is 'implied' or 'encoded' in the text 'in the very rhetoric through which he is required to "make sense of the content" or reconstruct it "as a world." Consequently, the relevance of the psychology of readers is limited, but a few psychological observations which bear directly on the dynamics of reading inscribed in the text will be included in the next section. The advantage of talking of an implied reader rather than of 'textual strategies' pure and simple is that it implies a view of the text as a system of reconstruction inviting structures rather than as an autonomous object. Thus, analepses are often used to provide information necessary to the reader, and prolepses to arouse the reader's expectations, the story is abstracted by the reader, and characters are constructed by the reader from various indications dispersed along the text-continuum.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: How does Kenan consider the role of the readers?



4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have tried to reflect on the different internal aspects of fiction as discussed by Rimmon Kenan in her book *Narrative Fiction*. You have, by this time, found that Kenan organises her discussions on fictional narratives around issues like events, time, focalization, characterization, narration, the text and the reader—which are some of the fundamental aspects in any fictional narratives. As you finish reading the unit, it is expected that you will now be able to examine the important aspects of narrative fiction, especially those prescribed for your study.



4.7 FURTHER READING

1) Prince, Gerald. (2003). *A Dictionary of Narratology*. London: University of Nabraska Press.

2) Rimmon Kenan, Shlomith. (2005). *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. Routledge.



4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: According to Renan a narrative fiction must have certain qualities… …unlike other narratives, the *narration* in narrative fiction is a communication process where a message is transmitted by the addresser to addressee… …besides, the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message is also taken into account.

Ans to Q 2: Story' designates the narrated events reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events… …story is a succession of events, text is a spoken or written

discourse which undertakes their telling… …the text is what we read.

Ans to Q 3: Narration can be both real and fictional… …the author is the agent responsible for the production of the narrative… …the author is also responsible for the communication as part of the narration… …communication involves a fictional narrator transmitting a narrative to a fictional narratee.

Ans to Q 4: A story has been defined as the narrated events… …because a story is a construct, it is not directly available to the reader… …a story has a structured character, as it is made of separable components.

Ans to Q 5: Flat characters are 'humours' or caricatures, types… …such characters do not develop in the course of the action… …flat characters are easily recognised, and easily remembered by the reader… …round characters are defined by contrastive implication, namely those that are not flat… …they have more than one quality and are developing in the course of the action.

Ans to Q 6: Time is not only a recurrent theme in a great deal of narrative fiction, it is also a constituent factor of both story and text. The peculiarity of verbal narrative is that in it time is constitutive both of the means of representation (language) and of the object represented (the incidents of the story).

Ans to Q 7: Order, duration and frequency… …*order* would answer the question 'when?' in terms like: first, second, last; before, after, etc…. ….duration would answer the question 'how long?' in terms like: an hour, a year; long, short; from x till y, etc… … *frequency* would answer the question 'how often?' in terms like: x times a minute, a month, a page… ...*frequency* also encompasses the relations between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated in the text.

Ans to Q 8: Direct definition and indirect presentation… …the first type names the trait by an adjective—'he was goodhearted', by an abstract noun—'his goodness knew no bounds', some other kind of

noun—'she was a real bitch', or part of speech—'he loves only himself'…. …the second type, instead of mentioning the traits displays and exemplifies it in various ways.

Ans to Q 9: Focalisation is often discussed as the 'point of view'… …point of view treat two related but different questions—'who sees?' and 'who speaks?'… …but a person is capable of both speaking and seeing, and even of doing both things at the same time… …but a person is also capable of undertaking to tell what another person sees or has seen… …so speaking and seeing, narration and focalization, may not be attributed to the same agent.

Ans to Q 10: Kenan in his deliberations on a narrative, considers the 'reader' to be a construct, a 'metonymic characterization of the text', an 'it' rather than a personified 'he' or 'she'… …such a reader is 'implied' or 'encoded' in the text according to Kenan.



4.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What according to Rimmon Kenan is or is not a narrative? How does Kenan view the act of narration in the context of narrative fiction? Discuss.

Q 2: What distinguishes a narrative fiction from other literary texts and other types of narratives such as a film or pantomime? Discuss.

Q 3: Why is time so important in narrative fiction? Discuss in detail with reference to 'order', 'duration' and 'frequency'?

Q 4: What is understood by the term focalisation? Why is it that focalising and narrating are two different activities?

Q 5: Discuss the role of a reader as viewed by Rimmon Kenan.

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UNIT 5: HENRY FIELDING: *TOM JONES* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Henry Fielding: The Novelist

5.3.1 His Life

5.3.2 His Works

5.4 Story of the Novel

5.5 Critical Reception of Fielding

5.6 Let us Sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

5.9 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of Henry Fielding
- read and understand the novel *Tom Jones* in its proper context
- trace the main storyline of the novel
- situate Fielding in the context of 18th century novels.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 2 of Course 5. This unit introduces you to Henry Fielding (1707-1754), one of the greatest precursors of English novels, and his famous *Tom Jones* (1749). Henry Fielding was well known for his rich, earthy humour and satiric prowess. Along with Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), and Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), Fielding was the progenitor of the novel as a genre in the 18th century. Most of these writers wrote novels, which not only depicted the contemporary currents of events in the history of England but also provided covert yet incisive

insights into the follies and foibles of the middle class milieu of the time. The novel *Tom Jones* is historically contextualised halfway through the 18th century, and is closely enmeshed with the royal history of the Stuarts ruling England at that time. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will learn that in writing this novel, Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction, which he outlined in the prefatory chapters to the Books of the novel, and then proceeded to translate theory into practice. At the same time, in creating his hero Tom Jones in this novel, Fielding introduced a concept of a 'character' new to the English fiction at that time.

5.3 HENRY FIELDING: THE NOVELIST

In this section, we shall discuss the life and works of Henry Fielding, the novelist who wrote a number of novels including a literary masterpiece like *Tom Jones.*

5.3.1 His Life

Henry Fielding was both a novelist and a playwright. He was born on April 22, 1707 at Sharpham Park, Somerset, of parents who were of aristocratic lineage. He attended Eton College from 1719 to 1724. He studied law in London in the late 1720s and was a student of Leiden University at the Netherlands for some time. However, his main interest was in theatre, and composed around 25 plays in the period between 1728 and 1737. Some of his early successes in drama include *Tom Thumb: A Tragedy* (1730); revised as *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, (1731) and *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737), the latter being a satire on the Whig administration of Sir Robert Walpole. The



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

year 1737 saw the authorities imposing stage censorship through the passing of the Licensing Act.

From 1737, he started to find new outlets for his witty inventiveness. Fielding married Charlotte Cradock in 1734, and resumed his bar studies after being debarred from producing plays. His wife provided the model for two of his fictional heroines. As he resumed legal studies, he began to associate himself with political journalism. He entered the Bar in 1740 and in 1748; he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Middlesex. Together with his blind half-brother, John, Fielding was responsible for Britain's first organised detective police force, the *Bow Street Runners*. From 1739 to 1741, under the pseudonym of *Captain Hercules Vinegar*, he edited a thrice-weekly magazine *The Champion* and continued to oppose the views of the Walpole government.

After spending almost ten years by writing many of his novels, Fielding returned to journalism in 1752, and was appointed the editor of *The Covent Garden Journal.* He started with another pseudonym *Sir Alexander Drawcansir*. By that time, he was terribly down with asthma and gout. In 1754, with his wife and daughter, he set sail for Lisbon where he breathed his last. *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,* published in 1755, is a depressing account of his final travels.

You will find that despite his rakish life style, Fielding was a man who had a well-deserved reputation for the generosity of spirit and a natural sympathy for the fellow men. As an Anglican, he believed in the 'good nature' of human beings. As a novelist, he was a committed citric of corruption and hypocrisy prevailing in his society. He brought to English novel a new degree of 'psychological realism' and a 'linear narrative style' besides drawing inspiration from multiple sources like classical epic, prose romances, the European picaresque and the Scriblerian satires. His own dramatic background introduced a new sophistication in

the representation of the comic characters through dialogue. In 1906, George Bernard Shaw acclaimed him as "the greatest practising dramatist, with the single exception of Shakespeare, produced by England between the Middle Ages and the 19th century."

5.3.2 His Works

It is interesting to note that Fielding began his career as a playwright with *Love in Several Masques* (1728) modelled on the Restoration Comedy of Manners. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the famous English letter writer and a poet, was Fielding's distant cousin, and she encouraged him to write this play. In the same year, he became a student of letters at Leiden, where he remained about 18 months, greatly enlarging his knowledge of classical literature. On his return to London, he continued his energetic but precarious life as a dramatist, and between 1729 and 1737, he wrote as many as 25 assorted dramas, largely in the form of farce and satire. In 1730, three of his important plays namely *The Author's Farce*; *Rape upon Rape*, a savage satire on the practices of the law; and Tom Thumb (published in a revised form as The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great, the following year).

However, soon his skills in dramatic parody and the use of burlesque tempted him to parody Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* in *Shamela* (1741), Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1742) in *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams.* You should note that Fielding was disappointed with Richardson's *Pamela,* as he thought that Richardson took virtue and prudence to be identical, and that Pamela appeared to be a calculating woman whose concern for virtue, masked intentness on material and social betterment. For Fielding, who took morals to be essentially positive based on generosity, Shamela was a hypocrite who resisted her master to force him into marriage so that she might become a respectable lady, and

carry on freely with the local parson. The narrative of *Joseph Andrews*, on the other hand, follows the misfortunes of the innocent Joseph and worthless companion Parson Adams. This novel shows through numerous comic episodes the perennial problem of rendering virtue as colourful. Fielding called *Joseph Andrews* 'A Comic Epic in Prose.'

Fielding's next major novel is *The History of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743). It is a satire on human greatness interpreted in terms of power exerted over others. However, the novel is also topical in that man's lust for power is greater than their regards for human feelings. In this novel, Fielding however, took the life of a thief and receiver who had been hanged at Tyburn to demonstrate the division between a thief and a great soldier and a great political personality like Sir Robert Walpole.

The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling appeared in 1749. This great work is distinguished by his portrayal of un-idealised hero. This is yet another example of Fielding's "Comic Epic in Prose". In *Tom Jones,* Fielding emerges as a great innovator of the form of the novel in the 18th century. Fielding called for a panoramic view of the novel as he declared that a novelist must be well acquainted with all ranks and degrees of men and gain access to human nature by having conversation with people from both low and high classes. You should note that in this novel, Fielding provides a mature criticism of every aspect of general human interest– religion, sex, love, war, nature of men and women, social institution and so on. Fielding's last important novel is *Amelia* (1751). In this novel, he idealises a woman character for which the novel becomes a celebration of womanly virtues. It is also a novel about a credible and convincing representation of a positively good person. This novel is a reflection on his sad and gloomy experience of ensuring a tough life in the metropolis.

In 1748, there came an important opportunity in Fielding's life when he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for

Westminster and for Middlesex. His serious concerns at the social abuses and judicial corruptions during his times are reflected in essays like “A Charge Delivered to the Great Jury” (1749), “An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers” (1751), “Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder” (1752), and “A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor” (1753). As a magistrate, Fielding was very dedicated and effective, and he was responsible for Britain’s first organised detective police force.

Thus, you will find that with Fielding, the English novel gained maturity as he came to establish one of the most notable fictional forms of writings with the help of middle class realism. Fielding appeared to be one of the most civic minded of the English writers, a leading example of Augustan ideal of a ‘public man’. It is with the English society in general and not with the quality of the feelings of the individual characters, that Fielding was most concerned. His aim was to create an art form in the 18th century that resembled the epic of the ancient period. Both the realistic mirror and critical flavour contributed immensely to his development as a major exponent of the tradition of English fictional prose writing in its formative periods.



LET US KNOW

Although what constitutes a ‘novel’ caused much debate during Fielding’s time, there was some consensus that a novel was a prose work charting the everyday lives and events of the people. Fielding is generally agreed to be an innovating master of the highest originality. He believed that he had been “the founder of a new province of writing”, and even Sir Walter Scott, commended him for his “high notions of the dignity of an art which he may be considered as having founded.” In breaking away from the epistolary method of his contemporary Samuel Richardson and others, he devised

what he described as "comic epics in prose", which may be characterised as the first modern novels in English, leading straight to the works of Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Despite his rakish life style, why do you think, Fielding deserved applause?

Q 2: Name some of the major novels of Fielding. Briefly state, why they are important in the context of the 18th century England.

Q 3: In what ways, does the novel *Tom Jones* fulfil Fielding's purpose as a social writer?

Q 4: What was Fielding's new concept of the novel?

5.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL

In this section, we shall try to reflect on the story of the novel *Tom Jones* that is a huge novel. However, it needs mentioning that the introductory chapters that preface each of the 18 books of the novel, satisfy a contemporary reader's fondness for moral commentary. At the same time, they present before the readers the narrative strategy of Fielding while writing the novel. This novel is dedicated to George Lyttleton, an eminent statesman and orator who served as the modal of a typical 'good man' as exemplified by Mr. Allworthy in the novel *Tom Jones*. In the dedication, Fielding asserts that Lyttleton is largely responsible for *Tom Jones*, as he supported Fielding during the composition of the novel. The following is an attempt to discuss very briefly the storyline of the novel as well as the introductions to the various chapters that add to the wonderful experience of reading a bulky but largely engaging piece of fiction like *Tom Jones.*

"The rich and benevolent country gentleman Mr. Allworthy arrives home from a trip to London and discovers baby Tom in his bed. Allworthy tries to find the parents of this foundling and succeeds in discovering the

fact that a local woman Jenny Jones and her tutor, Mr. Partridge, are guilty of having an illicit child. Allworthy sends Jenny away from the country, and poor Mr. Partridge too vanishes suddenly. Allworthy decides to bring up the boy. Soon after, Bridget, Mr. Allworthy's sister, marries Captain Blifil, and becomes the mother of a son named Blifil. Captain Blifil regards Tom as a threat to the future of their own son as he is concerned more with making his own son the heir of Mr. Allworthy's huge properties."

The narrator of the story then takes the readers to twelve years earlier. Although Blifil and Tom Jones are brought up together, Allworthy is the only person to show consistent affection to Tom. The philosopher Square and the reverend Thwackum, the boys' tutors, despise Tom and loves Blifil, as it is believed that Tom is wild and Blifil pious. Tom frequently steals apples and ducks to support the family of Black George, Allworthy's servant, and tells all secrets to Blifil who informs Allworthy about the matter, thereby sending Tom into problems very frequently. However, interestingly enough, the people of the parish, hearing of Tom's generosity to Black George, begin to speak kindly of Tom while condemning Blifil for his cunning nature. Tom's sportsmanship helps him to befriend Squire Western—Allworthy's neighbour. His daughter Sophia Western falls deeply in love with Tom. However, Tom is already inclined towards Molly Seagrim, daughter of Black George, the servant. When Molly becomes pregnant, Tom prevents Allworthy from sending Molly to prison by admitting that he has fathered her child. Although later, Tom falls deeply in love with Sophia and begins to resent his ties to Molly, still he remains faithful to Molly. His relief comes with the knowledge that Molly has been having affairs with other men, and Tom is not the father of her child. He becomes free to confess his delicate feelings to Sophia.

In his death-bed, Allworthy reads out his will stating that Blifil will inherit most of his estate, although Tom too will get something. Both Thwackum and Square Western are upset after finding that each of them will receive only a thousand pounds. Tom experiences great emotional disturbance at Allworthy's illness and remains near his bed all the time.

When the doctor announces that Allworthy will not die, Tom rejoices and gets heavily drunk. Blifil calls Tom a “bastard” and Tom retaliates by hitting him. Tom, who has sworn faithfulness to Sophia, encounters Molly by chance and makes love to her. Sophia’s aunt Mrs. Western comes to stay at her brother’s house. Both unite over a plan to marry Sophia to Blifil. Mrs. Western promises not to reveal Sophia’s love for Tom as long as Sophia submits to Blifil as a suitor. Sophia, however, strongly opposes the proposal, and Squire Western grows violent with her. Blifil tells Allworthy that Tom is a rascal who danced drunkenly about the house, and Allworthy banishes Tom from the country. Tom does not want to leave Sophia, but decides that he must follow the honourable path.

Tom then starts wandering about the countryside. In Bristol, he meets Partridge who becomes his loyal servant. Tom also rescues Mrs. Waters from being robbed, and they begin an affair at a local inn. Sophia, who has run away from Squire Western’s estate to avoid marrying Blifil, stops at this inn and discovers that Tom is having an affair with Mrs. Waters. She leaves her muff in Tom’s bed so that he knows she has been there. When Tom finds the muff, he frantically starts pursuing Sophia. In London, Sophia stays with her relative Lady Bellaston. Both Tom and Partridge arrive in London to stay in the house of Mrs. Miller and her daughter Nancy. A young gentleman called Nightingale, with whom Nancy is in love, also lives in the house. Nancy becomes pregnant and Tom convinces Nightingale to marry her. Then Lady Bellaston and Tom too begin an affair, although Tom privately, continues to pursue Sophia. When he and Sophia are reconciled, Tom breaks off the relationship with Lady Bellaston by sending her a marriage proposal that scares her away. Yet Lady Bellaston is still determined not to allow Sophia and Tom’s love to flourish. She encourages another young man, Lord Fellamar, to rape Sophia.

Soon after, Squire Western, Mrs. Western, Blifil, and Allworthy arrive in London, and Squire Western locks Sophia in her bedroom. Mr. Fitzpatrick thinks Tom is his wife’s lover and begins a duel with Tom. In defending himself, Tom stabs Fitzpatrick with the sword and gets

imprisoned subsequently. Partridge visits Tom in jail with the ghastly news that Mrs. Waters is none other than Jenny Jones, Tom's mother. Mrs. Waters meets Allworthy and explains that Fitzpatrick is still alive, and has admitted to initiating the duel. She also tells Allworthy that a lawyer acting on behalf of an unnamed gentleman tried to persuade her to conspire against Tom. Allworthy realises that Blifil is this very gentleman, and he decides never to speak to him again. Tom, however, takes pity on Blifil and provides him with a pension.

Mrs. Waters also reveals that Tom's mother was Bridget Allworthy. Square sends Allworthy a letter explaining that Tom's conduct during Allworthy's illness was honourable and compassionate. Tom is released from jail and he and Allworthy are reunited as nephew and uncle. Mrs. Miller explains to Sophia the reasons for Tom's marriage proposal to Lady Bellaston, and Sophia is satisfied. Now that Tom is Allworthy's heir, Squire Western eagerly encourages the marriage between Tom and Sophia. Sophia chastises Tom for his lack of chastity, but agrees to marry him. They live happily on Western's estate with two children, and shower everyone around them with kindness and generosity.



LET US KNOW

The Parallelism between Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* makes room for an interesting analysis of Fielding's narrative strategies while writing both the books. Both the novels follow a tripartite structural scheme: city, highway and country. The country has been shown as the storehouse of natural virtue, the city the quagmire of corruption, vices and artificialities, and the highway the connecting line between the two. Moreover, both the novels are picaresque in structure and form. Again, in *Joseph Andrews,* the identity of Joseph's true father is withheld until the end of the novel. Similar things happen in *Tom Jones* as the identity of Tom's guardian too is withheld until near the conclusion of the novel although Fielding gives sufficient hints about the real parentage of Tom during the course of events.

Therefore, you find two main threads to the action in the storyline of the novel: one, the mystery attached with the birth of Tom, and the other, the love story of Tom and Sophia. However, they are not necessarily interrelated. Because, Tom is a foundling who cannot make any claim to Mr. Allworthy's properties and this prevents him from being an acceptable suitor for Sophia. The working out of these two main themes together through riddles and surprising solutions goes to the credit of the writer. I want to draw your attention to what Fielding himself says in the book. In the Dedication he claims that to "recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history." Then again, in his Farewell to the readers he says: "no man detests and despises scurrility more than myself…" Such information should make you aware of the concerns of Fielding while writing this novel.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the similarity between *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*?

Q 6: How is Tom treated in the family of Allworthy?

Q 7: Tell the story of Tom Jones briefly.

5.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF FIELDING

It is however interesting to note the changes and shifts in Fielding criticism in the 20th century. F. R. Leavis, in the first chapter of his *The Great Tradition,* dismissed Fielding's work. Denying him any 'classical distinction', Leavis suggested, "There can't be subtlety of organisation without richer matter to organise, and subtler interests than Fielding has to offer." Such a verdict on Fielding was not surprising in an age when the most highly admired practitioners of the English novels were George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, James Joyce, D. H. Laurence and so on. Leavis' challenge has however been taken by many subsequent writers and critics like Arnold Kettle, J. Middleton Murray, Ian Watt, William Empson, A. E. Dyson etc.

Most of the early critical studies of Fielding took as their foundation the moral complexity of the fiction and its formal intricacy. For critics in the 1950s and 1960s, Fielding's interest in freedom and licence appealed strongly. More recently, critics have reclaimed the importance of the dramatic works, while others have begun to investigate the fiction from feminist perspectives. For the contemporary student, a greater range of contextual information and biographical detail is available than ever before. In very recent times, however, Fielding's generous optimism, his delight in the senses and the plenitude of his fictional universe obviously commend him to the new 'modern' age. Subsequently, Fielding becomes more attractive a model for the new generation of novelists than George Eliot and Henry James.

Tom Jones was an immediate hit with the public, with recommendations quickly spreading through London's coffee houses. Fielding however did not achieve universal critical acclaim, with writers including Dr Johnson and Smollett objecting to the novel on moral and aesthetic grounds. In writing the novel, Fielding boldly asserted that he had employed all the wit and humour of which he is a master in an effort to laugh humankind out of their vices and follies. This prefatory remark on the purpose of the novel came as a shock to the contemporary readers, writers and critics. Samuel Richardson never forgave Fielding for his attack on *Pamela.* Even in his letter to two young women who had expressed their admiration for *Tom Jones*, Richardson wrote: "…he knows not how to draw a delicate woman. He has not been accustomed to such company…is too immoral, I will venture to say, to take any other bias than that a perverse and crooked nature has given him, or evil habits, at least, have confirmed in him…" He further reiterated "And I had reason to think that the Author intended…in writing it, to whiten a vicious Character and to make morality bend to his Practices." Samuel Johnson too said that *Tom Jones* was a "vicious" book, and that he "scarcely knew a more corrupt work than Tom Jones."

That *Tom Jones* is an immoral book became commonplace in literary criticism in subsequent periods too. The Victorian people too

might have been offended by Fielding's honest and straightforward portrayal of men, women and manners. You will find it interesting to note that Victorian writers like Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Charlotte Bronte and Matthew Arnold never liked this book. Stevenson called *Tom Jones* "dirty, dull, and false." However, contrary to such an attitude towards the book, 19th century critics spoke out in defence of Fielding and this book. Coleridge defended the novel by saying—"I think Tom Jones is one of the most perfect plots ever planned." Bulwer Lytton called Fielding a "deep, accurate, and scientific moralist''. Anthony Trollope hailed *Tom Jones* as "one of the greatest novels in the English language, for there he [Fielding] has shown how a noble and sanguine nature may fall away under temptation and he be again strengthened and made to stand upright." However, in the general perception of the 19th century, *Tom Jones* enjoyed a rather factitious reputation as an expression of frank and robust masculinity in contrast to the prudishness and sentimentality of much Victorian fiction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How did Leavis view Fielding in his *The Great Tradition*?

Q 9: What were some of the contemporary remarks on Fielding's *Tom Jones*?



5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have been introduced to Henry Fielding, one of the greatest precursors of the English novels and his famous novel *Tom Jones.* You have learnt that Fielding was the progenitor of the novel as a genre in the 18th century. Through the medium of the novel, he not only depicted the contemporary currents of events in the history of England but also provided incisive insights into the follies and foibles of the middle class milieu of the time. You have learnt that in writing this novel *Tom*

Jones, Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction, which he outlined in the prefatory chapters to the Books of the novel, and then proceeded to translate theory into practice. At the same time, in creating his hero Tom Jones in this novel, Fielding introduced a concept of a 'character' new to the English fiction.



5.7 FURTHER READING

1) Dady, Mark Hawkins. (ed). (1996). *Reader's Guide to Literature in English*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.

2) Drabble, Margaret. (ed). (2000) The Oxford Companion to English Literature (6th edition). OUP.

3) Ousby, Ian (1992). *The Wordsworth Companion to Literature in English*. Cambridge University Press.



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: For the generosity of spirit and a natural sympathy for the fellow men… … he was a committed novelist who exposed corruption and hypocrisy of his society… …he introduced psychological realism and a linear narrative style to English fictions.

Ans to Q 2: *Joseph Andrews* an episodic novel on the worth of virtue… …*The History of Jonathan Wild the Great* a satire on human greatness interpreted in terms of power exerted over others… …*The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* a criticism of the different human interests like religion, sex, love, nature of men and women… ... *Amelia* a celebration of womanly virtues.

Ans to Q 3: In writing this novel Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction… …through Tom Jones Fielding introduced a character new to the English fiction…. …this new character shares typical human

frailties, failings and vices but is finally redeemed by his natural and unfailing goodness in heart.

Ans to Q 4: During Fielding's time, the novel was seen as a prose work charting the everyday lives and events… …Fielding was an innovator of the highest originality... …breaking away from the epistolary methods of novel writing… …he devised the novel as a "comic epics in prose".

Ans to Q. 5: Both the novels are picaresque in structure… …both follow a tripartite structural scheme: city, highway and country—the country signifying natural virtue, the city exemplifying corruption and vices, and the highway the connecting line between the two…. ….in both the novels the identity of the true father is withheld.

Ans to Q 6: Allworthy is the only person who shows fondness for Tom… …Blifil hates him most… … The philosopher Square and the reverend Thwackum, the boys' tutors, despise Tom and adore Blifil, since it was believed that Tom was wild and Blifil was pious.

Ans to Q 7: For the answer reread the section 5.4.

Ans to Q 8: F. R. Leavis, in his *The Great Tradition* dismissed Fielding's work… …Fielding was denied any 'classical distinction'… …Leavis suggested that "There can't be subtlety of organisation without richer matter to organise, and subtler interests than Fielding has to offer."

Ans to Q 9: *Tom Jones* was an immediate hit with the public… …Samuel Johnson and Smollett objected to the novel on moral and aesthetic grounds… … his prefatory remark on the purpose of the novel—which was to laugh at the follies of human beings came as a shock to the contemporary readers, writers and critics… …Richardson objected that Fielding: "…he knows not how to draw a delicate woman"… …Samuel Johnson said that *Tom Jones* was a "vicious" book, and stated that he "scarcely knew a more corrupt work than Tom Jones."



5.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Fielding is often considered one of the most important and influential writers in the tradition of English novel? Do you agree? Justify your views.

Q 2: It is stated that Fielding wrote *Tom Jones* at a time when people were needed to be instructed in questions of morality. Justify your views with reference to Fielding's position in 18th century English Literature.

Q 3: Narrate the story of the novel *Tom Jones* in your own words. Do you think that Fielding is successful in representing both the city and country life with the help of this novel?

Q 4: Although what constitutes a 'novel' caused much debate during Fielding's time, there was some consensus that a novel was a prose work charting the everyday lives and events of the people. Elaborate.

Q 5: What, according to you, were Fielding's actual purpose in writing the Prefatory Chapters of his 18 Books in *Tom Jones*?

Q 6: What are the shifts and changes in the criticism of *Tom Jones*?

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UNIT 6: HENRY FIELDING: *TOM JONES* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 The Prefatory Introductions to the Books of the Novel

6.4 Major Themes

6.5 Fielding's Art of Characterisation

6.6 Fielding's Narrative Style

6.7 Let us Sum up

6.8 Further Reading

6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.10 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss briefly the contents of the prefatory chapters to the Books of *Tom Jones*
- identify the important themes of the novel
- explain Fielding's art of characterisation
- elaborate Fielding's narrative style.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit needs to be studied in connection with the previous unit. Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones* is often considered one of the masterpieces among the 18th and 19th century English novels. Published in 1749, this novel recounts the metaphoric journey of a foundling named Tom Jones through the trials and travails of life leading him finally to an improved understanding of life and its vicissitudes. In the different sections and subsections of this unit, we shall embark upon an exciting journey into the world of *Tom Jones,* which will further help you to gain considerable insights not only into the characters but also into the amazing chain of events depicted in the novel.

6.3 THE PREFATORY INTRODUCTIONS TO THE BOOKS OF THE NOVEL

Tom Jones is historically contextualised halfway through the 18th century, and is closely enmeshed with the royal history of the Stuarts ruling England at that time. The novel, both a 'Buildungsroman' and a 'picaresque novel', is regarded as the earliest English prose works describable as a novel. This huge work is divided into 18 smaller books, each preceded by a discursive chapter, often on topics unrelated to the book itself.

The introductory chapters preceding the individual books in the novel perhaps constitute the first extended body of work in English in which the author attempts to define and discuss the novel as a literary genre. These chapters thus discuss Fielding's aims and objectives in the novel, how he takes the critics to task, and steps out of his role as author to converse directly with the readers. The following will help you to read the essence of the brilliant prefaces Fielding has written.

Introduction to Book 1

The author begins by comparing a novelist to the keeper of an eating-house and the substance of the novel to a bill or fare. Like an honest host who first provides a menu, an author should inform the readers what they may expect in the novel. The provision of the novel includes the great and universal dish of human nature, which is the most extensive subject in the world. However, the true portrayal of human nature depends on the genius of the author as the true preparation of a dish depends on the genius of the cook. So, Fielding writes in *Tom Jones* *"We shall represent human nature at first to the keen appetite of our reader in that more plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country, and shall hereafter hash and ragout it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affection and vice with courts and cities afford. By these means, we doubt not but our reader may be rendered desirous to read on for ever…"*

Introduction to Book II

Here Fielding deals with his treatment of time in the novel. He tells his readers that this work is purposefully termed a 'history' but it is a history in a special sense. It is not "a life, nor an apology for a life'', but it is a history which records events of significance. Towards the end Fielding provides an important clue to the structure of the novel and also projects himself as an innovator in English fictions: *"My reader then is not to be surprised, if, in the course of this work here shall find some chapters very short, and others together as long…for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein. And these laws, my readers, whom I consider my subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey."*

Introduction to Book III

Fielding reiterates that during the course of the novel large spaces of time will be passed over if during such periods "nothing happened worthy of being recorded in a chronicle of this kind." However, in doing so, Fielding observes, that authors should prevent him from reading without either profit or pleasure. Instead, the author should allow the reader, if he so desires, to fill the vacant spaces in the novel with his own conjectures and meaning.

Introduction to Book IV

Fielding asserts that truth is the hallmark of his history in the book and this is what distinguishes this book from a romance. He presents the case of Sophia. If the heroine is to be introduced and if the readers are to be prepared to see the entrance of the lovely lady Sophia, "we have to prepare the mind of the reader for her reception, by filling it with very pleasing image we can draw from the face of nature". In order to explain this, Fielding further refers to the current theatrical practices following which the hero may be introduced by the blowing of drums and trumpets, and the entrance of lovers will be supported by soft and pleasing music.

Introduction to Book V

Here Fielding provides an excellent analysis of the function of a critic and the function of 'contrast' in a work of art. Fielding shows little

admiration for critics. Irrespective of the criticism, every work of art is a law unto itself and is centered on its own organic growth. Fielding boldly asks: “Who are the critics and whence did they derive their authority?” Finally, he argues that critics are men of “shallow capacities” who “mistook mere form for substance” and that “time and ignorance: the two great supporters of imposture” have lent their dubious authority to the critic.

Introduction to Book VI

Here Fielding tells us that many philosophers have arrived at the discovery that there is no such thing as love. They have come to this conclusion by “searching, rummaging, and examining into a nasty place…the nastiest of all places– A BAD MIND”. He asks the philosophers to accept that in the heart of every human being there is a benevolent disposition which gratifies itself by contributing to the happiness of others and that in this activity is exquisite delight.

Introduction to Book VII

Fielding in this Book observes that the world has been often compared to the theatre and human life to a great drama and it is easy to account for this when we reflect that it is nothing but representation or imitation of what really exists in life. Sometimes imitation is well done that they are confused with the real thing and a human being may live out his life by impersonating a dramatic character. Fielding says that a single bad act in life no more makes a villain in real life than a single bad part on the stage.

Introduction to Book VIII

Fielding starts with a discussion of the marvellous versus the real in fiction. Every writer should be within the bounds of possibility in his own writing. The general principle, however, is that man is the highest subject but we should be careful enough not to exceed the capacity of the agent we describe. Actions should not be only keeping with “the compass of human nature,” but they must be consistent with the character of the performer. The modern comedy writers are to be blamed only for this reason, for their heroes are presented as notorious rogues

for four acts and in the fifth, he becomes a worthy and respectable gentleman. If the writer strictly observes the rules of probability and possibility, he is entitled to some faith from his readers.

Introduction to Book IX

Fielding makes a claim that these introductory chapters will help the readers distinguish between the 'true' and the 'false'. By writing these chapters Fielding has secured himself from "the imitation of those who are utterly incapable of any degree of reflection, and whose learning is not equal to my essay" Good writing is an art demanding very rare talents, yet hack writers, despite their talents, have never hesitated to place their inferior works in front of the public. For this reason, Fielding argues *Tom Jones* is not called a 'romance' but a 'history.' He then proceeds to discuss the four basic qualifications necessary for a 'historian'—Genius, Learning, Conversation, and Sensibility.

Introduction to Book X

Fielding opens this book with a few suggestions to the readers

a) Do not be too hasty to judge the structure if the novel
b) Do not confuse certain characters just because they act alike or seem to act alike under similar circumstances
c) Do not condemn a character as a bad one because it is not a perfectly good one. No man has ever been all-good; on the other hand, no man has ever been all-bad.

Introduction to Book XI

Fielding once again explains his condemnation of the critics and their criticism and the reasons for disliking them. Many critics always tend to think that their only purpose is to condemn and in doing so they show their ignorance of the original meaning of the word 'judgment'. Critics are viewed as slanderer and slander is a cruel weapon unlike a sword for its wounds are always incurable. Furthermore, "…(it) seldom promises itself any reward." However, this remark does not apply to all critics as Fielding leaves aside the names of Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Dacier, Bossu and others like them.

Introduction to Book XII

Plagiarism is the most important topic of this chapter. Fielding freely confesses that he has borrowed passages from the ancient authors without acknowledging the source, for those who have a classical education will at once recognise the source immediately, and those who lack this education will have no use for the information on the source. The practice of 'borrowing' from the ancients, then, is not plagiarism. However, Fielding promises that if ever he is caught, he will give credit where credit is due.

Introduction to Book XIII

Although Fielding is seen invoking his muse in the best classical manner in this chapter, you should note that his concerns are mingled with quiet comedy. His personal note reads like this: "Comfort me my solemn assurance, that when the little parlour in which I sit at this instant shall be reduced to a worse unfinished box, I shall be read with honour by those who never knew or saw me, and whom I shall neither know nor see." However, for the successful completion of the novel, Fielding invokes four elements: Genius, Humanity, Learning and Experience.

Introduction to Book XIV

Fielding makes a bold claim for his being a comic writer and says that knowledge of upper life is of no great use to a writer like himself. This idea is best explained when he says: *"My province is comedy, and high life is certainly not comic—it is about the dullest thing in the world. The lower classes of life afford the greatest diversity, and it is here that the truly comic is to be found, High society treads a dull round of eating, drinking, visiting, and card playing. Not only is the world of high fashion and society soporific but the true characteristic of the present beau monde is rather folly than vice, and not only epithet which it deserves is that of frivolous."*

Introduction to Book XV

This introduction starts with contemplations on the ideas of virtue and vice. For Fielding, virtue is the certain road to happiness in this world and vice the sure avenue to misery.

Introduction to Book XVI

Fielding writes that writing prefatory chapters to the 18 books of *Tom Jones* has cost him more pains than writing the novel itself. Although these 'introductory chapters' are compared to prologues to plays, now they seem to have little connection with the novel and are generally written on three main topics:

(a) An abuse of the taste of the town people

(b) A condemnation of all contemporary authors and critics

(c) A praise of his own 'play' he is trying to present.

Introduction to Book XVII

Fielding now comes back to the situations inside the novel. When a comic writer makes his main character happy, and when a tragic writer brings his character to the height of human misery, Fielding says, both conclude that their work is done. Referring to the characters of the novel, Fielding says that Tom and Sophia now seem to be in a miserable plight. It is indeed doubtful if our author can make them happy. Sophia will probably be provided a good husband, but Tom's situation seems hopeless. What is significant is the fact that there is no supernatural aid for Tom's help. He himself will have to find some logical and natural way of liberating himself from difficulties.

Introduction to Book XVIII

Fielding says: "Now, reader, we have reached the last stage of our long journey. We have been as travellers in a long journey; if any bickerings or animosities have occurred during the trip, let us smile, shake hands, and be friends again; for once we take leave of one another we may never meet again." This is really so interesting on the part of a writer like Fielding. He again tells us: *"Furthermore, we must now lay aside all jesting and raillery; if I have earlier provided any entertainment, I must now lay it aside, for the conversation from now on must be plain and serious. There is no room now except for unadorned narrative."*

From these very brief summaries of the prefatory chapters it must be clear to you that this novel provides an interesting analysis of

"authorship" as Fielding never allows his readers to forget that he is the 'novelist.' However, what is important is that Fielding's self-conscious authorship is intentional artifice. Fielding makes the readers acknowledge the basic features of fiction—the interplay of reality and illusion. Therefore, parallelly in this huge work of art there runs a concern with the story of a foundling called Tom and a projection of Fielding's narrative strategies and art of writing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State the significance of the prefatory chapters to the "Books" of the Novel.

Q 2: What are the major issues raised by the author in the different Books of the novel?

Q 3: Do you think that Fielding justifies 'Plagiarism'?

Q 4: State the three suggestions fielding provides to readers.

6.4 MAJOR THEMES

Thematically, this novel is very important in the context of the period in which it was written. The following discussion on the themes of the novel will help you to seek out the significance of Fielding's novel *Tom Jones*.

Idea of the Picaro:

The novel falls into an important genre of novel writing, known as the picaresque novel. The term 'picaresque' is derived from the Spanish word *picaro* which means 'a low-life character who lived dishonestly by his wits', but the meaning of the term was soon expanded to refer to anyone at odds with, or outside, society. The picaresque novel is like an episodic narrative, describing the progress of the *picaro*. Some of the earliest novels based on the picaresque hero are anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and Mateo Aleman's *Guzman de Alfarache* (1559) translated into English by James Mabbe. In English literature, the tradition of the picaresque novel begins with *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) by Nashe. This tradition was continued in the works of Daniel

Defoe (*Moll Flanders*), Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*) and Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield*). In the hands of these writers, the picaresque narrative mainly becomes an episodic story involving a narrative. *Tom Jones* depicts the journey of the foundling named Tom Jones, in his journey not only through the phases of his life from childhood to maturity, but also literally through various places en route his journey towards London. He learns his lessons through the trials and tribulations of life, by the mistakes he commits, by being misunderstood and misinterpreted. Finally, he emerges as a somewhat chastened and refined individual, ready to take on life and its ordeals.

Universality of Human Emotions:

The novel *Tom Jones* presents a wide plethora of characters who display variegated range of characteristic prototypes from virtue to vice. There are in fact, further nuances with respect to the exposition of a single emotion. Fielding places the virtuous behaviour espoused by characters like Square and Thwackum as a foil to the virtues actually practiced by Jones and Allworthy. Tom, who saves the women in trouble and aspires to fight for his country, seems to be the embodiment of the very active type of Virtue that Fielding endorses. The female characters like Sophia, Bridget and Honour typify the peculiar nature of characteristic volition accompanied by frequent changes in opinion and attitudes towards the people and the world around. However, Fielding has constructed his characters in round fashion; they do not always behave in a stereotypical manner. The novelist makes them err and waver; they misunderstand and misinterpret. Even a character like Mr. Allworthy, supposedly the grandest and senior most amongst the characters of the novel, nevertheless is led to errors in judgments.

Idea of Virtue:

Fielding insisted that nothing in *Tom Jones* “can offend even the chastest eye on perusal.” This might have sprung up from his awareness of the morality based on the goodness of heart rather than technical virtue that he was trying to preach. The protagonist Tom Jones is a lusty, passionate, highly sexed young man but equally generous and easily

moved by the sufferings of others. In tracing the fortunes of this kind of a hero, Fielding could come to terms more with the moral complexities of the world as it is than with the simple-minded virtue of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams in his novel *Joseph Andrews*. You are already told that central to Fielding's philosophy is the idea that a good man can be guilty of bad act, but we should not condemn an individual as bad because he is not perfectly good. Although not a philosopher in the real sense, as early as 1740, in a newspaper names *The Champion* under the pseudonym Captain Hercules Vinegar, Fielding laid stress on the necessity of the 'good nature' in man, a quality he equated with virtue. He emphasised that good nature was "the benevolent and amiable temper of mind, which disposes us to feel the misfortunes, and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter and prevent the former." Tom attains wisdom and better knowledge of mankind and in the process he learns how to lead a happy life. He may be a sinner, but never a villain. Fielding is seriously concerned with his strategy of showing vices and hypocrisies in their repellent ugliness. However, he was equally conscious that virtues and goodness be shown in terms of their innocence and beauty. Thus, the story of *Tom Jones* is derived from life itself. As he wrote in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews "everything is copied from the book of nature, and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experience." Fielding insisted that his purpose was "to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices."*

Mock Heroic Convention:

Tom Jones is a comic epic in prose with many mock-heroic conventions like invocations and descriptions scattered throughout the narrative. But the mock elements serve as important artistic purpose and they enable Fielding to make certain important remarks about society, to deflate certain kinds of pretentiousness, to communicate the relish of the colour and variety of human life simultaneously with his ironic perception of the underlying identity of the high class battling and low class brawling. The mock heroic also enables him to bring the hero into a series of

situations in which his imprudence gives power to his enemy, which ultimately becomes the cause of his downfall. Whatever Suspense is created becomes comic, seasoned with the comic awareness of the absurdities and futilities of life. However, readers do sympathise with the way Tom gets himself embroiled in troubles. Along with this, the description of the hero as 'Foundling' indicates that Fielding is not exactly following the normal procedure of epic. Instead, he deals with his English society as it is.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5: In what ways is *Tom Jones* a picaresque novel?

Q 6: How has Fielding upheld the notion of virtue in this novel?

Q 7: How do you think, the mock epical elements function in the novel *Tom Jones*?

6.5 FIELDING'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

The basic method of characterisation of Fielding in *Tom Jones* involves action and author's description. In all the characters Fielding shows that a character's own action reveals him more. However, we also find that most of his characters are static– that is they hardly develop during the course of the novel. The only exception is Tom who grows and develops. Another feature of Fielding's characterisation is that he stresses one particular trait of a character. For example, Tom is impulsive, Blifill is greedy and Allworthy is easily gullible. This may mean that Fielding has not created a fully rounded character. However, it is not correct because as far as Tom is concerned, he shows his capacity for growth and maturation. Keeping these general observations in mind let us, in this section, briefly analyse some of the major characters in the novel.

Tom Jones:

Tom Jones is the principal character in the novel. The story delineates his development from infancy to young adulthood. Born out of

wedlock, he becomes the adopted child of Squire Allworthy. He grows up along with Blifil, the son of Allworthy's sister, Bridget, and her husband, Captain Blifil. However, they soon become fierce rivals. By nature, Tom is honest, courageous, and generous, but at times, becomes imprudent and downright reckless. His faults prevent him from being a perfect hero but his goodness in heart also makes him an icon of virtue. His handsome look and gallantry make him win the love and affection of many women of the countryside. One thing you should note that women always take the initiative but Tom never corrupts innocence in the unmarried, or virtue in the married. He is simple minded enough to believe that he has fathered Molly Seagrim's child and is prepared to marry her. When a similar situation emerges in London as Nancy Miller is pregnant after getting seduced by Mr. Nightingale under promises of marriage, Tom gives his ethic of sexual behaviour like the following: "Lokee, Mr Nightingale, I am not canting hypocrite, nor do I pretend to the gift of chastity more than my neighbours. I have been guilty with women, I own it; but am not conscious that I have ever injured any. Nor would I, to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being." Thus, although the plot of the novel is concerned with *who* Tom is, Fielding makes it clear that his theme is *what* Tom is.

Squire Allworthy:

He is a wealthy landowner who adopts and nurtures Tom Jones. As his name imply, he is "all worthy", one who is, kind, generous, and morally upright. He is reputed to be benevolent and altruistic. However, much like Tom Jones, he too sometimes takes unwise decisions. His only fault—due to his goodness is that he cannot perceive the evil in others.

Bridget Allworthy:

She is the sister of Squire Allworthy. She is the one who gives birth to Tom when she was not yet married and so, hires another woman to pose as his mother. An unattractive woman, Bridget always betrays beautiful women. She married Captain Blifil just because he flattered his religious views. After her marriage to Captain Blifil, she gives birth to a son who, later, becomes Tom's rival. However, towards the end she

becomes devoted to Tom largely because of his good look and gallantry.

Sophia Western:

She is the beautiful daughter of the violent Squire Western. She and Tom fall in love with each other, but circumstances contrive to keep them apart until the end of the novel. Both of them finally get married to each other. Like Tom, she lavishes gifts on the poor and treats people of all classes with respect. Through her commitment and courage she manages to reconcile her love for Tom, her duties towards her father and her resentment of Blifil.

Blifil:

He is the son of Bridget Allworthy and Captain Blifil. He is always antagonistic to Tom Jones. He pretends to be pious and principled but soon he exposes his real character through hypocrisy. He tries to manipulate events by devious means in order to oust Tom Jones and assure his inheritance of Allworthy's estate. The absence of natural human feelings in him does not distinguish him as a virtuous character, but rather provides a depressing portrayal of what humanity in general would be like if devoid of passion.

Squire Western:

He is a wealthy landowner and neighbour of Allworthy. He is a blustery man who loves a life full of energy and sportiness. However, he is also presented by Fielding as the caricature of conservative country gentleman. Since he is just a caricature, Fielding does not indent us to judge the extreme abuse of his daughter Sophia too harshly. At the same time, his insistence on Sophia marrying Blifil has less to do with greed than his strong adherence to tradition. He often speaks country dialect.

Mrs. Western:

She is the sister of Squire Western. Just like her brother, she too is a caricature of the artificial city woman always acting out expediently. She takes pride on herself being knowledgeable about the contemporary society, culture, and love. However, her ignorance reveals itself on numerous occasions like– she thought that Socrates lectures to students instead of engaging them in conversational debates. She lacks the

compassion exhibited by her niece, Sophia. She opposes Sophia's attachment to the lowly Tom Jones.

Partridge:

He is a schoolteacher who was wrongly accused of being the father of infant Tom Jones. After Tom grows up to be a man, he and Partridge become travelling companions. Partridge's relationship with Jones becomes akin to that of a page to a knight. It also bears striking resemblances to the comic relationship between Sancho Panza and Don Quixote in *Don Quixote*, a novel by Cervantes.

Jenny Jones / Mrs. Waters:

Jenny Jones is the maid servant who poses as the mother of Tom Jones when he is just an infant. Although she is not married, she adopts the name *Mrs. Waters* after she begins to live with Captain Waters. She has a sexual encounter with Tom at an inn at Upton. She later plays an important role in extricating Tom from extreme circumstances.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Trace the good qualities of Tom Jones as a character in the novel.

Q 9: How would you like to judge the women characters of the novel?

6.6 FIELDING'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Fielding left a great impact upon the tradition of the English novel in the 18th century and the 19th century by the style of writing he adopted for the novel. In the "preface" of *Tom Jones*, Fielding stated: "the excellence of the entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing it up...we shall represent human nature at first to keep appetite of our reader, in that more plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country, and shall hereafter hash and ragout it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford." From Fielding's point of view, art is artifice or deliberately constructed. He believed, as did most 18th century writers

and educated readers, that the purpose of art is to create pleasure, which is both civilised and civilising.

You should have noted that the novel *Tom Jones* is largely picaresque and episodic which very well serves Fielding's purpose of castigating vice and upholding virtue in a style filled with irony and wit and borrowed freely from the mock epic tradition. Fielding was alert enough to see that the tradition of the mock-heroic offered him a chance to decide on those modes of the ridiculous that mainly arise from hypocrisies and affectations. However, while defining the novel as an epic genre, Fielding emphasised its function in presenting a broad picture of a historical period, but like verse epics of the ancient times, it will not always display the weaknesses of humanity. His model might be Don Quixote and his aim was to present a 'prose epic' through which he wanted to create a panorama of society seen through ironic and satiric comedy and farmed in a commentary of his own on the theory of human nature and literary art.

The narrator begins every book with a formal introduction to the reader. He explains every nature of the narrative, both in terms of the plot and the method of writing. Very carefully, he delineates the gradual intensification of the plot with each added character and how they affect the transformation in the order of things. He also explicates as to why he makes use of a specific genre of writing in one instance rather than in another (such as the use of a quasi-epic style). The narrator directly communicates with the readers, addressing them specifically at times as male or female readers. The fact that Fielding had worked in the theatre before becoming a novelist influenced his narrative technique, especially in the use of lively dialogue and the choice of characters. Therefore, another important stylistic device of the novel is the use of colloquial language. Tom and Sophia are round characters but Mr. Western and Mr. Allworthy have some characteristics borrowed from the stock characters of drama. The most obvious influence of drama on *Tom Jones* is in the intricacies of the plot, which are the typical confusion of comedy and pathos.



LET US KNOW

"The most outstanding aspect of Fielding's style is the recurrence of finely balanced passages of irony. These passages appear in two different forms. One form is actually a juxtaposition of two passages in which a character first utters grand words about a noble philosophical idea and then Fielding reveals the hypocrisy of the character by showing him acting in direct opposition to his so called philosophy" (James C. Evans). An example of this technique is Fielding's handling of the character of Blifill.

Structure:

There are three types of structure to be found in *Tom Jones*. These are deftly combined by Fielding into one framework. The first structural level is simply associated with the plot content with the sequential narrative movement of one event into another. Fielding followed the ancient epic tradition, especially that of Homer in the *Iliad* with the 'unity of action' being the primary concern. This required the novelist to construct the plot in the way that there are causal relationships among the incidents. In the first section of the novel, upto Book VII, Tom's actions are misinterpreted by Allworthy leading to Tom's expulsion from the latter's home. In the next section, Fielding shifts his focus to Tom's journey to London and, as a critic says, the novelist is following the picaresque tradition, which is related to the medieval romance. Fielding seems to follow the tradition of *Don Quixote*. In the section that describes Tom's journey to London, Tom moves from one incident to another, from the band of soldiers to Mazard Hill, then to Upton Inn and to the Gypsies of London. There is, however, no causal relationship between one incident with another. In the final Section of the novel, Fielding combines these two structural levels– that of classical epic and medieval romance. We can also notice the comic structure at the end, with a comic tone consistently adhered to by Fielding. In the introduction to Book V, Fielding

lays out his comic principle: he would alternately present the sober and comic passages not without some subtle relationship between the two. Again, there can often be found an ironic comment on the serious elements of an earlier passage. This enables the novelist to maintain the comic tone pervasively.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: Comment on Fielding's style of writing as found in the novel *Tom Jones*.



6.7 LET US SUM UP

We have found that *Tom Jones* appears to be a novel about life and its trials and tribulations, narrated with a somewhat comic approach. Tom, by the end of the novel, moves towards achieving a settled way of life, with Sophia as his wife. For him, the entire novel resembles a journey, where he errs and stumbles with near escapes and close shaves. He gives in to passions at times, once almost committing the sin of incest. His actions are often misinterpreted. The characters around him have volatile opinions about him, ranging from love to loathing. The novel explores a variety of characters, displaying myriad moods and emotions. Fielding displays an amazing style of narrating the chain of events. He takes the reader into confidence, and often addresses them specifically as male or female readers. This enhances the readability of the novel, and boosts its overall receptivity amongst the reading public. After reading this unit, you must have gained sufficient ideas regarding the major themes as well as the narrative technique adopted by Fielding in recounting the history of *Tom Jones*. You are now well informed of the major characters of the novel, which have left their indelible impact upon the life of the protagonist in the novel. Finally, you have enriched your understanding of the novel by examining the history of reception of the novel by critics belonging to different periods.



6.8 FURTHER READING

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Websites Resources:

http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/tomjones/summary.html



6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: They constitute the first extended attempt by an author to define and discuss the novel as a literary genre… …they discuss Fielding's aims and objectives in the novel… …issues of self

conscious authorship… …Fielding's telling of the basic features of fiction—the interplay of reality and illusion.

Ans to Q 2: The provision of the novel being the portrayal of human nature… …treatment of time in the novel… …distinction between history and romance… …the function of a critic and the function of 'contrast' in a work of art... …a discussion of the marvellous versus the real in fiction… …suggestions to the readers… …issues in Plagiarism… …his direct discussion with the readers and so on.

Ans to Q 3: Yes… …Fielding freely confesses that he has borrowed passages from the ancient authors without acknowledging the source… …his argument is that those having classical education will at once recognise the source and others will have no use for information on the source.

Ans to Q 4: The three suggestions are:

1) Do not be too hasty to judge the structure in the novel.
2) Do not confuse certain characters just because they act alike or seem to act alike under similar circumstances.
3) Do not condemn a character as a bad one because it is not a perfectly good one.

Ans to Q 5: The picaresque novel is like an episodic narrative, describing the progress of the *picaro*… …*Tom Jones* depicts the journey of a foundling named Tom Jones through different phases of his life… …following the picaresque tradition he learns his lessons through the trials and tribulations of life.

Ans to Q 6: Central to Fielding's philosophy is the idea that a good man can be guilty of bad act, but we should not condemn an individual as bad because he is not perfectly good. … …he stressed the 'good nature' in man, a quality he equated with virtue… …although he displayed vices and hypocrisies in their repellent ugliness he was equally conscious that virtues and goodness be shown in terms of their innocence and beauty.

Ans to Q 7: Like many mock heroic conventions *Tom Jones* adopts invocations and descriptions… …the mock elements enable

Fielding to make certain important ironic remarks about society… …it enables him to bring the hero into a series of situations in which his imprudence gives power to his enemy which ultimately becomes the cause of his downfall… … But Fielding is not exactly following the normal procedure of epic. Instead, he deals with his English society as it is.

Ans to Q 8: Tom is honest, courageous, and generous… …He is handsome and gallant … …he is gentle and helpful… …he is simple minded.

Ans to Q 9: Except Sophia all the women characters are not free from their flaws… **…**Bridget always betrays beautiful women… …Mrs Western is a city lady who takes pride on herself being knowledgeable about the contemporary society, culture, and love.

Ans to Q 10: *Tom Jones* is a largely picaresque and episodic novel which very well serves Fielding's purpose of castigating vice and upholding virtue in an ironical and witty style… …Fielding borrowed freely from the mock epic tradition which offered him a chance to decide on the modes of the ridiculous arising from hypocrisies and affectations… …his aim was to present a 'prose epic' through which he wanted to create a panorama of his contemporary society… …His experiences at the theatre too influenced his narrative technique .



6.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: "It is easier to make good man wise than to make bad man good." Justify the meaning of this statement with reference to Tom's character.

Q 2: Critically discuss *Tom Jones* as a commentary on the English life of the 18th century. How does Fielding present the high society life of London?

Q 3: What ideas can you draw about Fielding's narrative strategy from

the novel *Tom Jones*? Discuss with reference to the prefatory chapters of the Books of the novel.

Q 4: What influence did Fielding's former experiences as a playwright have upon the structure of *Tom Jones*?

Q 5: Discuss Fielding's method of characterisation in *Tom Jones.* Do you feel that all the major characters are equally life like? What could be the possible reasons for this inequality?

Q 6: Do you think that Henry Fielding could build a relationship between the narrator and the readers of *Tom Jones*? How important is this relationship to the overall impact of the novel? Discuss.

Q 7: How does Fielding portray the relationship between city and country in the novel *Tom Jones*?

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UNIT 7: JANE AUSTEN: *MANSFIELD PARK* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Jane Austen: The Novelist

7.3.1 Her Life

7.3.2 Her Works

7.4 Story of the Novel

7.5 Critical Reception of Austen

7.6 Let us Sum up

7.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.8 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the life and works of Jane Austen
- explain Jane Austen as a major English novelist with reference to her novel *Mansfield Park*
- trace the storyline of the novel *Mansfield Park*
- examine how Jane Austen had been critically received as a novelist.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Jane Austen (1775-1817) and her novel *Mansfield Park.* Along with Walter Scott (1771-1832), Austen inaugurated the great age of English novel. To Jane Austen's credit, there are six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Austen's work may be roughly divided into two parts—the first associated with her birthplace Steventon, and the second, with Chawton

where her family had to finally move in 1801 after the death of her father. *Mansfield Park* was written at a particularly important point in her literary career and it also marks a dramatic change of direction. Written at Chawton Cottage between 1812 and 1814, the novel was first published by Thomas Egerton in July, 1814. It can be assumed that *Mansfield Park* is a counter statement of *Pride and Prejudice*. In this unit, you will be able to learn why Jane Austen is regarded as one of the greatest novelists in the English language.

7.3 JANE AUSTEN: THE NOVELIST

7.3.1 Her Life

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775. Her father, George Austen, was a country rector of latitudinarian or liberal views in the Southern English county of Hampshire, and her mother Cassandra (also called N´ee Leigh) had aristocratic linkages. Both George and Cassandra Austen were cultivated people. It is known that George, with his library of over 500 books, was 'a profound scholar', and Cassandra composed comic verse on local people and events, a common pastime of her community. The pair had eight children and Jane was one of the two sisters. Unlike her brothers, the two girls–Jane and Cassandra had little professional opportunities, and subsequently, failed to find a proper source of income. In the same period, Mary Wollstonecraft was writing on the restricted lives of women in her society. All that society sanctioned for the women was the gaining of a husband, and as the reasonably educated girls remained single, they were meant only to nurture their married relatives. It is important to note that Austen voiced her concerns over the dependency of



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

women on men. She also seemed to have accepted the intellectual pursuits of Wollstonecraft, although they are not openly expressed in her novels.

In 1783, the Austen sisters were sent to Oxford to be tutored by Mrs Ann Cawley, who then took them to Southampton. However, their stay was interrupted by an outbreak of typhus from which Jane nearly died. This was followed by formal education at Abbey House School in Reading. By the end of 1786, the sisters had returned to Steventon, where they were casually instructed within the family by their own relatives. Although Jane appreciated a well-stocked mind, she had very little respect for formal education and for boys. Their financial dependency on their father led the two Austen sisters to contemplate on a prospective future through marriage. Even as none of them achieved it, Cassandra was engaged to a clergyman who died in Jamaica and this had also brought much sisterly grief to Jane Austen. On the other hand, Jane's relationship with Tom Lefroy, the nephew of her much loved neighbour Madam Lefroy, abruptly broke. Instead of helping Jane, Madame Lefroy made sure that her nephew left before his relationship with a penniless girl became serious.



LET US KNOW

Napoleonic War:

Through almost all Jane Austen's adult life, Britain and France were at war with each other. In the 1790s, when hostilities first began, the country was facing the danger of the superior Revolutionary armies of France under Napoleon who assumed control of France in 1799. Two of Austen's brothers—Charles and Francis were in the Royal Navy, fighting the French. Letters and newspapers kept Jane Austen in close contact with their equally energetic wartime activities. Austen very often in her novels allowed characters to feel pride in a new maritime power and, even more, to revel in the entrepreneurial aspect of naval

service, the possibility of prize money and advancement for the enterprising (officer) class: 'the glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance', as Henry Crawford imagines it in *Mansfield Park*.

Jane Austen began her career as a writer in her childhood when she started to write *Juvenilia* in 1787. Subsequently, she wrote some great novels. She realised that she should not marry for worldly motives. Her family shifted from Hampshire to Bath in 1801. Her father died in 1801. Jane, her ailing mother and her sister Cassandra found themselves without a permanent home, and subsequently, they had to move from one house to another in Bath. It was in Chawton, when her brother had inherited a large estate that she left aside her frustration and started working seriously. The mood of Jane Austen in these last years of her life was pleasant. She turned to the three manuscripts that she had laid aside in Steventon. The first of these was *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) (Initially *Elinor and Marianne*). Then she revised and published *First Impressions* as *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). It was followed by *Mansfield Park* (1814). After the publication of *Mansfield Park*, Sir Walter Scott reviewed *Emma* in 'Quarterly' appreciating Austen's merit as a novelist. Such inspiration made her also revise and rename *Susan* as *Northanger Abbey* (1818). In July 1816, she finished another novel called *Persuasion*. Two decades of experimentation and revision went into the publication of these major novels.

During the spring in 1816, Jane Austen felt unwell. At that time, she was working on *Sanditon*, but it was unfinished. On 27th April of 1817, she made her will and she died early on the morning of 18 July. She was buried in Winchester Cathedral, 24 July.

From the six novels that she wrote, we learn much about the political, spiritual, and intellectual attitudes available in Jane Austen's time. However, instead of advocating positions, she

explores issues rather than resolving them. Although she remains an ardent observer of the beginnings of the capitalist and industrial transformation of Britain in rural Hampshire as well as the cities of London, Southampton, and Bath, she does not discuss society and politics at length. Her novels are experimental as each presents a different sort of heroine a different take on society and the relationship of behaviour and personality according to environment.



LET US KNOW

Jane Austen entered the world of literature at a favourable time. Women novelists had been increasing in number throughout the 18th century and they actually formed a majority towards the end. Peter Garside argues that, by the 1810, 'the *publication* of Jane Austen's novels was achieved not against the grain but during a period of female ascendancy'; only in the 1820 did male novelists become numerically dominant again – and then dominant in the culture. Austen was a voracious reader of contemporary fiction by men and women. She wanted to be an author who was bought, read, and reread, whose books became both an experience and a challenge to experience, not simply once-consumed items.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: In what ways did Mary Wollstonecraft influence Jane Austen?

Q 2: What, according to you, are the distinctions of Austen as a novelist?

Q 3: What significance does Jane Austen bear as a woman novelist?

7.3.2 Her Works

Sir Walter Scott praised Jane Austen for her exquisite touch in her novels, which makes the ordinary look very interesting. This feature can be traced in almost all her novels. The environment at her home, however, stirred Austen to perceive certain things right from her childhood. From an early age religious texts like the *Book of Common Prayer*, *The Bible*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* formed part of her interests. However, she was equally acquainted with fiction, non-fictional works, plays, poems and along with her sister Cassandra, she started reading all kinds of novels, and it influenced her to write certain burlesque in those days. She began to write *Juvenilia* such as *Love and Friendship* in 1787. She completed this novel in 1793. However, Thomas Powel, the fiancé of Cassandra, suddenly died in 1797 and Austen was much moved by the grief of her sister. Thus, Cassandra's sadness is echoed in Elionor's attitude in *Elinor and Marianne* (later *Sense and Sensibility).*

First Impression, the earlier form of *Pride and Prejudice,* was begun in October 1796 and completed in 1797. The novel was given to a publisher in London, but it was left unpublished. In 1797, she started working on *Elinor and Marianne*. During the period of 1797-98, she wrote *Susan.* Though she wrote all rough drafts of the novels, they were not published until the second decade of the 19th century. You will note that the period between 1803-1809 was rather barren. After the death of her father, Austen's family moved to Chawton in 1809 and from this date began the most fertile period of her literary career. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811, and it was followed by her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice* in1813. The immense popularity of *Pride and Prejudice* inspired Austen to write and publish her other novels–*Mansfield Park* in 1814, *Emma* in 1815, *Northanger Abbey* (initially *Susan*) in 1817, and *Persuasion* in 1817. At that

time, Austen gained reputation as an important novelist and writers like Walter Scott praised her worth. Austen started another novel called *Sanditon* on 27 January 1817. However, due to her illness she ceased to work on it. Like *Sanditon*, she attempted *The Watsons* in her early days, which, however, was also left unfinished.

You must note that Austen absorbed various genres including children's literature—nursery rhymes, Gay's *Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. She began writing delicious, sometimes surreal, stories and parodies to amuse her family from an early age of eleven. These stories are filled with anarchic fantasies of female power, licence, illicit behaviour, and general high spirits. Drunkenness, incest, and serial killings routinely occur in these stories, revealing Jane Austen's youthful awareness of the comic possibilities of language to address the absurdities of life even at this early stage. Works like "Jack and Alice" and "Love & Friendship" are examples of such early works. These juvenile productions physically mimic the grown-up book: they are written out carefully in notebooks and provided with dedications to Martha Lloyd, to 'Madame La Comtesse De Feuillide', and, of course, to her sister Cassandra. At fourteen, Jane Austen wrote the longest of these juvenile productions "Love & Friendship", taking two girls through a series of absurd adventures. "Love & Friendship" was followed by "Catharine", and a preparation for *Susan*, which would in time become *Northanger Abbey*. In "Catharine" Austen developed the character of a principled, unsophisticated heroine of ordinary achievements. "Catharine" was succeeded by "Lady Susan", a work rooted in the 18th century novel in letters, which suited the subject matter of a heroine manoeuvring within a world in which men control property. For *Mansfield Park* she made striking improvements on Maria Edgeworth's at least three novels and even wrote to her niece Anna on 28th September 1814: "I have made up my mind to like

no novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, Yours and my own."

Throughout her literary career, Jane Austen adhered to plain writing and consequential plots. The new 'style of fiction', with which Walter Scott credited her in his review of her mature novel *Emma,* is implied by the high-spirited burlesques and parodies of her Steventon days. She wrote only forty pages of *The Watsons* that graphically portrays humiliations faced by common people in a closed insular society. The story concerned four unmarried daughters of an ailing father with a small income: two are desperate husband seekers, the third would be happy to remain single if she had an income, and the fourth, the more genteel Emma, claims she would rather be a teacher than marry for money. However, Austen decided to quit from this project and there are several possible reasons for her quitting. She might have realised that just like "First Impressions" and "Susan" it was not readily going to be published, and she might have felt demoralised. However, her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh, who gave the novel its title, claimed she stopped because the subject matter was 'unfavourable to the refinement of a lady', being set in too lowly a rank of life where 'poverty and obscurity' may easily degenerate into 'vulgarity'. The plot of *The Watsons*– a delicately brought-up girl returning to her poorer family and facing the threat of economic hardship–would recur in *Mansfield Park*. However, it was in Chawton, to which Jane Austen moved after 1809, that she began to write like a professional writer. Her works beautifully exemplify the relations of individual talent to tradition.



LET US KNOW

A writer during Jane Austen's period could publish in four ways:

(1) Sell the copyright and avoid further anxiety over production and sales.

(2) Persuade a publisher to underwrite costs and share profits.

(3) Get a subscription list to pay for publication, relying on friends, relatives, and patrons.

(4) Publish on commission, so paying for the book production, receiving profits minus a commission, and accepting any loss.

It is important to note that in 1803, when 'Susan' had been offered to a publisher, Austen had tried the first option and had received the modest but usual sum of £10. In 1811, she tried the fourth when she sent *Sense and Sensibility* to Thomas Egerton, a London publisher, to be published on commission.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Which are the major novels by Jane Austen?

Q 5: What were the four conditions while publishing a book during Austen's time?

7.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL [Adapted from Wikipedia]

Mansfield Park was the first to be started after Jane Austen had settled in Chawton. This novel was named after an estate that established her as a professional writer. It was printed by Egerton and then Murray, and the move to this fashionable publisher confirmed that its author was aiming less for circulating libraries than for buyers intending to keep and reread copies. "I have something in hand– which I hope on the credit of P. & P. will sell well, tho' not half so entertaining", wrote Jane Austen in September 1813. Her decision not to repeat the 'entertaining' formula of her most successful novels suggests that, in *Mansfield Park*, she was aiming at something beyond general approval. The following is the storyline of the novel *Mansfield Park*.

Fanny Price, a poor young girl of 10, is to be raised by her rich uncle Sir Thomas, a patriarch, and aunt Lady Bertram of Mansfield Park. Previously she had lived with her own parents, Lieut. Price, and his wife,

Frances, Lady Bertram's sister. Fanny has firm attachment to her elder brother, William, who, at the age of 12, joined the navy. With very little income to rear her own children, Fanny's mother Frances is thankful to her sister for agreeing to keep Fanny with them. At Mansfield Park, Fanny grows up with her four elder cousins: Tom, Edmund, Maria and Julia. But only Edmund, the most good-natured of the siblings, shows her real kindness. Maria and Julia are spoiled and Tom becomes an irresponsible gambler. Over time, Fanny's gratitude for Edmund's thoughtfulness secretly grows into romantic love. Her other maternal aunt, Mrs. Norris, who is also the local parson's wife, showers care and affection on her Bertram nieces, particularly Maria, but is frequently mean-spirited toward Fanny.

When Fanny is 16, Sir Thomas leaves for a year to deal with problems with his plantation. He takes Tom along with the hope that he will gain some experience of his father's business. Meanwhile, Mrs. Norris, who is out to find a husband for Maria introduces her to Mr. Rushworth, a very rich but stupid man. Maria accepts his marriage proposal, subject to Sir Thomas's approval on his return. At the same time, the fashionable and wealthy Henry Crawford and his sister Mary Crawford, arrive at the Personage (A church house provided for a parson or a clergyman) to stay with Mrs. Grant, their half-sister. After a year in Antigua, Sir Thomas sends Tom back home while himself continuing business. Sir Thomas is confident that Edmund will be able to keep life in Mansfield Park running in the right order.

The sudden arrival of the Crawfords disrupts the grave world of Mansfield Park and sparks a series of romantic entanglements. Mary and Edmund begin to form an attachment despite her original preference for Tom who is the supposed heir of Mansfield Park. Although Edmund finds out that she lacks firm principle, and Mary too is unhappy with Edmund's willingness to become a clergyman, their mutual attraction grows. Fanny fears that Mary has enchanted Edmund, and that love has blinded him to her flaws. Meanwhile, during a visit to Mr. Rushworth's ancestral estate in Sotherton, Henry Crawford deliberately plays with the affections of

both Maria and Julia, finally driving them apart. Maria believes that Henry is falling in love with her and treats Mr. Rushworth dismissively which provokes his jealousy. Fanny, on the other hand, is highly observant and witnesses Maria and Henry in compromising situations.

The young generation in the household decide to put on Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lovers' Vows.* Initially, both Edmund and Fanny object, believing Sir Thomas would never approve of such activities, mainly because the subject matter of the play includes adultery. Eventually, Edmund agrees reluctantly to play the role of Anhalt, the lover of the character to be played by Mary Crawford. Besides giving Mary and Edmund plenty of scope for talking about love and marriage, the play also provides a pretext for Henry and Maria to flirt publicly. However, with the sudden and abrupt arrival of Sir Thomas the rehearsal of the theatricals comes to an abrupt halt. Henry, whom Maria had expected to marry, leaves and she feels crushed, realising that he does not love her. Although she neither likes nor respects Mr. Rushworth, she goes ahead and marries him, and both leave for Brighton, taking Julia with them. Meanwhile, Fanny's improved appearance and gentle disposition motivates Sir Thomas not to treat her as distantly as he did earlier. With Maria and Julia gone, Fanny and Mary Crawford naturally come closer to each other.

Henry returns to Mansfield Park and decides to amuse himself by making Fanny fall in love with him without knowing that Fanny is in love with Edmund. To further his suit, even he proposes to raise Fanny's brother William to the rank of naval lieutenant by making use of his family connections. Fanny is happy; however, when he proposes marriage, Fanny rejects him as she disapproves of his immoral character. Sir Thomas is dismayed and startled by her refusal to marry Henry, since it is an extremely advantageous match for a poor girl like Fanny. He reproaches her for ingratitude, and believing it is all female timidity on Fanny's part, encourages Henry to persevere. To bring Fanny back to her senses, Sir Thomas sends her to Portsmouth, hoping that the lack of comforts at her original home will help her set a higher value on Henry's

offer. At Portsmouth, she develops a firm bond with her younger sister Susan, but is taken aback by the contrast between her dissolute surroundings and the environment at Mansfield. Henry visits her to try to convince her that he has changed and is worthy of her affection. Although Fanny still maintains that she cannot marry him, her attitude begins to soften, as Edmund and Mary seem to be moving toward an engagement.

Henry leaves for London, and shortly afterward, Fanny comes of know about the scandal that has enveloped between him and Maria. Maria is exposed as an adulterous wife, Mr. Rushworth sues for divorce, and the proud Bertram family is devastated. To make matters worse, Tom becomes ill, and Julia, fearing that her father will essentially lock her up, elopes with Tom's flighty friend Mr. Yates.

In the midst of this crisis, Fanny returns to Mansfield Park with her sister, Susan, now joyfully welcomed by all in Mansfield Park. A repentant Sir Thomas realises that Fanny was right to reject Henry's proposal and starts regarding her as his own daughter. During an emotional meeting with Mary Crawford, Edmund discovers that Mary does not condemn Henry and Maria's adultery, only that it was discovered. Her main concern is covering it up, and she implies that if Fanny had only accepted Henry, there would have been no affair. Edmund, who had idolised Mary, feels that her true nature has been revealed to him. He returns to Mansfield, and goes ahead with plans to be ordained as a minister.

While he is despairing of ever getting over Mary, Edmund comes to realise how important Fanny is to him. He declares his love for her, and they marry. Eventually, they move to the Mansfield Park parsonage, where they live close to those they love best. Tom recovers from his illness, a steadier and better man for it, and Julia's husband, Mr. Yates, turns out to be not so empty-headed after all. Henry Crawford refuses to marry Maria, who is banished by her family to live "in another country," where she is joined by her aunt Norris. Finally, Fanny becomes the mistress of Mansfield Park.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What ideas can you derive regarding the story of the novel *Mansfield Park* from your reading of the chapter?

7.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF AUSTEN

Although many critics have hailed this novel as a remarkable achievement of Jane Austen, it has rarely been anyone's favourite. In 1917, Reginald Farrer wrote: "None of her books is quite so brilliant in parts, none shows a greater technical mastery, a more audacious facing of realities, a more certain touch with character. Yet, alone of her books, *Mansfield Park* is vitiated throughout by a radical dishonesty." With various modulations, later critics declare that here the moralist and creator are at odds, and that this troubling and challenging work defies satisfactory or 'comfortable' interpretation, however remarkable its achievements are.

Until the late 19th century, Jane Austen was not widely read, especially compared to her contemporary like Walter Scott. Her readership was largely confined to some among the titled gentry, and upper-middle classes and to a few discerning literary people. For example Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth B. Browning, found her to be limited. However, positive reception of Austen's work began with James Edward Austen-Leigh's book *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (published in 1870) in which he presented his aunt as a modest, lady like Christian spinster. Together with the novels' portrayal of the last and lost pre-industrial era of England, attractive to a new railway and suburban readership, this work brought a new image of Austen as national treasure, beloved by 'Janeites'. The image became associated with 'heritage', with pastoral Englishness; as the novelist Henry James remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.

The 20th century brought a change. Austen received many intellectual readers The 'dear Jane' of cultural England became by the mid-twentieth century also F. R. Leavis's mother of the morally serious 'Great Tradition' of fiction, the exclusive canon of writers worthy of study in a newly established university departments of literature. Critics like Reginald Farrer, D. W. Harding, and Marvin Mudrick, proceeded to rescue Austen from the 'Janeites'. In this context, Ian Watt in his *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), tried to locate a new modernity in Austen, whose novels achieved an 'authenticity without diffuseness or trickery'. Feminist criticism of the late 1960s and 1970s saw matters differently. Viewing Jane Austen through the lens of Victorian and modern literature and rebelling against a notion of a masculine-inflected foremother, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) argued that the novels 'explore[d] the tensions between the freedom of her art and the dependency of her characters: while they stutter and sputter and lapse into silence and even hasten to perfect felicity', Austen herself attains a 'woman's language that is magnificently duplicitous'. Building on this foundation, later versions of feminist criticism saw Austen as symptomatic of the gender conflict of her time: some understood her as voicing not answering questions, others accused her of colluding with patriarchy by advocating heterosexual romance over female relationships.

Another recent trend in Austen studies is the particular focus on one area of interest alone, such as her reception in anon-European context, her relationship to Romanticism or the Enlightenment, religion, education, the theatre, or food. One significant study, John Wiltshire's *Jane Austen and the Body* (1992), reflects a contemporary interest in the gendered and sexualised body, and its ability to manifest cultural constructions physiologically. As a result of all this activity, now in the 21st century, Austen's critical reputation has never stood higher. Her popularity outside the academy of course derives in large part from adaptations, especially of *Pride and Prejudice*: the BBC's 1995 and Hollywood's 2005 versions and the Bollywood-inspired *Bride and Prejudice* of 2004.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time?

Q 8: Mention the various shifts in the reception of the novel *Mansfield Park* in the 20th century.



7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have gone through the life and works of Jane Austen who is supposed to have inaugurated the great age of English novel. To Jane Austen's credit, there are six successful novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). She wrote the novel *Mansfield Park* at a particularly important point in her literary career, and it also marks a dramatic change of direction in her writerly career. Although many critics have hailed this novel as a remarkable achievement of Jane Austen, it has rarely been anyone's favourite. Until the late 19th century, Jane Austen was not widely read, especially compared to her contemporary like Walter Scott. Besides, some of her other contemporaries like Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth B. Browning, found her to be limited. However, positive reception of Austen's work began with James Edward Austen-Leigh's book *A Memoir of Jane Austen.* Together with the novels' portrayal of the last and lost pre-industrial era of England, attractive to a new railway and suburban readership, this work brought a new image of Austen as national treasure, beloved by 'Janeites'. The image became associated with 'heritage', with pastoral Englishness; as the novelist Henry James remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.

7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Mary Wollstonecraft was concerned with the restricted lives of women… …she argued that the only purpose of women was to gain a husband and the duty of the reasonably educated girls was to nurture their married relatives… …It seems that Jane Austen accepted both the female dependency on men and the intellectual pursuits of Wollstonecraft.

Ans to Q 2: All of her novels deal with themes related to women… …being a realist, she brings together rural folk and the middle class of the towns… …from the six novels that she wrote, we learn much about the political, spiritual, and intellectual attitudes of her time… …her novels are experimental as each presents a different take on society and the relationship of behaviour and personality to environment.

Ans to Q 3: Jane Austen entered the literary marketplace at a propitious time when the number of the women novelists had been increasing… …Peter Garside argued that Jane Austen's novels symbolised female ascendancy… …Austen's books finally became both an experience and a challenge to experience.

Ans to Q 4: *Juvenilia… …Sense and Sensibility… …Pride and Prejudice… …Susan… …Mansfield Park… …Emma… … Persuasion… …Northanger Abbey*.

Ans to Q 5: Sell the copyright and avoid further anxiety over production and sales… … Persuade a publisher to underwrite costs and share profits… …Get a subscription list to pay for publication, relying on friends, relatives, and patrons…. …Publish on commission.

Ans to Q 6: The novelist contextualises the story of one family, i.e, of Bertram family with the social reality of the middle class during her time in England… …Themes such as love, matrimony, colony, and

so on are gradually incorporated to the plot… …The nature of the characters and then their function lead to the climax into the plot.

Ans to Q 7: Both yes and no… … yes, because the characters greatly reveal the attitude and conduct of the middle class people of the time, their ways of living/thinking typifying the mentality of the bourgeoisie class… … no, because some major socio-political incidents during the time in England like the Napleonic War are absent in the novel.

Ans to Q 8: Edward Said condemned Austen's omission to mention that the estate of Mansfield Park was made possible only through slave labour… … Gabrielle White, however, opposed Said's condemnation of Austen and western culture… …some find faults in Austen's indifference to the Napoleonic War.



7.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Trace the life and works of Jane Austen to discuss the development of Jane Austen as a novelist in the 19th century.

Q 2: "Jane Austen's range of vision in her novels is confined to matrimony and gatherings." Justify your response with reference to *Mansfield Park.*

Q 3: What significance does Jane Austen bear as a woman novelist of her times? Discuss.

Q 4: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time? Justify your views.

Q 5: Discuss how the novelist Austen develops the plot in *Mansfield Park?*

Q 6: What evidence from the novel *Mansfield Park* can you give for or against the critical statement that Jane Austen's point of view is feminine?

Q 7: Mention the various shifts in the reception of the novel *Mansfield Park* in the 20th century with special reference to Edward Said.

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UNIT 8: JANE AUSTEN: *MANSFIELD PARK* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Reading the Novel

8.4 Major Themes

8.5 Austen's Art of Characterisation

8.6 Austen's Narrative Style

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 the unit, you will be able to

- read the novel in terms of the various important aspects related to the novel *Mansfield Park*
- explain the important themes of the novel
- discuss the plot, characterisation, and narrative technique in *Mansfield Park*
- make an assessment of the reception of the novel over the period of time since its publication.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a follow up unit of the previous unit, which deals more specifically with the novel *Mansfield Park*. Through this novel, Jane Austen explores certain attitudes and conducts of the middle class people or the bourgeois class in England during her time. Austen wrote the novel to portray the quietest and least outgoing heroine Fanny Price and to depict the Mansfield Park Estate of Thomas Bertram as the theatre of action

involving Fanny, the novels protagonist, and Bertram's own sons and daughters. This unit thus aims to present a comprehensive analysis of *Mansfield Park,* the critical reception of the novel over the years, and a few important themes that include love, friendship, matrimony and family. A brief introduction to Austen's art of characterisation through an analysis of the important characters of the novel shall also find due place in this unit.

8.3 READING THE NOVEL

Mansfield Park has been considered by most of the critics to be Jane Austen's most serious work. But, for some readers, this seriousness is also an impediment to our understanding of the novel, which refuses to fit into the critical stereotypes to see Austen as a moralist or a satirist. In 1923, Virginia Woolf wrote that "of all great writers, Jane Austen is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness." The same comment can be applied regarding greatness of *Mansfield Park.* Lionel Trilling observes: "No one I believe, has ever found it possible to like the heroine of *Mansfield Park*" (*Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Ed. Boris Ford). General readers too found Fanny Price not as Vivacious, witty and energetic as Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice.* However, recent criticism has seen the novel from various approaches–feminist, historicist and social, and moralistic. All these critical approaches have their own spokesman. An important critical inquiry of her come from Mary Evan's reading of the novel in her "Jane Austen and the State", where Austen has been shown as a proponent of liberalism. Thomas Bertram is considered representative of a repressive regime and the very metaphor of Mansfield Park denotes male authority. Post- colonial critics look at the novel as a critic of colonial expansion citing the character of Thomas Bertram. Edward Said's reading of the novel in his essay "Jane Austen and Empire" in his book *Culture and Imperialism* viewed that the world depicted in *Mansfield Park* is characterised by discourses on power. Many other critics have read the novel from their respective theoretical approaches. In the following

subsections, we shall try to discuss the various important aspects of the novel.

8.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are the important themes in the novel *Mansfield Park.*

Colonial Slave Trade:

Vladimir Nabokov in his Cornell University lectures on *Mansfield Park* regards Sir Thomas as important to the formal structure of the novel. It is because, he helps in understanding that "the source of the Bertram money" resides in the "cheap slave labor" operating in Sir Thomas's Antiguan plantations. For Nabokov, the "West Indies Estate" is functionally necessary to the structure of the novel, which requires Sir Thomas to leave Mansfield Park. In his view, details of such as Sir Thomas's Antigua possessions are not elaborated in the novel so that Jane Austen can use a pointed critique of Britain's colonial empire and practices, or the wealth of the Bertram family and how they use and misuse their wealth.

You should also note that **Edward W. Said**, uses Mansfield Park estate in the opening chapter of his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and aims to show that colonialism plays an important role in a novelist like Austen. According to Said, the Bertram fortunes are sustained by exploitation of slave labour on Sir Thomas's Antigua estates and plantations. Further, Fanny Price herself can be seen as a "transported commodity". At one point, Edward Said implicated the novel in western culture's casual acceptance of the material benefits of slavery and imperialism, citing Austen's omission to mention that the estate of Mansfield Park was made possible only through slave labour. At another point, however, he seems to have acknowledged that Jane Austen disapproved of slavery.

Critic such as **Gabrielle White**, however, has criticised Said's condemnation of Jane Austen and western culture, maintaining that Austen and other writers, including Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke, opposed slavery and helped make its eventual abolition possible. It is also a concern for some critics that Jane Austen was sublimely indifferent to the outside

world. Such critics suggest that *Mansfield Park* was written at the height of the Napoleonic War, yet the war is barely even mentioned in this or any other of her novels. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing and the country was in turmoil as a result, again there was barely a mention. Similarly, her novels contain not a single mention of the steam engine, the growth of the manufacturing cities or even the turnip (which had a much more profound effect on the British economy than any plant with the exception of cotton). She even manages to omit any mention of the abolition of the slave trade of 1808, four years before she started the novel and the culmination of a huge, controversial public campaign.

Question of Morality and Active Principle:

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen presents the military and the Church as the two serious professions that potentially support the country in a difficult time, the one defending it abroad, the other stiffening moral fibre at home and establishing those principles for which men were fighting. These 'active' principles are what the patriarchal Sir Thomas Bertram finds lacking in most of the inhabitants of Mansfield Park, but which his niece Fanny Price, with her fortuitous conjunction of humility and self-esteem, 'struggles' to uphold. Thomas himself is compromised not only by his presumed ownership of slaves in Antigua (the disordered colonial plantations may be linked to disorder in the English home) but primarily by his insidious arrogance, which allows him to treat his family as commodities. The moral deficiency within the novel is foreshadowed in the satirical opening of the first chapter, where the three middle-class sisters are assessed in monetary not moral terms by their mercenary lawyer uncle, and enter into a lifetime of sexual and social rivalry. The eldest two marry Sir Thomas Bertram and the Reverend Mr Norris respectively, with no mention of love. The third marries a lowly lieutenant of marines, presumably for love and no money, thereby disobliging her family. All lack balance between prudence and romance, love and self-interest.

Proper Education:

Related to morality and principle is also the issue of proper education which is a prominent concern of Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*.

Almost all the characters in the novel are associated with the theme in one way or the other. Here education signifies that kind of education which controls passions, regulates temper, cultivates reason and guides the action of the characters. Jane Austen is finally successful in creating characters who either acquire a high social status due to their principled education or are doomed to suffer throughout their life due to their faulty education. Here education is not necessarily academic education, rather the adaptation of just values from experience and atmosphere. Apart from Fanny and to some extent Edmund, most of the major characters do not possess just values due to their negligence towards an adequate system of education.

Love and Matrimony:

Like her other novels, love is very crucial in *Mansfield Park*. Her interest in young people and in their love and courtship, in fact, is a major subject in *Mansfield Park.* In the novel, the novelist is preoccupied with the responsibility of making matches for her heroes and heroines. Somehow, the concept of love in the novel is guided by emotion and calculation. Fanny's love for Edmund is beyond any artificiality and selfish motive. However, the other girls are not as serious as Fanny. For instance, the illicit relationship between Maria and Henry is steered by some temporary excitement and frail feeling. To an extent, Henry flirts with the girls in the name of love. He even proposes to Fanny, but she refuses his proposal since she knows the nature of Henry. In most of the cases, however, love is a means to get someone. As a result, the theme of matrimony becomes central to the plot. Therefore, parties, dances, theatres, gatherings, travel etc. become crucial elements in the overall design of the plot. The preparation for staging Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lover's Vows* in Mansfield Park is such a design for which various love affairs in the plot set the plot in motion.



LET US KNOW

What contributes most to Jane Austen's universal popularity?

Her ability to create the illusion of psychologically believable and self-reflecting characters is perhaps the most enduring quality of her as a novelist. Her novels are investigations of selfhood, particularly female, the oscillating relationship of feeling and reason, the interaction of present and past memory, and the constant negotiation between desire and society. Charlotte Bronte memorably wrote that Austen avoided the passions, that she rejected 'even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy Sisterhood'. Although in a mode quite different from Bronte, Jane Austen–sometimes ironic, rarely unrestrained–has nonetheless become a passionate writer.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does Austen treat the theme of love and matrimony in the novel?

Q 2: How does Austen present the idea of education in the novel you are reading?

Q 3: Do you think that the novel reflects on British colonial activities?

Q 4: What do you understand by the term 'the little bit of Ivory'?

8.5 AUSTEN'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Mansfield Park presents a variety of characters that have movements and vitality. The following is a brief discussion on the major characters of the novel.

Fanny Price:

Fanny probably is the least liked of all Jane Austen's heroines, whose own mother "thought Fanny insipid," although some of her close relatives found her "a delightful Character!" We meet Fanny when she is

only 10. She is small and physically fragile, when she is sent to Mansfield Park. Throughout the 19th century there is little critical attention paid to Fanny. It is interesting to note that **Reginald Farrer** in a review of the book in *Quarterly Review* in July 1917, assessed Fanny as a "penniless dull little nobody." But contrary to such views other critics like **Lionel Trilling** (1957) declared, "Nobody, I believe, has ever found it possible to like the heroine of" the novel" and proceeded to declare that Fanny is close to saintliness. Positive reviews also came from **Tony Tanner** (1966), who sees Fanny as "never, ever wrong." Although feminist and political readings of the novel have focused attention away from Fanny, critical reactions have still to encompass the hostility she endures. Her absence from her Portsmouth family gives her a tremendous feeling of loneliness and, except for Edmund's kindness, she is very often mistreated in her new home. Edmund tells her, "There is no reason in the world why you should not be important where you are known." Fanny becomes the chief companion of Lady Bertram, to whom she often attends. She believes, unlike Mary, in his choice of the church as a career and does not agree with the theatricals in the absence of Sir Thomas, refusing to participate in them. She is also one who perceives that Henry Crawford is playing games with Maria's and Julia's affections. Being a Cinderella figure, previously she is afraid of Sir Thomas Bertram and continually suffers from the mal-treatment of Mrs. Norris. Upon his return from Antigua, Sir Thomas's attitude toward her is transformed into one of considerable kindness, especially after he understands that Fanny alone had refused to be part of the theatrical activities. Fanny shows a considerable affinity for nature and gardens, their naturalness and development.

There are various stages in her progress in the novel. The first is Fanny's movement to Mansfield Park from Portsmouth. The second is the return home of Sir Thomas following his Antigua trip. This stage culminates in Crawford's proposal. In the third stage, Fanny returns with her beloved brother, William, to her Portsmouth home, where she spent her early years. This visit is an important part of her Bildungsroman—her growing up and maturing. Contrary to her expectations in Portsmouth, she finds "closeness



One of the significant qualities of the novel is that Austen writes precise prose but is on the side of Fanny and her aunt Lady Bertram whose feelings are the key to understand *Mansfield Park*. Fanny remains true to herself and is independent in spite of her circumstances.

and noise ... ... confinement, bad air, bad smells." Her negative reaction to her new environment soon becomes visible. When she returns to Mansfield Park, she becomes aware that "Edmund was no longer the dupe of Mary Crawford''. This is the fourth and final stage in her development. She is united with Edmund, although still "timid, anxious, doubting as she was" and obtains "a delightful happiness." Thus, Fanny is indeed a complex heroine; it is no wonder that she has provoked diverse reactions since the days of her initial creation. She becomes "Mrs. Bertram" and hence the intended pun "Price-less"!

Thomas Bertram:

A baronet and a Member of Parliament, Sir Thomas Bertram is the wealthy owner of Mansfield Park. Well known for his estate management he is also the father of four children Tom, Edmund, Maria, and Julia, and the guardian and benefactor of Fanny Price, the niece of his wife. Very serious in his deportment, he is distant from his children and pays little heed to their development, relying instead, for his daughters' education, on their aunt Mrs. Norris. He is kind to Fanny Price and attempts to help her mother financially when her sons need career assistance. Indulgent to his wife, he is almost absent in Mansfield Park because of his London Parliamentary duties. Being the owner of property in Antigua in the West Indies, he takes a journey there and is therefore absent from home for almost two years to deal with certain problems related to business. While he is away, his strict regime at Mansfield Park disintegrates. He returns to Mansfield Park unexpectedly and reacts strongly to the theatricals. On his return, his attitude to Fanny becomes kinder. His concern with morality and reserve leads him to ignore the inner being, and he is sorely tested by Maria's and Julia's elopements and his eldest son's lack of character. At the conclusion of the novel, "sick of ambitious and mercenary connections" (471) threatening Mansfield Park and his family, he welcomes Fanny as his daughter-in-law. Sir Thomas is a performer sustaining his own self-interest and self-image. **Tony Tanner** in "Introduction" to the Penguin edition of *Mansfield Park* comments that Sir Thomas Bertram is the sole lawgiver in the Mansfield Household. However,

he allowed Mrs. Norris to manage his household and paid little attention to how his daughters were brought about. It is said by another critic that Sir Thomas lacks imagination and common sense regarding his children. A stern father he never allowed any ball at Mansfield Park. In his absence, therefore, his children got a chance to stage a play but before that could happen, Sir Thomas returned from Antigua. Being a conservative MP, he could never allow a play by Kotzebue to be staged in his house simply because Kotzebue had revolutionary sympathies.

Tom Bertram:

The character of Tom Bertram is always contrasted with Edmund. The eldest son of the Bertram couple, Tom, a moral opposite of Edmund, is fond of horseracing, gambling, and other more dissolute activities, Tom's debts and extravagant life soon makes him face problems. Subsequently, Sir Thomas takes him to Antigua hoping that his visit will encourage his elder son to become more seriously concerned with his financial responsibilities. However, young Tom is sent back home early and, in spite of his awareness of his father's disapproval, suggests performing a play at Mansfield Park. He prefers a comedy and chooses the sexually provocative *Lovers' Vows.* He pays little hid to his social duties and responsibilities as the head of the Mansfield estate during his father's prolonged absence. Modern critics do not dismiss Tom as a dissolute person. Jane Austen introduces Tom as a plot device, using him for his role in bringing about two important points of the novel—the staging of the play in Mansfield household, and the return of fanny from Portsmouth. Austen herself has comforting words for Tom when she says: "He had suffered, and he had learnt to think… He became what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself." From such comments, it appears that even though a moral opposite to Edmund, Tom has his own personal qualities. Even his squandering money is excused when we consider his situation as the son of a rich MP. To sum up, Tom is young, careless and full of fun and there is no other character like him in the novel who loves his life and tries to live it to the full.

Edmund Bertram:

Edmund is mostly conceived as the model for correct judgment and principles in the novel. Destined for the Church, "he was not pleasant by any common rule, he talked no nonsense, he paid no compliments, his opinions were unbending, his attentions tranquil and simple.'' Edmund's kindness and consideration are demonstrated when the 10-year-old Fanny Price first comes to Mansfield Park, whom he befriends, protects, and advises. So much so that he becomes the formative influence on the development of her personality. In spite of his subsequent romantic obsession with Mary Crawford, his friendship with Fanny never fails. As **Tony Tanner** points out, "Edmund has chosen to be a clergyman by profession," and consequently "Edmund at this moment symbolically abandons his profession, his role in life, to play at being a stage clergyman indulging in a love affair (for such is his part!)." Yet in spite of Mary's disdain for his decision to enter the Church, Edmund defends his views by emphasising the spiritual and social role of the clergyman. After visiting Mary in London and seeing her with her friends, Edmund begins to realise her superficiality and lack of principle. On his return to Mansfield from London, Edmund becomes dependent on Fanny, who is his comforter and adviser. He marries Fanny, and they initially live at Thornton Lacey, his first parish. After the death of Dr. Grant, they move to the Mansfield Parsonage.

Maria Bertram:

The eldest daughter of the Bertrams, Maria is Mrs. Norris's favourite. She is three years older than Fanny Price, and her personality is influenced more by her mean and materialistic aunt Mrs. Norris than by her expensive education, her governess, or parents. She is persuaded by aunt to become engaged to the wealthy and well-connected Mr. Rushworth although she harbours no love for him. She takes the leading role in the theatrical performance of *Lovers' Vows* from her sister, and in revenge for Henry Crawford's accompanying Julia on the box to Sotherton, shamelessly flirts with him during the theatricals. She is the first to break out of the restraints of her marriage and elopes with Henry Crawford.

Rushworth divorces Maria, and she bitterly quarrels with Henry Crawford, who also refuses to marry her. She is forced to return home. However, her father punishes her by sending her to live away from Mansfield Park with her aunt Norris. **Claudia Johnson's** feminist reading of the novel sees Maria and Julia, attempting desperately to free themselves from "a code of female propriety" imposed by their father, who misreads his daughters.

Julia Bertram:

The younger daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Julia is a year younger than her sister, Maria, and two years older than Fanny Price. Educated with Maria by her aunt Norris, whose values are: "give a girl an education [a superficial one], and introduce her properly into the world, and then to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to any body." She is indulged by her aunt to grow up believing that she and her sister are "the finest young women in the country". Being the younger daughter, she is not spoiled as much as Maria by Mrs. Norris, and is more controllable. She is jealous of Maria for being Henry Crawford's favourite. Consequently, she refuses to participate in the Mansfield theatricals. In London, she meets Mr. Yates again, whom she allows, without much enthusiasm, to court her. Following Maria's elopement with Henry Crawford, and fearful of the consequences for her father's severity, she agrees to elope with Yates. Too bound up with her own pursuit of pleasure, in short, being a hedonist, she is unable to return to Mansfield to comfort her brother in his illness, or to be a friend to Fanny. Julia has received scant critical attention except as an example of a jealous sister, whose temper was "more controllable" than Maria's. She is not seen in a conversation with her sister, with whom she competes unsuccessfully to play the role of a lover, in the performance of *Lovers' Vows.*

Henry Crawford:

Henry has an estate at Everingham in Norfolk and is very flirtatious with sophisticated manners and taste. Forever playing a part, acting, performing, he seems to wish his own self, his own personality and position, would disappear. Thus, when he listens to William, he desires to be in his place and to be a sailor. When he listens to Edmund, he wishes

to be a clergyman. Able to converse with almost everyone about his or her interests, he is a good listener and an outstanding actor in the Mansfield theatricals. Even though she does not approve of the theatricals, Fanny admires Henry's performance, and when she is most suspicious of him, she is fascinated by his readings from Shakespeare. Henry obviously enjoys tempting women into relationships and leading them up the garden path. He plays games with Julia's feelings and flirts remorselessly during the theatricals with Maria, giving her misleading signals, although he is aware of her engagement to Rushworth. Henry helps twice to destroy the tranquility of Mansfield Park: through his participation in the theatricals and his elopement with the married Maria, whom he refuses to marry. He pursues Fanny and proposes to her, placing her in a difficult situation with her Mansfield family. For a commentator like Kathryn Sutherland, Henry and Mary Crawford belong to a world of metropolitan tastes, conspicuous consumption, self-gratifying acts of improvement, of wit and dandyism.

Mary Crawford:

Independently wealthy, having an income of £20,000, Mary Crawford possesses a "true London maxim, that everything is to be got for money." Her materialistic outlook comes into close conflict with Edmund's determination to be a clergyman. Unable to divert him into another choice of profession, "she would henceforth admit his attentions without any idea beyond immediate amusement." Her attitude softens later in the novel when she realises that with Tom's illness, there is a stronger possibility that Edmund will inherit the Mansfield estates. Mary wishes to control when she refers to Henry Crawford's falling in love with Fanny as "the glory of fixing one who has been shot at by so many" An important part of her role in the novel is as a temptress, to get others to indulge in "forbidden" pleasures. For example, she tempts Edmund to participate in the theatricals (in which she is successful), and to give up his vocation to become a clergyman. Mary is the attractive antithesis of Fanny Price in various ways.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss how Austen delineates the characters in the novel?

Q 6: What are the various stages of Fanny's development in the novel?

8.6 AUSTEN'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Jane Austen uses third person omniscient narration to tell the story. The instances of 'telling' and 'showing' (these terms are borrowed from Waine C. Booth) are evident in the narrative. For example 'telling' is a chief mode of narration right from chapter I in the novel. In certain cases, however, 'showing' is also used by the narrator. The conversation between Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris in the first chapter, thus, exemplifies the mode of 'showing'. It is a common feature in the novels of Jane Austen that her women characters must marry. For this, they must meet men in socially permitted ways, at balls or during visits, where they must get to know one another through conversation. This is why, though Fanny is quite silent throughout the novel, conversation becomes a part of the narrative. Another important aspect is her use of long sentences in the novel. The sentences in the narrative are often long with various syntactical parts. Minute details of the characters and of the settings are expressed through a coherent narrative technique. The novelist does not experiment with varied styles or she does not have the element of 'play' throughout the narrative yet the narrative is striking in the novel. The reader may not be fascinated with the style of the narrative, yet the novelist is able to keep the reader moving along with the story through a plain narrative style. Jane Austen is perhaps one of the first authors 'to grasp fully the technique of using free indirect discourse to represent the *lived* self in the moment'. Free indirect speech is a technique of using speech and narratorial discourse. It is employed in passages usually without quotation marks which are not delivered as direct speech but which represent characters' expression by employing their vocabulary, phrases, sentence structure,

and idiomatic inflections. Direct and indirect speech, subjectivity and objectivity merge, and the narrator, allowing distance from the character, mimics her style. When used for the central consciousness, the reader both identifies with this consciousness and suspects that it is not necessarily authoritative; what is delivered may be point of view rather than objective fact.



LET US KNOW

Three or Four Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on:

Jane Austen is quite different from her predecessors. For many years, she was not consciously writing for publication. During her period, Maria Edgeworth established herself as a very significant writer of the so-called 'provincial' novels. Her novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800) is particularly significant, both as a regional novel and as an evocation of history, 'before the year 1782'. But, her reputation did not last long as Jane Austen soon came to be regarded as the greatest woman writer of her time. What no authors before Jane Austen had attempted so successfully was to apply the techniques of the novel to the acute observation of society in microcosm: 'three of four families in a Country Village' was 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work,' she wrote in one of her letters. That her intentions were not small-scale, however, is clear from her next words – 'so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour'. Therefore, going against the trend of the novels of her time, Austen applies the microscope to human character and motivation, with no great didactic, moral, or satiric purpose, but with a gentle irony and perspicacity, which make her novels unique, as representations of universal patterns of behaviour, and as documentation of an aspect of the provincial society of her time. Jane Austen too criticises the 'gentry': the characters in Mansfield Park stage an 'anarchic' play *Lover's Vows* incidentally written by Elizabeth Inchbald, and portrays an older order of values that is changing, at a time when the gap between the gentry and the poor is widening.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Briefly comment on the narrative style of Austen in the novel *Mansfield Park*?



8.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit has examined Jane Austen's classic novel *Mansfield Park* from various aspects. The plot of the novel deals with Thomas Bertram's family and his estate at Mansfield Park, and how Fanny Price, whom Thomas has brought to his home at the age of ten, grows and matures and how Sir Thomas's attitude to her undergoes a change after his return from Antigua. It is worth mentioning that Jane Austen's contribution to English literature is immense and she occupies a remarkable place in English fiction. Her vision may be limited, yet she develops themes of broad significance and presents very truthful versions of society and human beings. Critics have always commented on her ironic attitude to the polite society of England. This unit has dealt with the theme of love, matrimony, property, education etc. Taking these ideas, this unit has introduced you to Jane Austen and her novel *Mansfield Park*. Its context is colonialism, yet, matrimonial subjects are central to the design of the novel. Some critics do point out the absence of war experience in nearly all of her novels at a time when Napoleonic war was in force, but the way Austen focuses on the areas of society in the novel, it could be well read without reference to the war. The literary historian David Daiches says that Austen is the greatest of all the novelists of manners of any period. It was mainly because writing in the late 18th and early 19th century, Austen could very well reflect on the habits and manners of particular social classes operating in a developed social setup.



8.8 FURTHER READING

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3) Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (1987). *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park.* Modern Critical Interpretations. Langhorne, P.A: Chelsea House Press.
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6) Copeland, Edward & Juliet McMaster. (eds.) (1997). The *Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7) Todd, Janet. (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen.* UK: Cambridge University Press.
8) Tomalin, Claire. (1997). *Jane Austen: A Life*. London: Viking.
9) Trilling, Lionel. (1965). 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park'. In *From Blake to Byron. The Pelican Guide to Literature*: Ed. Boris Ford. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Web Resource:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mansfield_Park



8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: She employs incidents of love and matrimony among the characters… … most of these affairs become unsuccessful because of the error in the attitudes of the characters… …Fanny's love for

Edmund, however, is an exception in the novel… …through her character, Austen criticises the hollowness in the attitudes of the 'rich' people.

Ans to Q 2: Education is important not necessarily as an academic exercise but as the adaptation of just values based on experience and atmosphere… …because of education, the characters either acquire high social status due to their principled education or are doomed to suffer throughout due to their faulty education… …in the end of the novel, Sir Thomas realises the inadequacies of his faulty education of his children.

Ans to Q 3: Yes… …in the novel Thomas Bertram leaves for Antigua in the West Indies for a year to resolve some unmentioned problem in plantations when his children have attained ages… …reference to the imperial attitudes of the British who frequently made colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America during that time… …Thomas Bertram's business in Antigua is a much discussed subject in the writings of Edward Said and other postcolonial writers.

Ans to Q 4: It's a fictional technique adopted by Jane Austen… … mean an acute observation of society in microcosm… …in a letter, she wrote: 'three or four families in a Country Village' was 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work'… …to achieve this, she applied the microscope to human character and motivation… … this phrase hints at the miniature and insular world as her raw material.

Ans to Q 5: Jane Austen creates various characters in the novel… …they fulfil the purpose of the novelist as they develop the story with their function and nature… … some of them have positive qualities: for example Fanny Price is a model of moral values… …while some other characters play other kinds of role having wickedness.

Ans to Q 6: The first stage is Fanny's movement to Mansfield Park from Portsmouth… ... the second is during the return of Sir Thomas following his Antigua trip… …in the third stage, Fanny returns with William to her Portsmouth home… …the fourth stage is when she returns to Mansfield Park and is united with Edmund.

Ans to Q 7: The narrative style is quite plain in *Mansfield Park*… …use of third person omniscient narrator to tell the story… …abundant use of techniques such as conversation, showing, telling, and various ornaments… …all these enhance the beauty of the novel as well as fulfil different purposes intended by the writer.



8.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Do you think that Austen's *Mansfield Park* serves as a mouthpiece of the women characters? Would you like to consider *Mansfield Park* as a feminist work?

Q 2: What is colonial in the novel *Mansfield Park*? How would you respond to the postcolonial criticism of *Mansfield Park* led mainly by Edward Said?

Q 3: How do you read Fanny's silence throughout the novel? Do you think that Fanny Price deserves the attention of the readers?

Q 4: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time? Critically discuss.

Q 5: Thomas Bertram is considered to be representative of a repressive regime and the very metaphor of Mansfield Park denotes male authority. Discuss.

Q 6: In what ways, do you think, a novel like *Mansfield Park*, provide important access to the British colonial Endeavour? Discuss.

Q 7: Identify some of the ways in which Austen upholds the 18th-century attitude toward social ranks.

Q 8: Jane Austen likened her literary works to 'a little bit of ivory'. In light of this statement, explain how Austen structures the plot of *Mansfield Park*?

Q 9: What are the different kinds of marriages depicted in *Mansfield Park*? What kinds of qualities are important in choosing a marriage partner in this world? Explain.

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UNIT 9: CHARLES DICKENS: *TALE OF TWO CITIES* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Charles Dickens: The Novelist

9.3.1 His Life

9.3.2 His Works

9.4 Story of the Novel

9.5 Critical Reception of Dickens

9.6 Let us Sum up

9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.8 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss Charles Dickens as an outstanding Victorian novelist
- consider Dickens as a strong commentator on the social and ethical issues of the Victorian age
- examine Dickens' revisiting history through the French Revolution as reflected in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*
- discuss how he makes London and Paris two focal points of the plot in the novel
- appreciate *A tale of Two Cities* as a unique testament to the changes taking place in English society during his times.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will get an opportunity to read about Charles Dickens and his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*—a touching human story against the backdrop of the French Revolution. Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812-1870) was an English writer and social critic of the Victorian

era. Famous for his creation of some of the world's best-known fictional characters, Dickens is considered by many to be the greatest novelist of his time. His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime, and by the 20th century, he has been widely recognised as a literary genius. The novel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. The novel tells the story of the French Doctor Manette, his 18-year-long imprisonment in the Bastille in Paris, and his release to life in London with his daughter Lucie, whom he had never met. The story is set against the conditions that led up to the French Revolution, and the Reign of Terror.

9.3 CHARLES DICKENS: THE NOVELIST

9.3.1 His Life

Charles John Huffam Dickens was an outstanding English writer and social critic who is generally regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian period. Famous mainly for creating some of the world's most memorable fictional characters Dickens' works enjoyed unprecedented popularity and fame in his own days but it was in the twentieth century that a revaluation of his literary genius has established him as one of the greatest English novelists of all time. In the following paragraphs, you will briefly read his life and works.



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was born in Landport, Portsmouth, on February 7, 1812, as the second of eight children to John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, and his wife Elizabeth Dickens. The Dickens family moved to London in 1814 and two years later to Chatham, Kent, where Charles spent the early years of his childhood. Due to financial difficulties they came back to London in 1822, settling in Camden Town, a poor neighbourhood of

London. Then in 1824, Charles's father, who had no aptitude for finance and was constantly in debt, was imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison. As a result of this, Charles, then twelve years old, was withdrawn from school and forced to work at a blacking factory that handled "blacking" or shoe polish to help support the family, while his mother and siblings joined his father at the prison. This experience left profound psychological and sociological scars on Charles. It gave him a very personal acquaintance with poverty and made him the most vigorous and influential voice of the working classes in his age. This experience also became a source both of creative energy of Dickens and of his preoccupation with the themes of alienation and betrayal in his novels.

When Dickens was around fifteen years of age, he gained employment as an office boy at an attorney's, while he studied shorthand at night. From 1830, he began working as a shorthand reporter in the courts and afterwards as a parliamentary and newspaper reporter. In 1833, Dickens began his literary career with contributions of short stories and essays to periodicals. *A Dinner at Popular Walk* was Dickens's first published story, appearing in the *Monthly Magazine* in December 1833. In 1834, while still a newspaper reporter, he adopted his famed pseudonym Boz. Dickens's first book, a collection of stories titled *Sketches by Boz*, was published in 1836. In the same year, he married the daughter of the editor of the *Evening Chronicle*, Catherine Hogarth, with whom he had ten children. They separated in 1858, but since divorce was nearly unthinkable in that age, he kept her in a separate house and supported her financially until her death. There were speculations later on that Ellen Ternan, a young actress friend, may have been Dickens's mistress, and that she may have been part of the reason for the failure of his marriage, though that relationship itself had apparently become central to his life and career.

Although Dickens was mainly a novelist, he continued his journalistic work until the end of his life, editing *The Daily News*, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round*. His connections to various magazines and newspapers facilitated his publishing his own fiction at the beginning of his career. *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* was published in monthly parts from April 1836 to November 1837. This work became very popular, continuing to be so after it was published in book form in 1837. After the success of Pickwick, Dickens embarked on a full-time career as a novelist, producing work of increasing complexity and at short intervals: *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* as part of the *Master Humphrey's Clock* series (1840-41), all being published in monthly instalments before being made into books.

In 1842, he travelled with his wife to the United States and Canada, which led to his controversial *American Notes* (1842) and which also formed the basis for some of the episodes in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens's series of five Christmas Books followed soon: *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846), and *The Haunted Man* (1848). After travelling further to Italy (1844) and Switzerland (1846) Dickens continued his successful novelistic career with *Dombey and Son* (1848), the largely autobiographical *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861).

In 1856 Dickens bought Gad's Hill Place, an estate he had admired since his childhood. In 1858, he began a series of readings from his books, which became instantly popular and for which he was handsomely paid. In that same year, however, after a long period of difficulties, he separated from his wife. Towards the end of his life, Dickens worsened his declining health by giving numerous readings. During one of his readings in 1869, he collapsed due to a mild stroke. He retreated to Gad's Hill and began to work on *Edwin*

Drood, which was never completed. He died at home on June 9, 1870 after suffering another, more severe, stroke. Contrary to his wish to be buried in Rochester Cathedral, he was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What, according to you, basically accounts for Charles Dickens' popularity as a novelist?

Q 2: What kind of experiences had a profound psychological and sociological impact on the mind of Charles Dickens?

Q 3: How did Charles Dickens begin his literary career?

9.3.2 His Works

Sketches by Boz (1836) is taken to be Dickens's first work. It is a journalistic book based on the various aspects of the city of London. However, it his through his *Pickwick Papers* (published monthly from 1836-1837) that he first emerged as a novelist of the future. It is a picaresque comedy in which the interest lies not only in the absurd incidents but also in the way in which the protagonist Mr. Pickwick reacts to new kinds of emerging events. Moreover, portraying characters from various parts of England Dickens seeks to provide an impression of the 19th century English social scene before the Industrial revolution.

With literary success assured, Dickens worked with greater intensity and overlapping with *Pickwick Papers* serialised first *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), then *Nicholas Nickleby* (1938-9) and then *Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41). *Oliver Twist* is the first of Dickens' novels to deal with specific social ills like criminal gangs of London while his *Nicholas Nickleby* is based on the centrality of human fate. *Old Curiosity Shop,* on the other hand, turns out to be an excellent example of Dickensian sentimentality. His next novel *Barnby Rudge* (1841) presents a contrastive analysis of individual eccentricities against a general atmosphere. But, it was with *Martin*

Chuzzlewit (1843-44) that Dickens first presents his real stature as a novelist. It is a novel based on the ironical study of the effects of greed on the characters of the novel. For the first time in this work, Dickens took a moral situation rather than a group of picaresque characters and incidents.

Dombey and Son (1846-48) is famous for the richness of characters and the moral purpose often derived from the author's awareness of the tensions between private affection and the demands of the industrial civilisation. The richness, flexibility and strength of his autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* (1849) draw attention of every serious reader. The portrayal of the clash of different ways of life and different strata of society in conflict with each other only helps the readers to judge how Dickens skilfully explores the relationship between convention and reality and between public and private standards. His next novel *Bleak House* (1852) is equally important in terms of the writer's concentration of the tragic ironies of human ambition and professions. Dickens's understanding of the ills of the Utilitarian industrialist philosophy is best reflected in his novel *Hard Times* (1854). The maturity of Dickens as a writer is noticeable in its juxtaposition of apparent and real knowledge, of the mechanical and the imaginative.

You will find it interesting to note that with a new set of novels like *Little Dorrit* (1855), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Dickens achieves almost full maturity as a novelist. *Little Dorrit* presents the paradox of fate and fortune, *A Tale of Two Cities,* offers a parallel but historical study of two cities, Paris and London during the French Revolution; *Great Expectations* explores, more than anything else, the relation between gentility and morality, and *Our Mutual Friend* provides a convincing picture of the effects of financial and social ambitions on the characters. His *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is a high-powered thriller but it remained unfinished due to Dickens' death in June 1870.



LET US KNOW

To Dickens goes the credit of depicting most authentically the English society of the times. The portrayal of common ordinary life against the dramatic changes brought to society by the Industrial Revolution marks much of his creative writings. If you read some of his novels it will not be difficult for you to understand that his fictional world is filled up by eccentrics, villains, unfortunates, hypocrites, social climbers, newly rich, criminals, innocents, bureaucrats, exhibitionists, self deceivers, roisters etc. exemplifying his acute understanding of his contemporary life and society. Moreover, an awareness of his own middle class origin, his unhappy childhood, and a sentimental attitude towards human problems characterise almost all his novels.

It is important to acknowledge Dickens's strength as a novelist 'as' belonging to the English realist tradition. Other than the above-mentioned novels, his canon also includes *A Child's History of England* (1851-53), many short stories, several comic plays and other writings. He is also said to have written a series of letters that would throw light on his life history even more. To him also attributed four Christmas Books: *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1845), *The Battle of Life: A Love Story* (1846), *The Haunted Man And The Ghost's Bargain* (1848).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the important characteristics of Dickens as a writer?

Q 5: Which, according to you, are the mature novels of Dickens and why?

Q 6: Why do you think Dickens's novels are important social documents?

9.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL

The novel begins in the year 1775 with Lucie Manette journeying to Paris to meet her father who has recently been released from the Bastille. Helpless and now mentally unbalanced, he is taken care of by Ernest Defarge, his sometime servant. Lucie and Mr. Jarvis Lorry take him back to London after he regains his balance after meeting his daughter. Five years later in London, Lucie makes the acquaintance of Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay (a French nobleman of the Evrémonde family who has repudiated his title), both of whom fall in love with her. However, Lucie prefers Darnay and subsequently marries him. Sometime later, in France, Darnay's uncle the Marquis de St. Evrémonde is killed on the orders of the Defarges due to his atrocities against the common people. When Darnay returns to Paris, he is captured too and sentenced to death at the guillotine. Doctor Manette, Lucie (accompanied by her child), and Miss Pross reach Paris, where the Doctor attempts to persuade the revolutionaries to release Darnay. This attempt is, however, unsuccessful. The reason behind this is that the Defarges learn of Doctor Manette's imprisonment by the Evrémondes after he witnessed the rape of a peasant girl and the murder of her brother by the members of this family. In the meantime, Sydney Carton also travels to Paris with a resolve to rescue Darnay. He enlists for this purpose the aid of John Barsad who is revealed to be Miss Pross's brother, Solomon Pross. The sense of urgency is heightened by the discovery by Carton of the Defarges's plan to kill Lucie and her child as well. It is, moreover, learnt that Madame Defarge is the sister of the murdered peasant girl and her brother. Sydney plans to evacuate the Manettes safely from Paris and is able to make an entry to Darnay's cell through Barsad's help. He drugs Darney and sends him to London with the Manettes, substituting himself for Charles. Madame Defarges dies when Miss Pross accidentally shoots her in an attempt to ward her off, while Sydney Carton is executed by the revolutionaries. The novel ends with the voice of Carton articulating his sense of satisfaction at having been able to reclaim some purpose in his life through his sacrifice.

The book gives a vivid picture (modelled on Carlyle's *The French Revolution)* of Paris at this period. Critics complained on publication of its lack of humour, but it later achieved wide popularity, partly through successful dramatizations and film adaptations.

9.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF DICKENS

Dickens captured the popular imagination as no other novelist had done and, despite some murmurs against his sensationalism and sentimentality and his inability to portray women other than as innocents or grotesques, he was also held in high critical esteem, admired by contemporaries as varied as Queen Victoria and Dostoevsky. But, it was not until the 20th century, that he began to attract serious academic attention, as one can find through George Orwell's 'Charles Dickens', in *Inside the Whale* (1940), Humphrey House's *The Dickens World* (1941), and Edmund Wilson's "Dickens: The Two Scrooges" (1941). Later criticism has tended to praise the complexity of the sombre late works at the expense of the high-spirited humour and genius for caricature traditionally labelled 'Dickensian'.

A Tale of Two Cities was in a sense uncharacteristic of Dickens in that it referred to a period some seventy years earlier from the Victorian society in which he lived. Many of the contemporary critics such as Sir James Fitzjames Stephen condemned the novel as clumsy, disjointed, mechanical and formulaic, showing an appalling grotesqueness and want of sensibility. Dickens' disparagement of 18th century England in relation to the present, and his hostile portrayal of the French aristocracy of the same period also came under attack. Even in the late 19th and early 20th century, critics, including the important Dickens scholar George Gissing and Dickens' fellow-journalist and novelist G. K. Chesterton, criticised the novel for its emotional approach to the Revolution at the cost of a more intellectual engagement with it, as well as its perceived constrained structure. At the same time, Dickens' contemporary writers such as John Forster, Thomas Carlyle, Wilkie Collins, and Mark Twain also praised the novel. So, we find that the novel was immensely popular with the reading

public on its original serialisation in 1859. But, its critical reception till today is marked by somewhat mixed response from the reading public as well as the critics.



9.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about Charles Dickens who is considered by many to be the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime, and by the 20th century, he has been widely recognised as a literary genius. His novel *A Tale of Two Cities* is a touching human story against the backdrop of the French Revolution. *Sketches by Boz, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, Old Curiosity Shop, Dombey and Son, David Copperfield, Bleak House, Hard Times, Great Expectations* are some of his other important novels. You have learnt how Dickens captured the popular imagination of the time that helped him gain high critical esteem. However, it was not until the 20th century, that he began to attract serious academic attention, mostly for his portrayal of the life of the common people under the Industrial Revolution.



9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: His memorable fictional characters… …his acute understanding of the life of the poor people crushed by Industrialism.

Ans to Q 2: At an early age of 12, Dickens was withdrawn from school and forced to work at a factory that handled shoe polish to help support the family… …this experience helped him to gain understanding of the poverty of the working class people.

Ans to Q 3: Dickens began his literary career in 1833 by contributing stories and essays to periodicals like the *Monthly Magazine*… …while still a newspaper reporter he published in 1836 *Sketches by*

Boz a short story collection… …it is through his *Pickwick Papers* (published monthly from 1836-1837) that he first emerged as a novelist of the future.

Ans to Q 4: Integration of journalistic writings with stories about the English middle class life… …depiction of the urban life and its human character… …discussion of how dramatic changes were brought to society by the Industrial Revolution… …acute awareness of his own middle class origin and his unhappy childhood… …a sentimental attitude towards common human problems etc.

Ans to Q 5: *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend The Mystery of Edwin Drood… … Little Dorrit* presents the paradoxes of fate and fortune… … *A Tale of Two Cities* provides a parallel study of Paris and London during the French Revolution… …*Great Expectations* explores the relation between gentility and morality… … *Our Mutual Friend* deals with the effects of financial and social ambitions on the characters.

Ans to Q 6: It is mainly because of the way his novels deal with specific social issues… …for example, *Oliver Twist* deals with criminal gangs of London… …*Martin Chuzzlewit* presents the effects of greed on the characters of the novel… …*Dombey and Son* represents the tensions between private affection and the demands of the industrial civilisation… …*David Copperfield* portrays the clash of different ways of life… …*Bleak House* (1852) concentrates on the tragic ironies of human ambition and professions etc.



9.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the important characteristics of Charles Dickens as a writer? Discuss with reference to some of his greatest novels.

Q 2: Write a note on the critical reception of Charles Dickens as a Victorian novelist.

Q 3: **“**The portrayal of common ordinary life against the dramatic changes

brought to society by the Industrial Revolution marks much of his creative writings." Elaborate this statement.

Q 4: What makes the portrayal of two important cities like London and Paris as the backdrop of the novel so significant, on the part of Charles Dickens? Give a detailed answer.

Q 5: Write the story of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* in your own words.

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UNIT 10: CHARLES DICKENS: *TALE OF TWO CITIES* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Reading the Novel

10.4 Major Themes

10.5 Dickens' Art of Characterisation

10.6 Dickens' Narrative Style

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

- discuss Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities* in detail
- identify the important themes of the novel and explain them
- assess Dickens' art of characterisation
- explain Dickens' narrative style as seen in the novel in question.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

The novel *Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens was published in both serial and book form in 1859. Carlyle's *The French Revolution* casts its shadows on this novel, which is set in London and Paris at the same time during the French Revolution. It is a novel that depicts the plight of the French peasantry and workers brutalised by the French aristocracy that led to the Revolution, but the brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the Revolution managed to gain equal attention from the novelist. The very title of the novel suggests the importance of the two

cities– Paris and London for Dickens to deal with the harrowing story of suffering and denial of justice for those at the receiving end aftermath of the French Revolution. You will feel that Charles Dickens in this novel provides the compelling juxtaposition of the parallel yet at the same time the contrasting worlds of the two cities. The following sections and subsections will offer an assessment of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* with particular emphasis on its story, themes, characterisation, narrative technique and critical reception accorded to both the author and the novel.

10.3 READING THE NOVEL

Contemporary reviews of the novel did not consider *A Tale of Two Cities* as a warning that revolution was at all possible in 19th century England. But critics in subsequent times have debated at length whether Dickens intended the novel to have implications for his own society. Around 1930s, the Marxist critic T. A. Jackson argued that the novel exclusively showed Dickens's belief that the revolutionaries were justified in using violence, cruelty, and revenge to overcome their oppression. More recent critics are still bewildered to find out Dickens himself was a revolutionary or not. Some opine that Sydney Carton is a middle class hero whose personal sacrifice indicates that the novel does not provide any political solution. But according to critic Cates Baldridge there is a "subversive subtext to the narrator's middle class horror at the collectivist Revolutionary ideology," and argues that Dickens may actually prefer the community of the Revolutionaries to the isolation of the middle class bourgeoisie life.

Criticism in the 20th century also paid more attention to this novel, concentrating on its psychological portraits and its status as historical fiction. Some critics even denied that the novel can be called a historical novel at all because of its one-sided portrayal of the French aristocracy before the Revolution. Even Bernard Shaw argued that the novel is 'pure sentimental melodrama from beginning to end, and shockingly wanting in any philosophy of history.' The historian Georg Lukacs voices the frequently heard criticism that the novel fails to connect the personal adventures of the characters with the Revolutionary background, as he

says: “Dickens, by giving prominence to the purely moral aspects of causes and effects, weakens the connection between the problems of the characters’ lives and the events of the French Revolution.” In his famous biography of Dickens, Edgar Johnson finds that “instead of merging, the truth of revolution and the truth of sacrifice are made to appear in conflict.”

10.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are some of the important themes of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Theme of Resurrection or Regeneration:

The idea of resurrection or regeneration is one that effectively functions as a unifying device for *A Tale of Two Cities* at several levels. From an ironic perspective Jerry Cruncher is termed a “Resurrection-Man” (a body snatcher), a “noble tradesman” who robs churchyards to provide cadavers to medical professionals. It is introduced in the first book itself through the phrase “recalled to life”. At one level it has a narrative function in that the plot depends on two of the major characters (Doctor Manette and Charkes Darnay) being rescued from incarceration and the guillotine respectively. In Book One Chapter V the reader is introduced to Doctor Manette who has spent a long period of his life in confinement in the Bastille. His experience has alienated him to such an extent from the outside world that he begins to regard his isolation itself as a natural refuge. His former servant, Ernest Defarge, acts as his caretaker after his release and the Doctor spends his time in the former’s garret making shoes, an art he had learnt in order to break the monotony of his life in prison. He creates, therefore, an alternate reality in the garret where even his daughter, Lucie, cannot enter. In fact, partially letting go of his memory becomes an unconscious strategy that he adopts in order to escape from the hard facts of reality. It is only gradually that Lucie is able to bring him completely back to life after his ‘recall’. At the same time, this resurrection is rendered precarious since the peace, calm and security of his imaginary but ideal life earlier cannot ever be fully recreated in real life, especially in the turbulent times that Dickens portrays. Consequently, we see the

Doctor suffering from a relapse in Book Three Chapter XII after he fails to convince the Defarges to use their influence to release his son-in-law Charles Darnay. Doctor Manette feels especially guilty since it is his own prison journal that has led to the re-imprisonment of and the death sentence for Charles. This chapter is aptly titled “Darkness” in this context since it signifies a return to the darkness of unreason. At the same time, the restoration of Doctor Manette earlier in the novel implies the restoration of Lucie to a family and a vast improvement to her relatively more marginalised status as an orphan. Again, Lucie herself is to be an agent of restoration for her father, as is advised by Jarvis Lorry in Book One Chapter IV, asking her to “to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort”.

Apart from Dr Manette, the ‘resurrection’ of Charles Darnay forms another crucial part of the narrative framework. Book Two Chapter III prefigures the more crucial rescue of Darnay towards the end of the novel. In this chapter, it is Sydney Carton whose likeness to him results in his acquittal from the charge of being a spy and saves him from being executed. Darnay is (again) sentenced to death in Book Three Chapter X and even here the denouement of the novel rests on Sydney Carton’s exchanging places with him in prison. Darnay is thus ‘recalled to life’ through the agency of Carton.

However, it is in the character of Carton that the fuller, more religious and metaphorical aspect of resurrection is embodied. This is because of the associations established by the author between Christ and Carton (which is discussed later). Carton, at the beginning of the novel, is projected as someone who has lost interest in living a ‘fruitful’ life and so is not ambitious at all. In this, he is diametrically opposite to Stryver who is extremely (and sometimes obsessively) devoted to the goal of success in life. However, paradoxically, while Carton seems to adopt a life-denying attitude regarding himself, he is more interested and active with reference to others (such as to Charles and Lucie). This willingness to be of use to others becomes crucial later in the novel. Moreover, the fact that his death will mean a certain kind of ‘rebirth’ for Darnay and also provide newer hope for his family (primarily Lucie and her son) becomes at one

level reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice. This also indicates the emergence of Carton as someone who has shed his earlier personality and has embraced life. With his frequent mood swings, Carton seems to be a character divided within himself who constantly strives to reconcile the different and conflicting, aspects of his personality. The conflicts within him are frequently the result of his self not attaining that ideal that Carton visualises. As Dickens seems to visualise, this ideal is of course modelled on the image of Christ. Towards the end of the novel the speculation that this might be actualised is given some emphasis. Again, this theme is brought into perspective through a network of Biblical images throughout the novel. For instance, in Book Three Chapter VIII, Sydney Carton fills his glass with brandy, pours it on the hearth, and watches it as it drop. This action gains a symbolic force through the association of wine with the blood of Jesus. Moreover, it goes back to Book One Chapter V where a cask of red wine spills on a Paris street, prefiguring the blood that is eventually going to stain the streets. The related idea here is of martyrdom, with Christ as the epitome of sacrifice and renunciation of the self. This is the reason why Carton has an epiphanic remembrance of Christ's words etching into his memory at his father's funeral as he strolls through the Paris streets at night after putting into action his plan to save Darnay in Book Three Chapter IX. As he is taken to the Guillotine (Book Three Chapter XV), Carton attains a transcendent state of mind that is articulated through his prophetic vision. This seems to resonate with the reiteration of Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life" that precedes this vision. Not surprisingly, then, the ideal visualised by Carton at the end looks ahead at the emergence of a newer generation of 'men' (since this vision is nevertheless centred on Lucie's *son* and Carton's namesake) who would abjure the violence and aggression of the earlier generation and build for a more peaceful and tolerant world.

Portrayal of Women:

Another important theme pertains to the portrayal of women in this novel. Critics like Lisa Robson point out that despite the breakdown of traditional gender distinctions, Dickens succumbs ultimately to the power

relationship involved in the issue of gender. One such instance is the description of the French aristocracy in terms of the Medusa, "the Gorgon's head", whose corruption and brutality actually created the circumstances for the Revolution (Book Two Chapter IX). At the same time, the guillotine (the counterpart of the Gorgon's head) is feminised as "one hideous figure [which] grew as familiar as if it had been before the general gaze from the foundations of the world—the figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine" (Book Three Chapter IV). It is a powerful and triumphant mythical deity (as it is sarcastically portrayed) which overpowers and instils fear and superstition in the people. In both cases, however, the women of France become living embodiments of the negative aspects of revolutionary activity, even though they rely on the men to actually carry out the actions envisaged by them. The character of Madame Defarge becomes a prototype of the 'monstrous' woman who repudiates her femininity in favour of political power and a public life.

The novel, however, ultimately denies women's moral and intellectual capacity to perform public roles. The killing of Madame Defarge symbolises this: it is presented as an act of retribution carried out through the hands of another seemingly unfeminine woman, Miss Pross. In the framework of the novel, the fate of Madame Defarge is determined by a patriarchal utopian vision where such unfeminine and dysfunctional women will cease to exist. The issue of gender here associates itself with the question of class through the fact that Madame Defarge is a peasant woman who is therefore already marginalised.

In contrast, the character of Lucie Manette conforms to the image of the angel of the hearth that proved to be so popular in much of 19th century literature, especially that written by men. Lucie belongs to the middle class and so is expected to perform the role of an administering angel both for her immediate family and the larger circle of family friends, particularly Sydney Carton. She is passive and vulnerable and therefore elicits in the men who make her acquaintance the impulse to protect her. In Book Two Chapter IV, with reference to her impact on Dr Manette, she becomes "the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery,

and to a Present beyond his misery: and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always." Again in Chapter XXI of the same book she is seen as "the golden thread which bound her husband, and her father, and herself, and her old directress and companion, in a life of quiet bliss". And in the concluding vision of Carton Lucie is elevated to the status of a Mary-like figure: "I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name." The use of knitting and weaving tropes by both Lucie and Madame Defarge serve to accentuate the distinctions held up between the two representatives of 19th century womanhood. In Lucie, the image celebrates her genteel domesticity within the traditional bounds of the patriarchal family with the woman as the moral centre. On the other hand, Madame Defarge's obsessive knitting becomes one of the media of communication in the revolution and comes closer to the Greek Fates with their inexorable power that wrenches her from the confines of middle-class family values.

In contrast to both these women characters, the figure of Miss Pross combines their character traits that complicate the picture further. In contrast to the idealised married feminine figure of Lucie, Miss Pross is not good-looking and has to work for her living. Her social position is inferior to Lucie's and she occupies an indeterminate space in the family structure of the Manettes – a position that is akin to the position of a governess. She is strong, independent and unmarried and by implication, therefore, less creative than Lucie. In this she approaches Madame Defarge who is entirely remote from the idea of regeneration. Miss Pross, however, comes closer to the conventional self-sacrificing and nurturing female figure by her unselfish acts (as a surrogate mother) for the safety of Lucy and her child. As her proximity to the feminine ideal becomes greater, Miss Pross becomes the agent through whom Madame Defarge will encounter her punishment. Thus, women become a medium through which the subversive forces of the revolution are sought to be contained in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The Theme of Doubling:

The theme of doubling is also central to the novel. This happens

first of all in the manner in which the identities and ways of life of the two cities of London and Paris, two of the most populous cities in the world during the 18th and 19th centuries, are juxtaposed with each other. This is initiated in the opening chapter itself through powerful sarcasm of latent anarchy and fear in England and France in 1775:

"There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever...France, less favoured on the whole as to matters spiritual than her sister of the shield and trident, rolled with exceeding smoothness down hill, making paper money and spending it. Under the guidance of her Christian pastors, she entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards. It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, for as much as to entertain any suspicion that they were awake, was to be atheistical and traitorous…In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night...prisoners in London gaols fought battles with their turnkeys, and

the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms; musketeers went into St. Giles's, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob, and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way." (Book One, Chapter 1)

The sinister and unpredictable nature of the mob is to be found in equal measure in both cities; however, it is Paris which subsequently becomes London's other as the French mob embarks on a violent revolution. Bjørn Tysdahl in his essay **"Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*** focuses more on the resemblances between the two cities rather than on their contrasts and sees this framework as being guided by what he terms "the grammar of comparison". This narrative strategy, for Tysdahl, is instrumental in creating networks for the circulation of the comedy of the novel [Tysdahl in Bloom (Ed.): 150]. It also gives, he argues, "greater depth and power to indirect political commentary, not least that which examines the price paid in England for early capitalism" [Tysdahl in Bloom(Ed.): 151]. There are parallels and contrasts set up with respect to the characters as well, as has been discussed earlier in the sections on 'resurrection' and on women, for instance, between Sydney Carton, Mr. Stryver and Charles Darney, and between Lucie Manette, Miss Pross and Madame Defarge.



LET US KNOW

In his Preface to the First Edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) Dickens lauds Thomas Carlyle for his massive documentation of the French Revolution in his book *The French Revolution: A History* but Dickens goes on to validate the originality of his own version:

"Whenever any reference (however slight) is made here to the condition of the French people before or during the Revolution, it is truly made on the faith of the most trustworthy witnesses. It has been one of

my hopes to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book."

Nonetheless, Dickens did ask for Carlyle for advice and was overwhelmed by the amount of research the historian had done for his book. There are several characters, places, events, etc. in common between the two authors. For example, the image of the knitting women in Paris; the crowd of Saint Antoine; the Governor of the Bastille and his execution by the mob; and the stoical and, at times, welcoming stance towards death exhibited by Carlyle's Marie-Jeanne Philipon and Dickens's Sydney Carton.

Use of Memory:

An allied theme to the use of history in the novel is its addressing of memory and reminiscence as it revisits events happening approximately seventy years ago. Since it is cast in the form of historical fiction, it engages with the manner in which collective or cultural memory is built out of individual remembrances. This brings up the inherent constructedness of memory itself, a factor that renders it suspect and more of a trap. This can be seen in the way Madame Defarge remembers the atrocities of the French aristocrats and refuses to acknowledge the exceptions in the present. At the same time, memory can also be healing, as when Doctor Manette's memory of his dead wife, seen in his daughter's face, leads to his process of resurrection from the grave of his prison and madness. Again, it is Charles Darnay's memories of his mother that motivate him to try to atone for his family's wrongdoings. In the case of Carton, however, it becomes more interesting as in spite of having a brilliant mind and memory, he chooses not to employ these faculties for his own benefit. At the same time, he is inspired by the memory of his love for Lucie to take a rare resolve to emerge from his passivity through an act that will make *himself* a part of the memories of Lucie and her child (more than in anyone else in that circle). In this sense, even if for him the action is soon to end, its repercussions will be felt for as long as the Darnay family continues.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you consider the theme of doubling central to the novel? Explain briefly.

Q 2: Do you think that Dickens's portrayal of the women characters of the novel is biased?

Q 3: How did Thomas Carlyle help Dickens write the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*?

Q 4: In what way, is the character of Carton related to the theme of resurrection?

10.5 DICKENS' ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Dickensian characters are famous for their typically whimsical names. He often drew his characters from the people he knew. The following are some of the major characters of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Doctor Manette:

Lucie's father who was unjustly imprisoned for eighteen years in Paris. He is brought back from the brink of madness by his daughter. Though he eventually comes home to England with his daughter, he still has occasional relapses of his previous condition when he is in a state of distress. He is eventually declared a hero by the revolutionaries due to his unjust imprisonment; however, the letter he wrote in his prison ironically becomes the evidence that condemns his son-in-law, Charles Darnay, to death. Consequent to this, Doctor Manette reverts back to his previous state of disjunction with the real world.

Lucie Manette:

Doctor Manette's daughter and Charles Darnay's wife. She is kind, loving and beautiful, and liked by all for her innate capacity for love and compassion. She bears an angelic nature. She rescues the Doctor from imprisonment and gives a healing touch to instil life into a broken man; she radiates the lives of those who come near her with her unceasing care and affection. Charles Darnay (who eventually marries her), Miss Pross

and Sidney Carton, besides her father, are the people who preferred her love and attention in abundant measures. It is Sydney Carton in particular who is captivated by her charm, beauty and good nature and sacrifices his own life to keep Darnay, her husband, alive. In sum, Lucie is cast in the convention of the angel of the hearth.

Charles Darnay:

Lucie's husband who was sentenced to death because of the actions of his father and uncle, the Marquis St. Evermonde. He is largely a passive character who, however, possesses a sense of justice. It is due to this that he repudiates his aristocratic title and settles in England as a person of more democratic ideals and one who will work to earn a living. However, circumstances go out of his control so that he is imprisoned twice and sentenced to death, from which he is ultimately rescued by Sydney Carton.

He is a representative of those members of the French aristocracy who were aware of the damage their families or others within their class were inflicting on the peasants but who found themselves unable to resist or stop them. Darnay also becomes a double – both literally as well as figuratively – of Carton.

Sydney Carton:

A lawyer who takes Charles Darnay's place at the Guillotine. Carton is known as the "Lion" Mr. Stryver's less successful assistant, the "Jackal". He is crude but cunning, frequently drunk, and often melancholic, and feels resigned to aimless course his once-promising life has taken. However, he is capable of feeling deep, immense, and tragic love that nonetheless remains hidden from others, particularly Lucie, with whom he is deeply in love. He redeems himself and is thus 'recalled to life' through his final act of substituting himself for Darnay in prison and at the guillotine. He thus has Charles as his double, who, with his social status and success as well as his more conformist role and a happier fate, provides a more positive yet more simplistic aspect to the darker aspect of Carlton. In the novel, Carton, more than any other character, is strongly equated with the figure of Christ.

Ernest Defarge:

He is a former servant of Doctor Manette prior to the latter's imprisonment and cares for the doctor after his release. He is married to Madame Defarge and fears her greatly, so much so that he does not object when she demands the denunciation of Darnay. He is also an important leader of the revolution who discovers Doctor Manette's hidden letter in his old cell in the Bastille. He owns a wine shop in Paris.

Madame Defarge:

The wife of Ernest Defarge. Her family was destroyed by the Marquis St. Evremonde and his brother, the uncle and father of Darnay. She is portrayed as a cruel, vengeful agent of the revolution, who spends her days knitting the names of people she has marked as guilty into her woolwork. She is single-minded in her desire to have Charles Darnay executed, despite his proven innocence of any crimes and despite her husband's loyalty to and compassion for Dr. Manette. She is thus the novel's most powerful example of how the oppressed peasants became the oppressors during the Revolution. At the same time, she is demonised as a woman since she does not conform to current and conventional ideas of femininity.

10.6 DICKENS' NARRATIVE STYLE

A Tale of Two Cities is told from an omniscient point of view though the narrative voice frequently adopts accounts from several other characters themselves. Here it would be pertinent to look at what the narrative voice and point of view signify.

The narrative point of view refers to the perspective from which a story is told. It can therefore be a first person point of view (told in the narrator's own voice, using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"); second person point of view (rarely used and using "You" as the speaking voice); and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually (but not always) uninvolved in the actions of the novel and in which the characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They". Authors frequently combine the first and third person points of view in

literary works. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens mostly uses the third person point of view, but at significant points, like the shift introduced in the very first line of the novel, moves to the first person in order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections. Again, even within the third person point of view, the focalisation on many occasions is not of the narrator himself but that of another character.

The narrative voice on the other hand, refers to the actual conveying of the story by a persona. That persona might be a part of the events, like the narrator in *Robinson Crusoe*, or someone who is outside the events narrated in the text, like the narrator of *A Tale of Two Cities*. At the same time, a text can carry a number of speaking voices other than the primary narrator. With reference to the present novel, the voice of the narrator subsumes within itself the accounts of other characters, like the journal of Doctor Manette and the vision of Carton prior to him being killed. The latter is one of the most important sections of the novel, in Book Three Chapter XV. Here, the third person narrative voice of the novel gives way to Carton's prophetic point of view at the end, preceded immediately by the reiteration of Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life". The narrative point of view and the narrative voice thus work in close coordination with each other in most literary works, and *A Tale of Two Cities* convincingly illustrates this interaction.

The novel proceeds largely in a linear fashion but Dickens frequently complicates this scheme through flashbacks and other devices, such as letters. The novel begins in the year 1775 then jumps to 1762 in the second book. From then on, we are constantly reminded of the passing of time. At times the narrative also unfolds itself through the human cycle of courtship, marriage, and the arrival of children (centring on the character of Lucie). Again in Book Two Chapter 21 the year is July 1789 and the event is the fall of the Bastille; however, then the events shift to August 1792. Even in Book Three, the events taking place during the period from 1792 to 1794 are interrupted by Doctor Manette's reminiscences regarding his imprisonment which take the reader back to December 1767.

Again, with techniques, Dickens creates a compelling account– albeit fictional– of the French Revolution that has been able to leave a powerful impression on every generation of readers. Some such techniques are **foreshadowing**, that is, a literary device through which an author provides clues (for example, certain recurrent images, symbols, words, and so on) to later events that become central to the plot in a text (in this novel, for instance, the first line of the novel, the breaking of the wine casket in a street in Paris; the resemblance between Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay; and the oft-repeated phrase "recalled to life"); **hyperbole** or exaggerated description; **personification** (for instance of England and France); **leitmotifs** (the phrase "recalled to life"; the words of Christ frequently repeated in the novel); and **symbolism** (the connection made between blood and wine; knitting; the attic; shoemaking; the guillotine, and so on).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the narrative point of view in the novel?

Q 6: What are the important stylistic techniques used by Dickens in this novel?



10.7 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* presents a powerful critique of contemporary social life in England by revisiting the collective memory of the French Revolution, particularly as it was remembered in England during his times. However, it is not merely a piece of historical fiction but it engages with larger issues of human freedom and Christian faith, revenge, forgiveness and redemption, human agency and so on. The unit has dealt with the importance of Charles Dickens as the most outstanding novelist of the Victorian period and has highlighted the role he played as one of the strongest commentators on the social and ethical

aspects of his age. The various novels he wrote substantiate this point even better. The way he fictionally revisits history through the French Revolution, along with its reverberations in England in this novel, only adds to its socio-historical significance and shows Dickens' capacity for integrating topical with larger human issues in his comprehensive vision. Other important points discussed in the unit include the themes, characterisation and the narrative technique employed by Dickens in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities.*



10.8 FURTHER READING

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2) Daiches, David (2007). *A Critical History of English Literature* (Vol II). Random House, India.
3) Glancy, Ruth F. (ed.) (2006). *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.
4) Newlin, George (1998). *Understanding A Tale of Two Cities: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
5) Petch, Simon (2002). "The Business of the Barrister" in *A Tale of Two Cities* in *Criticism.* Volume: 44, Issue: 1.
6) Robson, Lisa (2008). "The 'Angels' in Dickens's House: Representation of Women in A Tale of Two Cities" (*Dalhousie Review* 72, no. 3, Fall 1992; pp. 311-333, reprinted in Bloom).
7) Tysdahl, Bjørn (2008). "Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*" (Dickens Quarterly 15, no. 2, June 1998, reprinted in Bloom).

Web Resource:

www.victorianweb.org

10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Yes… … The theme of doubling is initiated in the opening chapter itself through the portrayal of the latent anarchy and fear in England and those in France during 1775... …The sinister and unpredictable nature of the mob is to be found in equal measure in both London and Paris.

Ans to Q 2: Yes… …Dickens visibly succumbs to the power relationship involved in the issue of gender exemplified by his description of the French aristocracy in terms of the Medusa… …the women of France become living embodiments of the negative aspects of revolutionary activity, even though they rely on the men to actually carry out the actions envisaged by them… …the novel denies women's moral and intellectual capacity to perform public roles.

Ans to Q 3: Dickens drew heavily from Thomas Carlyle's book *The French Revolution: A History… …* he got overwhelmed by the amount of research Carlyle had done for his book… …but Dickens is also original while writing his own version of the Revolution.

Ans to Q 4: Carton has lost interest in living a 'fruitful' life and seems to adopt a life-denying attitude regarding himself… …the fact that his death will mean a certain kind of 'rebirth' for Darnay and also provide newer hope primarily to Lucie and her son… …thus he becomes at one level reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice… …there are resemblances to other Biblical images too: Sydney Carton's filling his glass with brandy and pouring it on the hearth is symbolic of wine with the blood of Jesus.

Ans to Q 5: First person point of view told in the narrator's own voice using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"… …second person point of view rarely used and using "You" and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually not involved in the

actions of the novel and characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They"… …in this novel, Dickens mostly uses the third person point of view but moves to the first person in order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections.

Ans to Q 6: Foreshadowing… …use of hyperbole or exaggerated description… … personification… …leitmotifs… …symbolism etc.



10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Examine the idea of social regeneration through suffering and sacrifice as it is explored in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Q 2: Examine the novel as a piece of historical fiction, throwing light on the interrelations between history, memory, and narrative.

Q 3: Analyse the trope of doubling in Victorian fiction with special reference to the present novel.

Q 4: How do the themes in this novel interlink with each other? Can you identify other themes that follow from them?

Q 5: "The women become a medium through which the subversive forces of the revolution are sought to be contained in *A Tale of Two Cities.*" Justify the importance of this statement.

Q 6: Do you find that the theme of Resurrection important in *A Tale of Two Cities*? What are the different levels in which this theme has been treated by the author?

Q 7: Discuss Dickens' attitude toward the French Revolution. Does he sympathise with the revolutionaries? Explain with references to the text.

Q 8: In what ways does Dickens portray the villainous characters in his novel? From a character like Madame Defarge, what conclusions might the reader draw about the author's notions of human evil?

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UNIT 11: EMILY AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË: LIFE AND WORKS

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Charlotte Brontë: The Novelist

11.4 Emily Brontë: The Novelist

11.5 Anne Brontë: The Novelist

11.6 Critical Reception of the Brontë Sisters

11.7 Let us Sum up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.10 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- trace the life and works of Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë and Anne Brontë in some detail
- describe the significance of the Brontë sisters in the context of English literature
- discuss the critical receptions of the Brontë sisters and their works in the field of literature.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the Block. This unit shall introduce you to the Brontë sisters whose literary contributions today have become important areas of research. You will note that Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855) was the eldest among the three sisters. She had been a novelist and poet, and her novels have become classics in the field of English Literature. She is best known for her novel *Jane Eyre* which she wrote under the pen name Currer Bell. Emily (1818-1848) was also a novelist

and poet. She is best known for her only novel, *Wuthering Heights.* She wrote under the pen name Ellis Bell. Anne Brontë (1820–1849) was the youngest of the three sisters. She published a volume of poetry with her two sisters under the title Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, and two novels namely *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. This unit shall deal with the life and works of the Brontë sisters in some details, and it is hoped that the information and ideas that you will get in this unit, shall help you to discuss the novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in the subsequent units.

11.3 CHARLOTTE BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

The eldest of the famous Brontë sisters, Charlotte was born in Thornton, Yorkshire in 1816, to Maria and Patrick Brontë. The family moved from Thornton to Haworth when Patrick was appointed a curate to a church at Haworth Yorkshire in 1820 until his death in 1861. After the death of their mother in 1821, the charge of taking care of the children devolved on to their aunt Elizabeth Branwell. In 1824, Charlotte was sent to Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge in Lancashire, along with three of her sisters Emily, Maria and Elizabeth. Starvation and lack of hygiene made life at Cowan Bridge difficult for all of them. Charlotte's physical health began to deteriorate when two of her sisters died. Following this tragic death of two of his daughters, Patrick Brontë brought back his daughters to Haworth parsonage. The children Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Barnwell got together, and imaginatively created a world of their own and started their apprenticeship as writers in the form of articles, poems and stories. We must understand that though Charlotte led a more or less secluded life, this collaborative exercise of the siblings in imaginative and creative engagement had a strong bearing on her later literary career.

You should note that before turning to fiction, the Brontë sisters wrote poems. Like her contemporary Elizabeth Barett Browning, Charlotte experimented with the form of long narrative poems and dramatic monologue, both characterise Victorian poetry. She decided

later to abandon poetry in favour of the most popular genre of the period the novel. It is important to note that this shift in her mode of writing indicated an overall shift in the literary taste in 1830s and 1840s. The Brontë sisters lived in the gloomy landscape of the Northern moors and shared a life of fantasy and retreat from the ordinary world. However, through journals and newspapers, they also got access to the contemporary political and ideological debates neither were they aloof from the wind of European Romanticism. On the Brontë sisters' imaginative engagements, Richards Church writes in *The Growth of the English Novel*:

"The children set up worlds of their own, Charlotte and her brother Branwell (soon to die of drink and boredom) inventing one called *Angria*, a pure fairyland; the other inhabited by the younger sisters Emily and Anne, a more grim and moral estate called *Gondal*. All of them wrote copiously of adventures in those imaginary countries…there were no other outlets for the girls."

Charlotte had her education at Row Head too, and from 1839 to 1841, she had found engagements as Governess in many houses. In 1842, she and Emily went to Brussels and enrolled in a boarding school. During this time, Charlotte, Emily and Anne brought out a collaborative poetry collection under the pen name of Cureer, Ellis and Acton Bell. In the mean time, Aunt Elizabeth Branwell died, compelling them to come back to Haworth. Charlotte, however, made a second visit to Brussels, but eventually a lonely and homesick Charlotte made a final comeback in 1844. In the mean time, their only brother died, who was a suspected opium eater. It is, thus, important to note that a tragic undercurrent characterised the course of Charlotte's private and familial life; death took away her mother, aunt and her siblings (we shall in fact see later how death becomes a theme in the novel *Jane Eyre*). So, the writer's experience of the ravages of death is partly responsible for lending an air of loss and melancholy to the novel. The first published novel by Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, got success and it eventually made her reveal her identity. She became close to a high social circle and became friends

with writers like Harriet Hartineer, Elizabeth Gaskell, W. M. Thackeray and G. H. Lewes.

Charlotte married Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's curate in 1854. Soon after marriage, her health declined rapidly and in 1855, at the age of 38, she breathed her last.

The seclusion of the Haworth parsonage had a strong bearing on the works of Charlotte Brontë. Not only Charlotte, this isolated situation of their home had a potent influence on the creative endeavours of all the Brontë sisters. They were, however, not detached from the contemporary social and political atmosphere. They had a shared life in Yorkshire parsonage, and were close observant of the political and ideological debate that reached them through the contemporary journals. In their early stage, the sisters evolved an elaborate fiction about the fantasy kingdoms of Angria and Gondal. That kind of Gothicism and Romanticism, however, did not remain an exclusive trait of their work because as Andrew Sanders states, "in their adult fiction obvious escapism is diminished in the face of an oppressive and isolating present."

During the Victorian period, the novel emerged as a dominant literary form. People with diverse sensibilities turned to novel writing. Still, it was the question of man in society and the attending moral issues in a particular social context that became a continuous preoccupation of most of the writers. This 'social' orientation of Victorian novel spared some writers who sought to give vent to personal emotions, and take shelter in the realm of the private. Charlotte, along with her sisters, too had the inclination for private emotions. She wrote her first novel *The Professor* in 1846. William Crimsworth, the protagonist of the novel, is an orphan; he leaves England to seek his fortune in Brussels. He falls in love with a puppet teacher in Brussels and eventually marries her. You will note that the manuscript was rejected six times by publishers and was posthumously published by the firm Smith, Elder and Co. in 1857. This novel is based upon her experience as a language student as well as a teacher at Brussels. The basic objection to the novel was with

regard to the incidents and its failure to appeal to the readers.

Jane Eyre was published in 1847, under the pen name Cureer Bell and it achieved immediate success. Apart from the social issues it deals with, the narrative by itself was fascinating with its remarkable power to provoke and surprise. The writer's own passion, dreams, frustration are all imaginatively transmuted into fictional incidents, but the novel obviously transcends the autobiographical into a kind of fictional wish-fulfilment. The narrative is characterised by a sustained emotional temperament as well as its many moments of revelation. *Shirley* (1849) is a "Condition of England Novel" set at the time of Napoleonic wars and is concerned with labour relations. In the novel, Robert Gerard Moore is a mill owner and he introduces a labour-saving machinery in the mill. The labourers turn against him and attempt to destroy the mill and to take his life. In order to raise funds, Robert proposes to Shirley Keeldar, an heiress, but she refuses, and marries his brother, Louis. One notable aspect of the story is its portrayal of a distinctive woman character. The character of Shirley Keeldar was affirmed by Elizabeth Gaskell as a representation of Emily Brontë. The novel raises question of woman and how she is confined to limited opportunity.

The feverish note of *Jane Eyre* is heard in *Villette*. Unlike in *Shirley*, it avoids political backdrop, but marks a return to emotional life. Charlotte's experiences at Brussels formed the materials for *The Professor*, but after the novel's failure, the same materials were now reworked into *Villette*. Here the narrator Lucy Snowe loses her family and the means of financial support; she leaves for Villette and finds employment with Mme Beck as a governess and then as a teacher in the latter's school. Among the vain and frivolous students, Lucy in turn succeeds in establishing her authority. She has a tempestuous relationship with M. Paul Emmanuel, Mme Beck's cousin. Ultimately, he establishes her in a school before leaving for West Indies. The novel has received critical acclaim as it explores the theme of isolation, repression, gender roles and cross-cultural conflict. However, not all the works of Charlotte Brontë might be of the same literary merit, as the critics have

upheld *Jane Eyre* as her best fiction. Nevertheless, by going through all of them, one will find certain common preoccupations—the question of woman, gender relation, search for happiness, and the portrayal of the writer's own private experiences.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Comment on the literary background of the Brontë sisters.

Q 2: Why did the Brontë sisters adopt pseudonyms?

Q3: How would you justify the presence of Gothicism and Romanticism in the works of the Brontë sisters?

Q 4: What were the causes behind the popularity of *Jane Eyre*?

11.4 EMILY BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

Emily Brontë was born on 30th July, 1818 in Thornton, a village near Bradford in Yorkshire. As mentioned in the previous section, she was the second among the Brontë sisters. In April 1820, their family moved to a little parish at Haworth to the Northwest of Thornton where Patrick Brontë, their father was given a perpetual curacy. This place in the remote moorlands was to be Emily's home for the rest of her life.

In September 1821, her mother died and her aunt Elizabeth Branwell came over to look after the family. The Brontë girls were initially educated at home by their aunt and later the two elder ones were sent away to Crofton Hall near Wakefield. Then, in 1824, they were sent to the School for Daughters of Poorer Clergymen at Cowan Bridge near Turnstall. The school was a bad experience as the students were neglected if not ill-treated. So much so that the very next year saw the elder Brontë girls come home to die and Charlotte and Emily leave the school for good. Their pathetic experience there has been immortalised in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* which also gives us, like Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, a glimpse of the terrible conditions prevailing in some schools of England during the first half of the 19th century. The three sisters and Branwell were then left to lead a lonely life in Haworth

dominated by their eccentric father. Aside from the village being in the remote wilderness of Yorkshire, the Brontë family also had an isolated position in society. They belonged neither to the landed gentry nor to the common village folk.

Both Emily and Anne were so engrossed in the world of their making that they did not abandon it with age. Their creative imagination blossomed within its ambit and this resulted in the *Gondal Stories and Poems*. None of the prose is extant but the Gondal Poems gave us an idea of the powerful imaginative faculty of the Brontë sisters. Though the stories are not based on the real-life activities of the girls, the features of the Yorkshire country side where they lived are reflected in the Gondal terrain. The wildness of the moors together with the serene beauty of the hills is also the recurring theme of *Wuthering Heights*. In May 1846, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* was published under the Brontës' masculine pseudonyms mainly through the initiative of Charlotte Brontë. Emily and Anne contributed twenty-one poems each and Charlotte twenty. The book, especially Emily's poems, received good reviews but did not sell well.

In December 1847, *Wuthering Heights* was published, again under Emily's pseudonym Ellis Bell, and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* under the name of Acton Bell. The three sisters believed, perhaps rightly, that their books would receive scathing reviews if these were known to be written by women. There was wide speculation in English literary circles as to who these mysterious Bell brothers could be. The majority of the readers were also horrified by the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine whose lack of morals and use of profane language offended their Victorian sensibilities. They were repelled by and skeptical of the sadistic "monster" Heathcliff. Thus, Emily's one and only work of fiction was torn apart by critics during her lifetime. It survived initially because of the attempts of her more famous sister to explain the novel to a hostile reading public. Charlotte Brontë's *Biographical Notice* of Ellis and Acton Bell and Editor's Preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* written after Emily's death went a long way towards softening the perception of

fierceness and nihilism that critics thought they detected in the author. In September 1848, Branwell who, in addition to his heavy drinking had also become addicted to opium, died suddenly. Emily had looked after him and had continued to hope for his recovery. At his funeral she caught a cold, which was to prove fatal. She refused to see a doctor and accept medication. Three months later she died at the age of thirty, to be followed in another few months by Anne. Charlotte lived for some more years, had a short married life and died in 1855. Their eccentric, violent, near-blind father survived them all.

Readers and critics still feel themselves bewildered to think of the literary significance of a novel like *Wuthering Heights.* It is as far removed from the worlds of Dickens, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell as the lonely windswept moors from crowded bustling London. However, some critics point out that the works of the women novelists, Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot have some traits in common. These can be cited as an intimate portrayal of English life and an increasing capacity to delve into moral and emotional nuances. In their hands the novel acquires the power and artistry of poetry, thus eliciting in the reader a total involvement as in a poetic drama. This is true of the *Mill on the Floss* as of the *Wuthering Heights*. These writers also succeed in portraying life in an England of various regions, social strata and times.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Point out the significance of the Gondal world?

Q 6: What kind of family life did Emily Brontë have?

Q 7: How would you like to judge the literary worth of *Wuthering Heights*?

11.5 ANNE BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

Like her elder sisters, Anne Brontë was educated largely at home, where, as the youngest of the motherless family, she may have fallen under the Wesleyan influence of her Aunt Branwell, who is thought to

have encouraged her tendency to religious melancholy. As a child, she was particularly close to Emily; and as you have read in the previous section, together they invented the imaginary world of Gondal, the setting of many of their poems. Anne accompanied Charlotte to Roe Head in 1836-7, and became governess to the Ingham family at Blake Hall in 1839; from 1840 to 1845, she was governess to the Robinson family at Thorp Green Hall, near York. Her brother Branwell joined her there as tutor in 1843, and became disastrously involved with Mrs Robinson. Anne's recollections of her experiences with the over-indulged young children and the worldly older children of these two households are vividly portrayed in *Agnes Grey* (1847). The novel appeared under the pseudonym Acton Bell, like in case of her poems, published in 1846 with those of her sisters. Her poems, which show the influence of Cowper and Wesley, explore religious doubt and confront Calvinist despair: among the most moving are 'To Cowper', 'My God (oh let me call thee mine)' and a Gondal lyric, 'Song: We know where deepest lies the snow'. Her second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), portrays in Arthur Huntingdon a violent, infantile, but sexually attractive drunkard clearly to some extent drawn from Branwell; Charlotte, in her 'Biographical Notice' (1850), felt obliged to comment that 'the choice of subject was an entire mistake', and insists that her sister's nature was 'naturally sensitive, reserved and dejected'. The novel may be read as a scathing indictment of sexual double standards enshrined in marriage law and the educational system.

Anne died at Scarborough, where she was buried.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Point out the autobiographical elements in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 9: What do you understand by Social Problem novel? Can you read *Jane Eyre* as a social problem novel?

11.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE BRONTË SISTERS [Adapted from Margaret Drabble]

In her lifetime, Charlotte was the most admired of the Brontë sisters, although she was criticised on the grounds of alleged 'grossness' and emotionalism, considered particularly unbecoming in a clergyman's daughter: Matthew Arnold wrote in a letter (1853) that her mind contained 'nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage', and H. Martineau offended her by claiming that *Villette* dealt excessively with 'the need of being loved', and was passionately anti-Catholic. More widespread, however, was praise for her depth of feeling and her courageous realism, and her works continue to hold high popularity and critical esteem. The standard biographies are E. Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), and W. Gérin, *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius* (1967).

Unlike Charlotte, Emily had no close friends, wrote few letters, and had few but strong loyalties; the vein of violence (exemplified in the story of her subduing the dog Keeper with her bare hands), of stoicism, and of mysticism in her personality have given rise to many legends but few certainties. She is now established as one of the most original poets of the century, remembered for her lyrics (e.g. 'The night is darkening round me'), for her passionate invocations from the world of Gondal ('Remembrance', 'he Prisoner'), and her apparently more personal visionary moments ('No coward soul is mine').

Wuthering Heights, which was at first regarded by many as excessively morbid and violent, was gradually reassessed, and by 1899 Mrs H. Ward was praising Emily's masterly fusion of romance and realism at the expense of Charlotte's shrill didacticism. The 20th century, produced a great deal of critical and biographical commentary: C. P. Sanger analysed her careful plotting in *The Structure of Wuthering Heights* (1926): Frank Kermode proposed a variety of readings in *The Classic* (1975): Terry Eagleton proposed a Marxist reading in *Myths of Power* (1975); and J. Hillis Miller explored the complex narrative structure of *Wuthering Heights* in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982).



11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this introductory unit, you have read about the Brontë sisters and their works. Charlotte Brontë was the eldest of the three sisters. She had been a novelist and poet and is best known for her novel *Jane Eyre.* Emily Brontë was also a novelist and poet. She is famous for her only novel *Wuthering Heights.* Anne Brontë was the youngest of the sisters. She also wrote two novels namely *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. You have learnt that all of them wrote under masculine pseudonyms, as publishing by a woman in their times was a very difficult issue.



11.8 FURTHER READING

1) Allen, Walter (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.

2) Entry on the Brontë sisters in Drabble, Margaret. (ed). (2000). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.* (6th edition). OUP.

3) Ford, Boris (ed.) (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol. 6 From Dickens to Hardy.* Great Britain: Penguin Books.

4) Sanders, Andrew. (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* London: OUP.



11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Before turning to fiction, the Brontë sisters wrote poems…

…but Charlotte decided to write novels the most popular genre of

the period… …the gloomy landscape of the northern moors where she lived enabled them to imaginatively retreat from the ordinary world… …again through journals and newspapers, they got access to the contemporary political and ideological debates, as well as European Romanticism… …Subsequently, they produced Gondal stories and poems.

Ans to Q 2: It was done to avoid a strong gender prejudice prevalent during that time… …since writing was supposedly a male enterprise a male pseudonym would have ensured acceptability of the work among the literary circles… …Emily Brontë adopted the pseudonym Ellis Bell, Anne Brontë Acton Bell and Charlotte Brontë Currer Bell… …It was because they believed that their books would receive scathing reviews if these were known to be written not by men.

Ans to Q 3: The seclusion of the Haworth parsonage had a strong bearing on the works of Charlotte Brontë sisters… …despite that, they were not detached from the contemporary social and political atmosphere… …they evolved in their early stage an elaborate fiction about the fantasy kingdoms of Angria and Gondal… …however Gothicism and Romanticism of that kind did not remain an exclusive trait in their works.

Ans to Q 4: Charlotte's own passion, dreams, frustration etc. are all imaginatively transmuted into fictional incidents… … the novel transcends the autobiographical into a kind of fictional wish-fulfilment… …the narrative of the novel is characterised by a sustained emotional temperament as well as its many moments of revelation.

Ans to Q 5: Emily and Anne Brontë were engrossed in the world of their own making… …for this they imaginatively created the Gondal terrain… …the result was the composition of Gondal Stories and Poems… …however, none of the prose is extant but the Gondal Poems gave us an idea of the powerful imaginative faculty of the Brontë sisters.

Ans to Q 6: Emily had a very sad family life… …two of her elder sisters died in childhood and the only son Branwell was to waste away his talents and drink himself to death in the prime of youth… …moreover, she had to live a lonely life dominated by their eccentric father.

Ans to Q 7: *Wuthering Heights* as a novel is far removed from the worlds of Dickens, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell… …however, it seems to have certain points common with the works of Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot… …the worth of this novel lies in its intimate portrayal of English life and in its capacity to penetrate deep into the moral and emotional nuances.

Ans to Q 8: Parallel between Charlotte's real experience as a governess and Jane's… …similarities between Cowan Bridge and Lowood… …ravages of death in the author's private life and death as a theme in the novel.

Ans to Q 9: It means novels focusing the social questions… …it is a fixed historical category… …although it discusses social issues, *Jane Eyre* is not a typical social problem novel… …it is about an isolated individual whose course of life does not reflect the ebb and flow of social and communal life.



11.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the major preoccupations of the Brontë sisters as novelists? Discuss with reference to some of the important works.

Q 2: Why was it difficult for the Brontës to publish during their times? Point out the autobiographical elements in the novels of the Brontë sisters.

Q 3: Do you think that the morbid and secluded atmosphere at home in turn contributed to the making of the Brontë sisters' as writers? Illustrate.

Q 4: What according to you is the significance of the Brontë sisters in

the context of English fiction? How did they write their fiction against a masculine milieu of the early 19th century? Discuss.

Q 5: Write a note on the condition of the novel in the beginning of the 19th century.

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UNIT 12: CHARLOTTE BRONTË: *JANE EYRE*

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 The Story of the Novel

12.4 Major Themes

12.5 Charlotte Brontë's Art of Characterisation

12.6 Charlotte Brontë's Narrative Style

12.7 Let us Sum up

12.8 Further Reading

12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.10 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- read *Jane Eyre* as an outstanding fictional work produced in the Victorian age
- discuss the novel in relation to the dominant issues and ideas prevalent during the Victorian times
- relate the text to the facts of the author's life as well as to some aspects of the age in which the author lived.
- examine the dominant issues of gender and a female author's treatment of the same
- discuss how *Jane Eyre* employs a particular narrative style and draws on different genres of fictional writing.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* which has been regarded as one of the classic texts of Victorian literature. Of the four novels written by Charlotte Brontë, namely, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, *Jane Eyre* stands out as the most powerful

fictional works of the author and when it first appeared it was praised by critics for its freshness and vigour. The novel is autobiographical in the sense that we find close resemblance between some of the facts of the life of the protagonist and that of the author. We also find how the world of the writer's personal life is, in some ways, related to the world of the novel. As you go on reading the unit, you will soon discover that it is indeed a powerful narrative with a series of discoveries, which are surprising, shocking and horrible at times, and, of course, can, in the words of one of the earliest reviewers, "make the pulses gallop and the heart beat, and feel the eyes with tears."

12.3 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL

Jane Eyre was published in London in 1847 by Smith, Elder & Co. under the pseudonym Cureer Bell. Charlotte Brontë completed writing the novel by August, 1847. By then, her first novel *The Professor* failed to gain literary success. She accepted the criticism of the novel by W. S. Williams, reader for the firm of Smith & Elder, of the "want of varied interest in the tale", and offered the same firm her second novel with the conviction that the novel would avoid the weakness of the first one. The author considered the suggestion of the publisher regarding the title of the work, and finalised it as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. It was printed and published by 19th October 1847. A second edition, containing some corrections made by Brontë and a preface dedicating the novel to Thackeray, was published in 1848. Her communications with the publisher of the novel provide useful information as to the literary taste of the time and how the writer negotiated the issue. As Charlotte Brontë writes:

"Perhaps, too, the first part of *Jane Eyre* may suit the public taste better than you anticipate, for it is true and truth has a severe charm of its own. Had I told all the truth, I might indeed have made it far more exquisitely painful– but I deemed it advisable to soften and retrench many particulars lest the narrative should rather displease than attract."

Jane Eyre, a ten year old orphan, has a miserable life at

Gateshead Hall, oppressed and tormented by Mrs. Reed and her children. Jane's father and mother had died when she was a baby. Mr. Reed took the responsibility of bringing her up. He had been the brother of Jane's mother. On his deathbed he directed Mrs Reed to look after the girl and treat her as her own child. After the death of Mr. Reed, Mrs. Reed considered Jane a nuisance, and oppressed and tormented the little girl. Thus, Jane spent her years of neglect, abuse and physical and mental torture at Gateshead. One day Jane's cousin knocked her down and when she retaliated, Mrs. Reed punished her by sending her to Red Room-a gloomy chamber where Mr. Reed had died, and which therefore was rumoured to be haunted. It was a horrible experience for the ten year old girl, who lost her consciousness as she stayed in the room. She was freed later but she devolved dangerous illness. However, she regained normalcy slowly with the care of the sympathetic family apothecary Mr. Llyold and the loving ways of Bessie, the sharp-tonged nurse at Gateshead Hall.

Mrs Reed continued to despise Jane and felt that she could no longer take charge of the girl. She made arrangement for sending Jane to Lowood School. She consulted the proprietor of Lowood School, Mr. Brocklehurst for getting the little girl vigorously trained in the institution. One morning Jane left Gateshead Hall and rode 50 miles by stage to Lowood. Jane studied diligently at Lowood and was liked by her superiors. During her stay at Lowood, an epidemic of fever broke out, causing many deaths. Sickness and semi-starvation prevailed in Lowood. Mr. Brocklehurst strictly ensured this condition of starvation among its inmates, prescribing it as a condition for Christian way of life. The investigation of the epidemic finally helped in improving the atmosphere. After Jane completed her study at Lowood she was retained as a teacher. However, she grew weary of her life at Lowood, and advertised for a position as governess. Finally, she was engaged by Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield near Millcote. Jane had one pupil to teach at Thornfield– Adele Varens-a ward of Mr. Edward Rochester. In contrast to life at Gateshead Hall and Lowood School, she was pleased with the

quiet country life, the beautiful old house and her own comfortable room.

When Jane entered the house as governess Mr. Rochester, her master, was not there. From Mrs. Fairfax She came to know that the master seldom came to Thornfield and travelled much. For the first time, she met Mr. Rochester while she was out walking, went to his aid after he fell off his horse. Her employer was a sober and moody man. He confided to her that the girl Adele was the daughter of a French dancer, who not just deceived him but also deserted her daughter. One night Jane was alarmed by a strange noise and found that Mr. Rochester's room was open and his bed was set ablaze. When she attempted to arouse all the inhabitants in the house, Mr. Rochester commanded her to keep quiet about the whole affair. The mystery did not unfold at that time, but she learned that Thornfield had a strange tenant who laughed like a maniac; she believed it to be Grace Poole, seamstress employed by Mr. Rochester.

Mr. Rochester had the habit of attending parties. One day he informed the people of Thornfield that he was soon bringing a party of guests home. Miss Ingram, the daughter of Lady Ingram, was the centre of attraction in the party. Mr Rochester was known to have paid court to Miss Ingram. During the party the guests treated Jane with disdain, which, they thought, her humble position deserved. In the mean time, Jane fell in love with Mr. Rochester, but she saw that he was only interested in Miss Ingram. One evening, when Mr. Rochester was away, the guests played charades. Here a gypsy fortune teller appeared to read the palm of the lady guests. When it was Jane's turn to see the fortune teller, she was reluctant, yet somewhat inwardly excited as to the fortune teller's predictions with regard to her link with Mr. Rochester. To her utter dismay, her relation with the gypsy turned out to be much revealing. The fortuneteller exactly articulated her feeling and it was discovered afterwards that the fortuneteller was Mr. Rochester himself.

A stranger named Mason arrived at Thornfield to see Mr. Rochester on business. That night the person was mysteriously wounded supposedly by the inhabitant of the third floor– Grace Poole. It was

another mystery to Jane.

One day, news came from Gateshead that Mrs. Reed was on her deathbed and that she was willing to see Jane. Jane returned to Gateshead Hall. Mrs. Reed handed a letter to Jane saying that her uncle John Eyre had asked her to send Jane to him for adoption. But, Mrs. Reeds then sent him false information that Jane had died at Lowood. Now on her death bed, Mrs. Reeds was haunted by a sense of guilt that she kept from Jane that information which would have led to her adoption by Mr. Eyre and inheritance. After the death of Mrs. Reed, Jane came back to Thornfield which, to her, was like her own home. One night in the garden, Jane was embraced by Mr. Rochester, and he proposes to marry her. Jane was first hesitant, given the fact that Mr Rochester's romantic link with Miss Ingram was very much in the air. Mr. Rochester then revealed that he had forsaken Miss Ingram after having a test on her love for him in order to find out how much she cared for him and not for his wealth. Rochester told Ingram that he was to be destitute soon. On hearing this, she chose to avoid and Rochester came to know that her real interest was in his money. Finally, Jane accepted the proposal. They planned for a quiet ceremony at the village church. She wrote to her uncle in Madeira about Mrs. Reed's deception and about her prospective marriage with Mr. Rochester.

Before wedding, Jane had another harrowing and mysterious experience. She saw a repulsive looking woman in her room ripping her wedding veil to shred. Mr. Rochester tried to convince her that the whole thing was nothing but a figment of imagination whereas next morning she found the torn veil in her room. Anyway, at the church during the pronouncement of the vows, a stranger declares that there was an impediment to the marriage. He presented a document, which stated that Mr. Rochester had married Bertha Mason, Mr. Mason's sister in Spanish town, Jamaica fifteen years ago. Mr. Rochester admitted the fact and he conducted the party to the third storey chamber, where they found Grace Poole, the attendant, and Bertha Mason, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester. It was this mad wife who injured her own brother Mr. Mason, set ablaze

Mr Rochester's bed and tore apart Jane's wedding veil.

Fearing that she might have to live as Rochester's mistress, and not his wife, Jane decides to leave Thornfield despite much exhortation by Mr. Rochester to the contrary. Two days later she found herself utterly desolate on the moors of a north Midland shire. She did not have a penny, slept in the open field, starving and actually had to begg for food. Finally, she got shelter in the house of St. John Rivers and befriended his sisters Mary and Dian, who nursed her back to health. In the new household, she assumed the name of Jane Elliot and refused to divulge anything about her past, except her link with Lowood School. Eventually Mr. Rivers found her a place as mistress in a girl's school. It was through Mr. Rivers that much to her surprise, she came to know about the death of her uncle at Madeira, leaving for Jane an inheritance of twenty thousand pounds to her. She learned that St. John and his sisters are in fact her own cousins. Jane was utterly happy and jubilant at such a pleasant discovery of her relations. She promptly offers to divide the inheritance with her cousins.

During this time, St. John was about to go to India as a missionary; he offered her a proposal of marriage. He plainly admits that he does not love her; he admires her for her qualities and thought her to be a deserving companion for his prospective missionary works. Jane refused the proposal. She was indebted to his kindness, but she could not become his wife. Initially though Jane agreed to go to India, she however, rejected the marriage proposal because she could not forget her first love Rochester. So, she returned to Thornfield. The whole mansion was now in ruins. From the neighbours she learned that one stormy night, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester set the whole mansion on fire, as a result of which she died. Mr. Rochester was trying to rescue her from the roof, but his hand had been badly injured and also lost his eyesight. Now he lives at Ferndean, a lovely farm some miles away from Thornfield. Jane went to the farm, and saw from a distance how the blind Rochester was trying to walk. Jane told him about St. Joan and how his marriage proposal was rejected by her. Jane and Rochester then got

married; after two years Jane regained his eyesight and could see their first child.



LET US KNOW

You should note that the form of the novel *Jane Eyre* is that of Bildungsroman which is basically a story of a child's growth and maturity into adulthood. Jane, the protagonist, is a thinking and sensitive woman who is individualistic without being morally insensitive. The novel also offers social criticism and, among other things, it deeply grapples with important moral issues. The moral aspect of the novel is intimately related to the portrayal of a protagonist who is contemplative, keenly observant and, many a time, unyielding with respect to the pressures of external circumstances. Besides, Gothic fiction, which enjoyed vogue and popularity right from the Romantic period well into the mid-Victorian times, also has a considerable impact on *Jane Eyre*. The legacy of the Gothic fiction can be felt in the novel's creation of a solitary, brooding atmosphere, and the air of fearsome mystery, as well as in some crucial incidents in the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is Jane Eyre?

Q 2: Mention the names of the male characters in the novel.

12.4 MAJOR THEMES

In the previous section, you must have gained some general information regarding the probable themes and issues raised in the novel *Jane Eyre.* Ever since its first appearance, Jane Eyre has been a popular novel, highly commended by its earliest reviewers. Its popularity could be attributed to the portrayal of the character of Jane but the other aspects of the novel, notably the themes, must also be taken into account.

Country Life and the Seasons:

The novel opens with the mention of cold winter wind and rain, which disrupt the evening walk of the Gateshead people that day. Winter brings coldness, despair and glooms. The narrator says in chapter 1:

"I studied the aspects of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast."

Description of the seasons and the landscape also occurs when it comes to having casual outing. Going for long evening walks forms part of Jane's routine at Gateshead Hall, but no such outing is allowed in Lowood, except going to Church on Sundays. Attending the Church was an important aspect of the country life. Despite the new religious skepticism promoted by the scientific discoveries, the Church still played an important role in Victorian society. However, to Jane, church going, especially in winter Sundays, was a kind of torture. "We set out cold, we arrived at church colder; during the morning service we became almost paralysed."

The seasons, thus, provide an apt décor for human drama to take place; the changing seasons corresponds to the changing situations and shifting moods of the protagonist. When Jane is cleared of the false charge against her at Lowood, and she got inner strength to improve herself academically, there is the beautiful description of the 'onset of summer'. In the same vein, the description of nature is equally picturesque in Jane's first encounter with Mr. Rochester: "something of daylight still lingered and the moon was waxing bright; I could see him plainly. Later, it is the 'splendid summer' and a beautiful natural settingwith 'sweet briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink and rose' that provide a background for Jane's romantic engagement with Mr. Rochester.

Confrontation of the Social Classes:

The novel's first confrontation, which is between Jane and the Reeds, can be seen as confrontation of two different social classes. Mrs

Reeds obviously belongs to higher stratum, and Jane represents the poor class. Mrs. Reed's aversion of Jane is not just rooted in the girl's unyielding and observing, unsubmissive nature. It has a history, in the act of transgression of social decorum befitting a class. Her husband's sister had a low marriage, of which Jane is the outcome. Towards the end of her life, Mrs. Reed called for Jane, and while finding her near her bed, she still retains her old class prejudice: "Mrs. Reed took her hand away, and turning her face toward me, she remarked that the night was warm." There is no trace of repentance, except of the fact of her deliberate misinformation to Jane's uncle; but, rather there is the renewed expression of her former class prejudice:

"…Are you Jane Eyre?"

"I am Jane Eyre."

"I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands- and so much annoyance she caused me, daily and hourly, with her incomprehensible disposition…''

The most vivid confrontation of class can be seen in the Gateshead Hall episode. Jane is repressed and tortured physically and emotionally, and what is sought from her is that she understands the limits of her ways in accordance with her class. This lesson of class norms Mr. Brocklehurst tried to imbibe in Jane not as a common sense, but in a huge theological framework, as he presents contrasting version of heaven and hell as the only options lying before Jane.

Another important issue associated with class is property and inheritance. The novel shows Jane the protagonist's passage through different material atmospheres, which are also different stages of her intellectual, moral and emotional development. She starts as a poor girl, and could at best expect to become a governess; but towards the end, sudden endowment of inheritance from her uncle of Madeira at once raises her social status. Therefore, in terms of class status she is finally at par with Mr. Rochester. It is therefore interesting to see how the novel, among other things, also unwittingly maintains equilibrium with respect to

class when there is the question of two people's emotional bonding.

Redemption and Forgiveness:

The first encounter between Jane and Mr. Rochester is significant, because it symbolically enacts another important theme of the novel: an individual's moral and ethical 'fall' and the need of rescue through redemption and forgiveness. Mr. Rochester falls off his horse when Jane was out walking and she offers him helping hand. Mr. Rochester is not a righteous person; he is vulnerable to temptations and adventurous in a perverse way particularly in relation to women. First, it was Bertha whose dark sensuality appealed to him. Then there was the French dancer Celine Varens by whom he had a daughter. Then he approaches Miss Ingram, daughter of Lady Ingram. Mr. Rochester himself was aware of his transgressions, and he sought to atone for them; an instance of his atonement is the bringing up of Adele. The theme of sin and redemption as related to Rochester's conduct is present in the novel. Rochester asked Jane to be his mistress but Jane's pure love for him showed him the path of redemption, which came much later after his going through a huge punishment. Thornfield Hall was burnt; he was crippled and blind. This enormous loss was a necessary aftermath of his earlier misdeeds, as well as a prelude to the marital bliss as he and Jane were re-united at the end of the novel.

Domination and Dissidence:

Jane Eyre is about domination, repression, imprisonment or loss of freedom and at the same time, it is also a tale of opposition, dissidence, or search for identity and freedom. Through different stages of the protagonist's passage into an independent womanhood, the narrative offers different images and instances of domination, subjugation and imprisonment. To Jane, Gateshead Hall becomes a sort of prison so that when there is the talk of sending her to Lowood, Jane is anxious to shift to that place, as it would at least relieve her of the compulsion of having to endure oppression and humiliation at Gateshead Hall. However, it is soon noticed that Lowood School offers another kind of imprisonment.

Jane is a great rebel throughout the novel, though the nature of her dissidence markedly changed in later life. At Gateshead, when John Reed, her cousin, knocked her down on the floor and injured her, she fought back rather than withdrawing from the confrontation and this led to her imprisonment in the red room. The novel offers a telling account of Jane's suffering inside the gothic chamber. This literal imprisonment of Jane can be related, from a much later moment in the narrative, to the long-term imprisonment of Bertha Mason in the attic at Thornfield Hall.

Language can also be a vehicle of dissidence. There is a passage in the Gateshead Hall episode where Jane speaks to her aunt with utmost freedom and courage, revealing Mrs. Reed's torturous ways and giving vent to her own emotion: ''I will never call you aunt again as long as I live …if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty." It was such a powerful discourse that it compels Mrs. Reed to soften her tongue, as she said: "Is there anything you wish for, Jane? I assure you, I desire to be your friend."

The most vivid and significant image of imprisonment and dissidence can be seen in Bertha Mason's case. Mr. Rochester marries Bertha, brings her home and discovering that she is mad; he imprisons her in the attic, under the care of Grace Poole. Bertha tries to come out whenever Grace Poole is drunk, and attempts to kill her husband. Finally, she puts the entire mansion at Thornfield into flames and kills herself.

Search for Home and Family:

At Gateshead, we have Jane as a child of ten who has lost her parents and thus, a family and a home. Gateshead Hall is not her home in its proper sense, because no offer of truly humane and emotionally intimate bonding was extended to her. In another way, in case of Mr. Rochester too, the terms—home and family—lost all its positive import. In the final moments of the novel, however, we have him finding a true home and making a true family after marrying Jane.

If loss of home and family has a tragic aspect, it also moulds Jane's nature in a positive way. She has nothing to fall back upon; she

was compelled to struggle with circumstances and situations and to make significant decisions of life; and thus she establishes herself as an independent and self-reliant individual. When Jane arrives at Thornfield Hall, she is uncertain as to the nature of its air, and was a little apprehensive. But after a disturbing phase spent at Thornfield and revelations about Mr. Rochester's wife, she leaves the place, becomes destitute, and is literally reduced to begging until she is accommodated in the Moor House by St. John. St John's sisters Maria and Diana had a sisterly relation with her. Jane comes of a poor family; yet she has much less craving for riches than for a real home and relations. Her uncle of Madeira bestows upon her an inheritance of twenty thousand pounds. However, she resolves to divide equally the money with her cousins. Rather than the matter of inheritance, it is the 'discovery' of her cousins that truly delighted her.

When somebody is in need of the shelter of home and comforting presence of a family, any human intervention to such a quest is seen as an ethical blunder. Mrs. Reed in her last days could not bear the pangs of conscience because she supplied to Jane's uncle misinformation about Jane when he had offered to adopt the girl. Jane's uncle's initial offer of adoption is significant; it could have meant for her home and family– a possibility, which Mrs. Reed averted.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Mention some of the important themes of the novel.

Q 4: Mention what Charlotte Brontë wrote in her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* regarding morality and religion.

Q 5: What role does Seasons play in the novel?

Q 6: What thematic purpose does the confrontation between Jane and Mr. Reeds serve in the narrative of the novel *Jane Eyre*?

12.5 CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Charlotte Brontë's strength as a novelist lies more on her creative imagination, a vitality that every page of the novel 'burns and breathes with', to borrow from David Cecil than on characterisation. Her major characters such as Jane Eyre, Lucie Snowe, Caroline Holstone, Shirley Keeder are all fully drawn and elaborately furnished but the secondary characters are mostly seen through the narrow prison of the heroine's temperament and therefore, they exist, in so far as they relate to her. Another weakness of her characterisation is that she is rather ineffective in the portrayal of the male characters. They are conceived as rather too feminine or too full of masculine vanity. However, she is particularly successful in portraying the character of Jane Eyre who has few parallels in English fiction in terms of possessing a dynamic personality.

Some of the important characters of the novel are discussed with more detail in the following sections.

Jane Eyre:

Jane Eyre, the principal character of the novel, is one of the most talked about characters in Victorian fiction. In fact, the story of the novel is inseparable from her own story and, therefore, the novel charts her own growth from being a child, a young girl, to a mature woman. However, she has been shown as dependent on others— first on Mrs. Reed, then on Mr. Brocklehurst, then on Mr. Rochester and St. John. This dependence, though circumstantial, helps her to move on. As a poor little orphan, she was materially bound to Gateshead Hall. In fact, from Gateshead Hall through Thornfield Hall, she was in some way or the other made to feel that she is at the mercy of others. Initially this 'other' was Mrs. Reed, then Mr. Brocklehurst, and then Mr. Rochester. After Mrs. Reed's punishment of Jane at red room, it was Brocklehurst who offers to hone her personality as a passive, receptive and suffering individual by offering contrasting the images of heaven and hell as Jane's only alternative. At Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst's dismissive ways and

pronouncements of inhuman and harsh norms find a certain Christian vocabulary. When, for instance, he inquired about twice serving a lunch against the norms of the institution, Miss Temple confessed to it, and he retorted: “you are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying.” The awareness of being dependent is something that Mr. Rochester too gives Jane from time to time.But right from her childhood Jane had a bit of mental independence or self respect. Her little act of rebelliousness against her cousin after he hit her is a manifestation of her self esteem. When Mrs. Reed commands her children not to mix up with Jane who, to her, is ‘not worthy of notice’, her reply was straightforward: ‘they are not fit to associate with me.’

The Lowood School episode is significant if we look at the moral and intellectual development of Jane. After a terribly secluded life at Gateshead Hall, it was at Lowood that she comes to terms with some good people, like Helen Burns and Miss Temple. Helen Burns was a senior student at Lowood. She was disgracefully flogged and was sent to stand in the middle of a room full of people by a teacher named Miss Scatcherd. She was an embodiment of endurance and restraint. She talks to Jane about the New Testament lesson to love one’s enemy and this lesson of Christian forgiveness Jane imbibed later in her life, as, in Mrs. Reed’s final days she accompanies her aunt. However, the latter fails to do away with her earlier class prejudice against Jane. In fact, it was her closeness with Helen Burns and Miss Temple that it prepared the ground for Jane to enter a wider realm of experience and it gave her a sense of her worth.

At Thornfield Hall, independence of mind and self-reliance was essential to Jane as, among other things, she is to make a crucial choice: whether she would stay with Mr. Rochester or leave him after she learns about his past life. He implores her to stay with him with a heart full of repentance and with utmost sincerity. Of course, she decides to leave, implying a troublesome aftermath for Mr. Rochester and an uncertain future for herself. What is important however is how Mr. Rochester is

made dependent on Jane's verdict. In the Moor House episode, she consents to accompany St. John to India on missionary work, but she is also unambiguous in articulating her refusal of his proposal for marriage. This very act of refusal once again establishes her integrated and independent selfhood.

Many critics feel that the character of Jane Eyre is a self portrait of Charlotte Brontë although the author herself is has denied it. One critic Laura Hinkley, finds a parallel in Jane's love for a married man and Charlotte's love for M. Heger. Jane's love is passionate but she would put her feelings aside to live a life of struggle. On the whole, despite the affinities between Jane and her creator, what is important to remember is that in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë has presented a complete person and a woman of moral superiority.

Mr. Rochester:

Mr. Rochester is a complex character. His actions and ways actually pave the way for a number of interpretations. As the owner of Thornfield house, he entrusts upon Jane the task of teaching Adele, daughter of a French opera dancer Celine Varens. As affirmed by the child's mother, Edele was his own daughter. But he did not give the small child his love as father. Rather, he seeks to discharge his duties impassionately. It was the bitterness arising from Celine Varens' breach of trust with him that lends him this coldness towards Adele.

Mr. Rochester appears to enjoy travelling abroad, and as Jane has been informed by Mrs. Fairfax, he is seldom seen at Thornfield Hall. He loves to enjoy party and the company of woman. He is somewhat sadistic with respect to his ways to Jane. He is aware of how Jane loves him still he talks to her about his prospective marriage with Miss Ingram. He is well aware of how Jane is attuned to his home; yet he commands her to leave Thornfield Hall, something that aggrieved her. He reminds her that she is a dependent being, and that once Miss Ingram becomes his wife she should shift elsewhere. What is more, he even commands her to go to Ireland and find a new situation at a specified household. Though afterwards he confesses that he sought to arouse Jealousy in

the mind of Jane, his ways nevertheless has caused her emotional disturbance.

Mr. Rochester has some qualities that can be called anti-heroic. He is dark and ugly looking, his rough appearance and impulsive action make him singularly unsuitable for Jane's acceptance. Charlotte Brontë's account of Rochester's character is seen in her letter to her publisher: *"Mr. Rochester has a thoughtful nature and a very feeling heart; he is neither selfish nor self indulgent; he is ill educated, misguided; errors, when he does err, through rashness and inexperience: he lives for a time as too many other men live, but being radically better than most men, he does not like that degraded life, and is never happy in it…"*

Bertha Mason:

Bertha is the mad wife of Mr. Rochester. He had married her in Jamaica, West Indies, fifteen years back, when he was quit a young man. According to him, however, it was a plotting designed by his brother and his father to get thirty thousand pounds, something of which he was completely unaware. Initially, Bertha's sensual beauty fascinated him, but after marriage he discovered that she was mad. As revealed by him to Jane, Bertha's mother was mad too. She was brought back to Thornfield Hall, and imprisoned in the third story attic. Grace Poole was engaged to keep a constant vigil on Bertha.

Bertha tried to come out of her chamber when Grace Poole was unaware, and once she set ablaze the bed of Mr. Rochester, and attempted murder of her brother Mr. Mason. Further, she tore the wedding veil of Jane. It indicates two things: Bertha has a certain murderous hatred against the male, and she senses Jane as her rival. It is significant that she is rather heard and sensed than seen. It is evident that it was not out of love but lust that propelled Mr. Rochester to marry Bertha. Paradoxically, however, Mr. Rochester's prime accusation against her was her coarseness; she is "at once intemperate and unchaste". On the other hand, he locks her up in a room and goes forth on a life of sexual adventure.

Bertha Mason, in many ways, stands as antithesis to Jane. Her

sinister revenge motive stands opposite to Jane's composure and self-restraint. She is physically strong, violently willful, demonic– qualities which are not acceptable in a Victorian wife. Many feminist critics, however, see Bertha as Jane's alter ego, an embodiment of her repressed anger.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How would you like to judge the character of Mr. Rochester?

Q 8: Do you think Bertha is an antithesis to Jane?

12.6 CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S NARRATIVE STYLE

As has been indicated by the full title of the novel, it is a first person narrative. It is told from the viewpoint of the protagonist, Jane Eyre. Technically, in a narrative where the character presents his/her own story, we have to set apart the narrator and the character for the purpose of analysis. We shall have to discuss the relation between Jane the narrator and Jane the character in the world of the events narrated. An important fact about the narrative style of *Jane Eyre* is that the Narrator is aware that what he/she narrates is a written narrative. There are instances where the narrator directly addresses the reader with the word "reader" as the narrator declares at the end of the book: "reader, I married him." Because the novel is technically autobiographical, self-presence is an important criterion to assess the reliability of the narrative. The realism of the novel basically hinges on the 'presence' of Jane in a situation. This self-presence enables the narrator to describe things, even gives her the power to record, observe, assess and criticise the 'other', be it event, people or situation. Again, it also enables the narrator for self-presentation.

One interesting fallout of this first person viewpoint is that sometimes there is a rupture between Jane's self-presentation and her received image in other people's mind. For instance, Rochester describes his own impression of Jane when she comes to Thornfield: "I

find you full of strange contrasts, your grab and manners were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, and altogether that of one refined by nature, but absolutely unused to society, and a good deal afraid of making herself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed, you lifted a keen, a daring, and a glowing eye to your interlocutor's face; there was penetration and power in each glance you gave." He claims that Jane may be stern and repressed, but we cannot figure it out from Jane's self-presentation. Some crucial narrative information are not part of Jane's felt life; it has been supplied by other agency. There are occasions where Jane receives other's stories. It is Mr. Rochester who informs her facts of Adele's parentage, the deception of Celine Varens to him, and more importantly, the story of his past. And in all this, Mr. Rochester presents himself more as a victim than as a victimiser. Mr. Rochester narrates how he was fooled by his father into marrying a 'mad' woman for monetary gain. The way Mr. Rochester presents his story also carries an implicit justification for his act of imprisonment of his own wife. Bertha does not have a point of view, neither an intelligible voice which can only be heard from a distance.

Another aspect of the novel's narrative strategy is its retrospective nature. It is told from a much later point of time. Towards the end, the narrator says 'I have now been married ten years.' It is only at this point that the perspective of the narrative is defined as the voice of thirty-year-old Jane. In some points distance is perceived between Jane the narrator and Jane the character in the world of the events, as in chapter 2, the narrator contemplates on the turmoil in the mind of the young Jane: "what a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance was the mental battle fought!" However, there is also no obligation to maintain a narrative distance throughout the novel; there is in fact a flexible play with narrative distance, and you will see that it is necessary in the creation of an atmosphere of mystery and gothic horror in Thornfield Hall. This creation of the atmosphere of horror

would not have been possible when the reader perceived a gap between the experienced narrator and the ignorant character. With regard to the mysterious events in Thornfield Hall, the reader is given as little narrative information as Jane herself knows. It leads to revelation: revelation to Jane as much as to the reader.

The abundant use of symbolism, imagery, and the supernatural elements adds to the stylistic mastery of Charlotte Brontë as a writer. If you read the text you will find that occasionally the narrative rises above the commonplace and receives an extra infusion of poetic flavour. The splitting of the great chestnut after Rochester's false marriage proposal is clearly symbolic of a portent. Most interestingly, this is followed by the nightmarish visit of Bertha Rochester to Jane's bedroom two nights before the actual marriage, the tearing of the wedding veil that is planned from the upcoming ceremony that will certainly betray both the real wife and the girl falsely betrothed. It is extraordinary that the climax of the story hinges on the telepathic appeal Jane receives from Rochester just at a time when she was ready to submit to St. John.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What according to you is the important aspect of the narrative style used in the novel *Jane Eyre*?

Q 10: Why is it that the narrative strategy used in the novel is retrospective in nature?



12.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have learnt that this unit has dealt with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* which has been regarded as one of the classic texts of Victorian literature. Of the four novels written by Charlotte Brontë, namely, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, *Jane Eyre* stands out as the most powerful fictional works of the author, and when it first

appeared, it was praised by critics for its freshness and vigour. The novel is autobiographical. Moreover, from this unit, you must have also learnt that *Jane Eyre* is an outstanding fictional work produced in the Victorian age, and it makes lot of resemblance to the facts of the author's life as well as to some aspects of contemporary life such as issues of gender and the female author's treatment of it.



12.8 FURTHER READING

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2) Alexander, Christine (1983). *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
3) Allen, Walter (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.
4) Amigoni, David (2000). *The English Novel and Prose Narrative.* Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press.
5) Barker, Juliet (1975). *The Brontës*. London: Macmillan.
6) Beaty, Jerome (1996). *Misreading Jane Eyre: A Postformalist Paradigm*. Colombus: Ohio State University Press.
7) Brontë, Charlotte (2004). *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: Norton.
8) Ford, Boris (ed.) (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol. 6 From Dickens to Hardy.* Great Britain: Penguin Books.
9) Gilbert, Sandra & Susan, Gubar (1973). *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
10) Glen, Heather (ed.) (1997).*Jane Eyre* (New Casebook Series). London: Macmillan.
11) Kettle, Arnold (1967). *An Introduction to the English NovelVol I.*

Universal Book Stall, New Delhi.

12) Lodge, David (1966). "Fire and Eyre Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements" in *Language of Fiction.* London: Routlegde and Kegan Paul.

13) Sanders, Andrew (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* London: OUP.

14) Woolf, Virginia (1925). *The Common Reader*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co.



12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Jane Eyre is a ten year old orphan living at Gateshead Hall… …she is oppressed and tormented by Mrs Reed and her children… …she spends her years of neglect, abuse and physical and mental torture at Gateshead… …she finds herself confined toa gloomy chamber where Mr Reed had died for no serious reason at all… …she loses her consciousness; with the care of the sympathetic family Mr. Llyold she gets well soon.

Ans to Q 2: Mr Reed… …Mr. Llyold… …Mr. Brocklehurst… …Mr. Rochester… …Mr. Rivers… …St. John etc.

Ans to Q 3: Country Life and the Seasons… …Confrontation of the Social Classes… …Redemption and Forgiveness… …Domination and Dissidence… …Search for Home and Family

Ans to Q 4: "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion…There is a difference; and it is a good, and not a bad action, to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them."

Ans to Q 5: The seasons provide an apt décor for human drama to take place in the novel… …the changing seasons corresponds to the changing situations and shifting moods of the protagonist as well as the characters.

Ans to Q 6: It represents the confrontation of two different social classes… …Mrs. Reed's aversion of Jane is not just rooted in the girl's unsubmissive nature; it has a long history… …it has been seen by Reeds as the act of transgression of his social decorum… …this high class attitude of Reed towards Jane continues till the end of the novel.

Ans to Q 7: Mr. Rochester is a complex character… …he is the owner of Thornfield house and he entrusts upon Jane the task of teaching Adele… …Mr. Rochester appears to enjoy travelling abroad… …Mr. Rochester is dark and ugly looking, his rough appearance and impulsive action make him singularly unsuitable for Jane's acceptance.

Ans to Q 8: Yes… … Bertha Mason, in many ways, stands as antithesis to Jane. Her sinister revenge motive stands opposite to Jane's composure and self-restraint. She is physically strong, violently willful, demonic– qualities which are not acceptable in a Victorian wife. Many feminist critics, however, see Bertha as Jane's alter ego, an embodiment of her repressed anger.

Ans to Q 9: The narrator is aware that what he/she narrates is a written narrative… …there are instances where the narrator directly addresses the reader with the word "reader" as at the end of the book: "reader, I married him."… …self-presence is an important criterion to assess the reliability of the narrative because it is autobiographical.

Ans to Q 10: It is told from a much later point of time. Towards the end, the narrator says 'I have now been married ten years.' It is only at this point that the perspective of the narrative is defined as the voice of thirty-year-old Jane.



12.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a detailed sketch of the complex nature of relationships that helps in the development of the plot of the novel *Jane Eyre*.

Q 2: Trace the relationship between Jane and Rochester from the beginning to the finish.

Q 3: To what extent does Jane's life at Thornfield help her to grow as an individual? Explain with reference to the incidents in Thornfield.

Q 4: 'Self determination is the chief virtue in Jane's character'. Elaborate this statement.

Q 5: Why do you think Charlotte Brontë makes Rochester almost blind for some time and then allows him to recover some of his sight later?

Q 6: Compare the characters of Rochester and John Rivers in their dealing with the women in the novel including Jane Eyre.

Q 7: 'Jane Eyre is a declaration of feminine independence.' Discuss.

Q 8: Do you think that the *Jane Eyre* is an autobiographical fiction Charlotte Brontë had written?

Q 9: How does the loss of home and family make Jane a stronger character?

Q 10: In what way, do you feel, can the novel *Jane Eyre* be called a Buildugsroman? Explain.

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UNIT 13: EMILY BRONTE: *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 The Story of the Novel

13.4 The genesis of *Wuthering Heights*

13.5 Major Themes

13.6 Emile Brontë's Art of Characterization

13.7 Emile Brontë's Narrative Style

13.8 Let us Sum up

13.9 Further Reading

13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.11 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- trace the storyline of the novel *Wuthering Heights*
- identify the important themes that add to the significance of the novel
- discuss the narrative techniques and Brontë's art of characterisation
- appreciate the novel in totality as a work of one or more literary genres.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to *Wuthering Heights* a novel by Emily Brontë (1818–1848). The fifth daughter of an Irish clergyman, Emily wrote only one novel apart from a number of poems which were first published in 1846 along with those of her two sisters Charlotte and Anne. In order to understand the somewhat bewildering structure of the novel with its dark, gothic and supernatural elements, you will first have to

understand Emily Brontë's life history in some detail. Also after reading the novel, you might wonder why this talented writer did not pen any other work of fiction, which could probably have been of equal merit. (In fact, she and Anne together did write numerous prose pieces which were never published and are now lost.) Many readers and critics of *Wuthering Heights* ask the same question. The answer could lie in the quality of Emily Brontë's creative imagination as in the rather unusual circumstances of her life, or in the geographical location where she grew up. The story of the novel sets in the untamed countryside of 18th century Yorkshire and deals primarily with the violent passions of the main protagonists who held sway over the other dramatis personae. The theme and its treatment have little in common with the main body of Victorian novels, which were greatly influenced by the socio-political situation of the times. After reading this unit, you will finally understand that the far-reaching changes sweeping across England, and the world seemed to have had little impact on the private world of *Wuthering Heights*.

13.3 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL

Wuthering Heights is the story of two households and their occupants spanning two generations. Several people, dramatis personae and outsiders alike, take hold of the narration and the events unfold in different sequences of time. This is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the novel.

Lockwood, a tenant, who has rented Thrushcross Grange for a year in 1801, is the first narrator. He begins by telling us about the experiences of his visit to Wuthering Heights, the other country house, in the neighbourhood where his property owner Heathcliff resides. He does not get a warm welcome but returns the next day when he also meets young Cathy and Hareton Earnshaw. A snowstorm compels him to spend the night there even after Joseph, the surly old servant, sets the dogs on him. He is led to sleep in a room, which seems to be out of bounds for everybody. Here he finds a diary written by Catherine Earnshaw some

twenty-five years ago. At night he is awakened by a child's ghost who seizes his hand when he puts it out of the window. As he cries out in mortal fear, Heathcliff rushes in and is overcome with passion at the sight of the ghost.

Next morning, Lockwood returns to the Thrushcross Grange where Nelly Dean, his housekeeper who had worked in Wuthering Heights in the past, begins to enlighten him about the place, the people and the happenings there. Her narrative goes back to 1771 when Catherine Earnshaw and her brother Hindley were children and a foundling was brought home by their father from a trip to Liverpool. This child of about seven who spoke *'gibberish'*, grew up to become Heathcliff. Nelly observes that the child brought about a division in the family as Catherine and her father grew attached to him and Hindley grew to hate him. There was such strife in the family that Hindley was sent away to college. After Mr. Earnshaw's death in 1777, Hindley, with his newly married wife Frances, returned home and began to wield his clout as the Master. He discontinued Heathcliff's education and set him to work as a farm hand. Catherine, however, remained his friend till an escapade with him introduced her to the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange. After spending five weeks there, she was transformed into an elegant young lady and her distance from the boorish Heathcliff grew. Yet the attraction between the two did not wane though Hindley continued to mistreat the latter. In 1778, Frances gave birth to a son Hareton but died later that year. Two years later Catherine turned fifteen and Edgar began courting her. She seemed to return his affections and this alienated Heathcliff further. In the meantime, Hindley grew addicted to liquor and began mistreating his infant son.

One night Heathcliff overhears Catherine telling Nelly that she is going to marry Edgar and he vanishes from home. Then the old Linton couple catch a fever and die. Three years later in 1783 Catherine marries Edgar and moves to the Grange taking Nelly with her. Heathcliff returns the same year having mysteriously become "quite the Christian" and rich. The marital harmony between Catherine and Edgar is shattered as her

passion for the prodigal is rekindled. The disquieting atmosphere and the latter's goading infuriates the mild Edgar. Things come to a head when Heathcliff seduces Isabella and she elopes with him. Catherine develops fever and delirium and in this state is remorseful at what she feels to be her betrayal of her true love. Heathcliff brings Isabella back to Wuthering Heights, which has become a dirty and neglected place. Hindley is a wreck and his son a violent little ruffian. In a reversal of circumstances, Heathcliff looks like a gentleman. Catherine does not quite recover from her illness and dies giving birth to a daughter. Before dying, she blames him and Edgar for her plight and tells him that he will suffer as she has. At her demise, Heathcliff falls apart completely and becomes a friend. After Catherine's funeral, all hell breaks loose. Hindley in a drunken rage tries to kill Heathcliff but fails and is almost beaten to death by the latter. Isabella flees to London where her son Linton is born. Six months after his sister's death, Hindley also dies. Soon it is discovered that all the Earnshaw property is mortgaged to Heathcliff and Hareton is a destitute.

Twelve years later Isabella, realising that she is dying begs her brother to take Linton away with him. Edgar does so but Heathcliff immediately claims his son and has him brought over to Wuthering Heights where he is a tyrant. When her father is away in London, Cathy goes on a clandestine visit to the other house and meets Hareton. On her 16th birthday, she meets him and Heathcliff out in the moors and is taken to Wuthering Heights for a visit. Here she meets Linton again and is told about the two families and their relationship by the new Master of the house. The man confides to Nelly his plan of marrying Cathy to his son, ostensibly for her security. Linton at first seems to be against it but terrorised by his father falls in with the latter's plan and woos Cathy. Initially Edgar too objects vehemently but gives in because a fever has debilitated him. We are already told how Hareton is deprived of education, and mistreated by Heathcliff and Joseph. He is often taunted by Linton and Cathy too for his ignorance. We also learn that the servants neglect Linton, and already of delicate health, the young man has bouts of cough and fever. Yet mortally afraid of Heathcliff, he helps

the former trick Cathy and Nelly into coming to Wuthering Heights where both are made prisoners. Catherine's daughter resists fiercely but the man who is obsessed by her mother beats her into submission. The next day she is married to Linton while Nelly is kept locked up. The housekeeper is eventually released but the young bride remains a prisoner held by her husband and his father. She is not allowed to visit her father who is dying but manages to escape and reach his death bed. After Edgar's funeral Cathy is taken back to Wuthering Heights. In an interesting aside Heathcliff confesses to Nelly that he had opened Catherine's grave to look at her face and has bribed the Sexton to bury him next to her. Very soon Linton also dies and his father gains full control over both the families and their properties. His motive of revenge is complete as he now tyrannises over the two children.

The story then moves ahead to 1802 when Lockwood returns to Thrushcross Grange after eight months. He visits the other house and finds some changes there. The young couple has become friends and Cathy has taken up the role of teaching Hareton. Nelly lives there now and tells the tenant that Heathcliff died three months ago. Towards the end he had difficulty in eating and breathing but was strangely excited. He also confessed to her that he no longer craved for revenge and was stirred by the resemblance both the children bore to Catherine. One morning Nelly found him dead beside the open window of Catherine's old room. He was buried next to Edgar and Catherine but the villagers maintain that they have seen him roaming the moors with his beloved. Cathy and Hareton are to be married on the New Year's Day of 1803 and will move to Thrushcross Grange with Nelly. Wuthering Heights will be shut and left in the care of Joseph. The story which began with Lockwood's first visit to the house ends as he leaves it for the last time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is Lockwood and how did he meet Heathcliff?

Q 2: Where did Heathcliff come from and what place did he have in the Earnshaw family?

Q 3: What role does Nelly Dean play in the novel?

13.4 THE GENESIS OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Unlike her sisters' works which contain fragments of their own experiences, Emily Brontë's novel does not give us a glimpse of her own life or her times. The Pennine highlands running past Cowan Bridge and the low-lying moors where Haworth Parsonage was located combine to form the setting of *Wuthering Heights*. Apart from this, the only verisimilitude consists of some realistic details of Yorkshire life like the dialect and interior decoration. The theme and treatment of the novel is far removed from the conventions that shaped the writing of the Victorian novelists. Where then do we look for and find the source of this work which stands out starkly against the large body of the 19th century English Fiction?

We can say with a fair degree of certainty that the novel had its genesis in the tales of Angria and Gondal which the Brontë children had created during their lonely childhood days. These tales evolved into the poems the sisters wrote when they grew up. A poem of Emily's written when she was about eighteen which began: "I am the only being whose doom/No tongue would ask, no eye would mourn..." is highly reminiscent of Heathcliff. That the novel departs from the Victorian norms of realism can be appreciated if we recognise its emergence out of a deeply private and long extended meditation on the world of Gondal. This would also explain how Emily Brontë could compose a work so elaborately and chronologically complex, as well as meticulously plotted over three generations, within a nine month period (between sometime in 1845 and July 1846). She had ,over time, so completely internalised the characters,

action and stylistic devices of the Gondal saga that she was able to give the early collaborative narrative the shape and tone of a conventional novel in a relatively short time. The witty urbanities of Thackeray, the domestic bliss of Mrs. Gaskell or the social criticism and humour of Dickens, which the readers delighted in, were conspicuous by their absence in *Wuthering Heights*. Instead, we have the incest motif, the macabre opening of graves, raging passions, storms and howling winds, the ghost of Catherine, the darkly irresistible Heathcliff—all staple fares of the Gothic literature so popular during Emily's girlhood. The Romantic Poets seemed to have taken precedence over Jane Austen, Dickens, or George Eliot as far as her reading was concerned because elements of their poetry are dominant motifs in the novel. The protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* still had the groans of the Byronic hero when the characters of the contemporary novels had become immersed in the struggle of the individual within a rapidly industrialised and complex society. In a word the Victorian novel had started documenting the ascendancy of the Superego over the Ego while *Wuthering Heights* was exploring the private world, the id of its Heathcliff and Catherine.



LET US KNOW

Id: That part of the unconscious mind consisting of a person's basic inherited instinct, needs, feelings and desire.

Ego: That part of the mind that is responsible for the interpretation of reality and a sense of personal identity.

Superego: That part of the mind that acts as a conscience and makes one aware of right or wrong.

Another interesting source may be found in the Brontë family's forebears in Ireland. As garnered from the account of William Wright in "The Brontës in Ireland" (1893), Patrick Brontë's father Hugh Brunty was adopted at a young age by a cruel and vengeful uncle named Welsh. This story became folklore in the Brontë household as the Reverend told his children many times about their grandfather's virtual kidnapping and

childhood abuse by the uncle. Welsh himself was a central figure in the legend. An orphan found on a boat going from Liverpool to Drogheda, he was adopted by Hugh's grandfather. Like Heathcliff, Welsh was eventually able to drive away and disinherit all the legitimate heirs of the family. He also fell in love with the daughter of the house but was unable to marry her. This ruthless ancestor bears some resemblance to the hero of Bartholmew Simmon's Gothic story 'The Bridegroom of Barna', which was set in Ireland. This tale was published in 1840 in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, a leading journal regularly read by the Brontë family. The story tells of disinheritance, revenge, and an unconsummated marriage between a woman of high birth and a man from a lower class. Although we do not know for certain, the two narratives, one real and the other fictional, could have struck a chord in Emily Brontë and given birth to the novel in general and the character of Heathcliff in particular.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Can you trace the sources of *Wuthering Heights*?

Q 5: How did the great Romantic poets influence Emily Brontë in the writing of her novel?

13.5 MAJOR THEMES

Wuthering Heights is a complex mosaic where the themes of love, jealousy, alienation and revenge are woven around untamed nature and social conventions. Here the supernatural acquires the stature of a spiritual harmony which defies the grave or earthly separation. Though death and misery are recurring motifs, the book ends with the promise of regeneration, continuity and happiness.

Theme of Love and Revenge:

The theme of the deep and almost unearthly intensity of Heathcliff and Catherine's love is paramount in the novel. The quality of this passion is emphasised by her marriage with Edgar Linton which is the result of romantic conventions accepted and blessed by society. After she

tells Nelly about her decision to marry Edgar, the housekeeper asks her:

"Why do you love him Miss Cathy?"

Catherine replies:

"Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with."

"And because he is young and cheerful."

She further confesses to Nelly about her passion for Heathcliff:

"my great thought of living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage of the woods. Time will change it…my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath…Nelly, I am Heathcliff…" (Chapter IX)

Nothing could be more in contrast than the emotions she exhibits for the two men. Catherine's marriage to Edgar finds only a brief mention in the novel as if that period is unimportant. Heathcliff's ardour is expressed through his anguish at her death: Oh God!" he cries out, *"It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"(Chapter XVI)When he beholds Catherine's ghost out of the window, he bursts "into an uncontrollable passion of tears."* His urging:*" Come in! Come in!.../Oh my heart's darling, hear me this time…"* is the exhortation of a soul desperately craving to be united with his beloved who is no more of this earth but whom he wants more than any living being. A few days before his death in Chapter XXIX he tells Nelly: "I have nearly attained my heaven." The thought of his imminent union with Catherine has purged him of every evil intent and has ended his will to live.

Among the less important characters, Hindley's love for Francis resembles a little the ardour of Heathcliff and Catherine.As for Edgar and Catherine and later in the case of Linton and Cathy it is love thwarted rather than passion consummated. The end sees the redemption of Heathcliff through love and in the union of Hareton and Cathy the unrealised desires of an earlier generation find fulfilment.

You will also notice that a sense of physical love, whether

consummated or not, is powerful throughout the novel, beginning with the initial couple Hindley and Francis who are described as openly "kissing and talking nonsense by the hour." Isabella's attraction to the swarthy Heathcliff is overtly physical, and all the Heathcliff imagery is passionate and sensuous. It is now widely acknowledged that childhood is not asexual, and the descriptions of childhood embraces, kisses and caresses of Heathcliff and Catherine remind us more of the Romantic fascination for the quasi-incestuous brother-sister bond than of childhood innocence. Only against the force of their powerful physical and emotional need for each other does the separation of Catherine and Heathcliff, first by society and then by death, have its enduring power to move us.

Another important theme woven with the love motif is revenge. Hindley hates Heathcliff because the latter has come between him and his father. He banishes the interloper from the household and starts mistreating him as soon as old Mr. Earnshaw dies. Heathcliff on his part is so vengeful towards Hindley that his very mission in life is to take control of the Earnshaw household and make every member suffer. Even the love of Catherine does not deter him from his chosen path. Her marriage to Edgar extends the scope of his revenge to the Linton family. So powerful is the revenge motive that it determines the action of the novel till its conclusion. Only in the end do we find love conquering hatred to make way for regeneration in the form of Cathy and Hareton's union.

The Romantic Legacy:

Emily Brontë's relation to the great Romantic Poets pertains to deep affinities in the creative spirit. The literal identification of the mind and nature, which is the essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality, is displayed to a certain extent by Emily Brontë most noticeably in Heathcliff and Catherine's out of the world interaction. As for Shelley, both the creator of 'Adonais' and Emily, in evolving their image of creativity, focus upon the conflict between sense and spirit and the quest for a real 'communication' with Spirit, or lost Beloved or dead Poet. They have a similar disdain for worldly doctrines and canonical religion, a pique

against worldly injustice. In *Adonais* Shelley evokes the image of a kind of dream more real than life, while the climax of *Wuthering Heights* focuses on Heathcliff's struggle with the reality of spirit. Again, Emily Brontë found in Byron's work, a poetic legitimacy for the unbridled passions of her protagonists. Heathcliff is the archetypal 'Byronic' hero with his mysterious origins, lawlessness, fatal love and self-induced death. However, *Wuthering Heights* goes far beyond the ethos of the Gondal world that permeates a poem like 'The Prisoner of Chillon' in terms metaphysical significance. A parallel can also be drawn between the poetic-philosophical quest of the mature Coleridge, as in his 'The Ancient Mariner' and that of Emily Brontë in her poetic novel.

Theme of the Supernatural:

Reading *Wuthering Heights* can be both intense and engaging if we are willing to suspend our disbelief long enough to immerse ourselves in the remote Yorkshire countryside at the end of the 18th century as Emily Brontë's imagination recreated it. Realistic themes like family feuds traversing generations and class prejudices are set against the Gothic motifs of dark, stormy weather and supernatural intervention. The last mentioned feature is reminiscent of the transcendental and mystic notes that constitute the essence of Romantic poetry. In fact *Wuthering Heights* has been called 'a poem of a novel' because appreciation of it involves a complex emotional response as in poetry. The Supernatural is not an extraneous element but, as in the poetry of the great Romantics, integral to the theme and treatment. This is also made possible by the fact that the spiritual note underlying the love and revenge themes seems to culminate in the supernatural encounters between Heathcliff and Catherine. The reader is less offended by the lack of verisimilitude and more satisfied that the lovers come together after their separation on earth. The Supernatural is not imposed on an unsuspecting audience as the author has prepared us for something beyond the physical.

Complicated Nature of Family Relations:

In *Wuthering Heights,* the perverse and complicated nature of family relations acts as a severe indictment of patriarchy on several

levels. Catherine, as the Gothic Female heroine, shows her mettle from her childhood when she departs from the Victorian norms of behaviour, and is described as a "wild, wicked slip". Heathcliff is essential in the story for understanding her personality and dilemma. He represents a force of nature, the embodiment of pure, unrestrained, sexual energy. The Gothic reading approximates Freudian construct as it often depicts among other things, a quasi-incestuous attraction between pseudo siblings. The early relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is meant to suggest a primitive pseudo marriage, a union of soul mates who do not engage in a sexual relationship but who act and think of themselves as a dyadic, androgynous unit. This pseudo marriage is a denial of the traditional, patriarchal family where she is not defined by her father or his status because she has entered it on her own volition without the mediation of a male member of her family. Her union with the nameless entity Heathcliff is a repudiation of patriarchal values and social conventions. However, these norms prove too strong for Catherine, and her civilizing process begins with the courtship of Edgar. With it comes the realization that in the present world order a woman cannot exist apart from the men who provide them with name and status. Her marriage to Edgar is a vindication of the status quo but the Gothic heroine must suffer for her betrayal. To Heathcliff's final indictment: "Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy?...What right did you have to leave me?", she replies, "I have done wrong, I'm dying for it." Death is the only release for Catherine, her only possible return to childhood and the free innocence she experienced with Heathcliff in a sort of perverse realm of infantile sexuality.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What affinities did Charlotte Brontë share with the Romantics?

Q 7: Do you think that Charlotte Brontë succeeds in her use of the supernatural?

Q 8: How is the complicated nature of family relations portrayed in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?

13.6 EMILE BRONTË'S ART OF CHARACT-ERIZATION

The timeless appeal of *Wuthering Heights* comes as much from its style and language as from its characters and plot. The last two features are entwined in a way so as to imbue the story with a fairy tale element. This is true of the two protagonists around whom the other characters function. Emily Brontë's novel is, after all, remembered as the story of Heathcliff and Catherine.

Heathcliff:

All through the novel, the character of Heathcliff remains an enigma. Largely the mystery of *Wuthering Heights* has its source in his unknown ancestry and his strange relationship with Catherine. When he is brought home by old Mr. Earnshaw, he is a dark-skinned child speaking "gibberish" and Nelly refers to him as "it". There is a sense of mystery about his disappearance as a youth and till the end about his death. His demeanour and attributes are likened to the devil's by Nelly. Hindley as a boy also calls him an "imp of Satan" (Chapter IV). It would, however, be too simplistic to explain his sadism and vengefulness as the working of a possessed soul. Critics point out that his cruel streak was, perhaps, the result of an infancy spent on the streets of Liverpool as an abandoned child and the subsequent ill-treatment by Hindley. Yet another interpretation of Heathcliff's character is likening him to the natural forces. He has variously been identified with the wild, lonely moorland, the raging storm and the beast within us. Another interpretation following the Jungian paradigm positions him as the destructive animus of a woman who has been taken over by the Shadow.



LET US KNOW

The Animus as a Hero:

Wuthering Heights, one of the best known classics in English and also very widely read, is open to a large number of analyses. One school of criticism uses the Jungian paradigm and looks at Heathcliff as the destructive animus of a woman.

This school sees his demonic attributes making sense only if one takes him to be a figure in Emily Brontë's psyche that it was necessary for her to create. This psychoanalytic approach traces his creation to Emily losing her mother in her childhood and her sisters' death during her adolescence. The isolated existence in the remote moorland only worsened her situation. According to this theory the condition of serious stress she went through could kindle the animus or the underlying masculinity in a woman. There is nothing admirable or acceptable about Heathcliff's ruthlessness or sadism on the 'real' plane. It is difficult to see him as a lover, even a demon lover. Hence, the Jungians take him to be the embodiment of the animus that developed out of Emily Brontë's uncompleted mourning to protect her from collapse. But, the animus does not consist of fiendish and brutal qualities alone. So, Heathcliff is the agent of torture as well as creative development in his author moving her towards the happy and the regenerative ending of the novel. In this sense he can be accepted as a hero or even as an idol.

Catherine:

The other protagonist of the novel is the girl for whom Heathcliff lived. The characterisation is such that one is woven into the other. The temperament and conduct of one can be understood in conjunction with that of the other. Catherine's nature is very different from the maidenly subservience consonant with the Victorian model. She is not the obedient daughter and displays an unruly streak. Her enduring spontaneity gives way to arrogance and selfishness as she grows up and Nelly is irritated by her behaviour (Chapter VIII). She is partial to the foundling Heathcliff her father had brought home and is a more than willing partner in his escapades. The childhood kinship takes on a passionate overtone as they become adults and not even her marriage to Edgar can change the intensity of their feelings for

each other. Her marriage spurs Heathcliff on to extend his cruelty to the Linton family but she is deliriously happy at his return. At one point, she even tells her husband, “I don’t want you, Edgar; I’m past wanting you” (Chapter XII) but she wants him to go on loving her. Even in death she remains the self-absorbed being and tells Heathcliff, “You have killed me_ and thriven on it…I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn’t you suffer? I do!” (Chapter XV). Her sufferings do not end with death as we know from the little ghost, which Lockwood sees. In conjunction with Heathcliff, we see the mystic side of Catherine. She makes us aware of her presence even after her death through the mysterious relationship she continues to have with him. Heathcliff and Catherine occupy the unique position of being inseparable in many ways. Critics suggest that they together are Emily Brontë’s approximation of energies for which description and interpretation can only be limited. Whether they represent nature, primitive urges unregulated by social order, or an unorthodox moral code, they together pose a threat to the social, sexual or cultural status quo.

Hindley, Edgar, and Isabella:

They occupy the roles of minor figures whose attributes and conduct are again seen in the light of the protagonists’ actions and measured accordingly. For example, Edgar appears gentle, refined but also delicate and weak by the side of Heathcliff and his love also pales in comparison. However, as the story progresses, he gains in stature while the latter grows more villainous. Hindley too is measured by the reader in terms of his relationship with Heathcliff. His temperament and behaviour are shaped early in the novel by the advent of the foundling and his subsequent position in the family. Isabella, with her refined, Victorian traits, acts as a foil to the unruly, tempestuous Catherine.



LET US KNOW

The Second Generation:

The author does not delineate the children as comprehensively as the parents. Again, their action and personalities are seen only in the context of the latter. Cathy is as headstrong as her mother but is more caring. She is also capable of standing up to Heathcliff. Her marriage to Linton can be seen in the general scheme of things as reparation for her mother's rejection of Heathcliff and her loveless wedlock with Edgar. Hareton is a mere sketch, a rough, unlettered bumpkin reformed into a good soul. It is as if this ploy is necessary for the resolution, that is Heathcliff and Catherine finding happiness through their progeny, to assert the philosophy that there is meaning in existence after all.

Lockwood:

Lockwood is regarded by many critics as the surrogate reader in *Wuthering Heights*. Although his first visit to the house is described as an unwelcome intrusion, he is drawn to the place. His second visit and the encounter with Catherine's ghost serve to build up the atmosphere and whet the curiosity of the reader. He also introduces us to Nelly Dean, through whom the story unravels. Lockwood, who has come to the remote countryside to recover from an unhappy love-interlude, prefers to be a recluse. To a lesser degree he is a misanthrope just like Heathcliff but minus the latter's viciousness. On this level, a parallel can be drawn between the two.

Nelly Dean:

Nelly Dean is a well-drawn character who comes across as a credible narrator. She, a "poor man's daughter," has been brought up with the Earnshaw children and thus has their confidence. By her own admission, she is self-educated and not

a coarse, illiterate servant. Yet, as has been observed earlier, her role as a narrator is conditioned by her beliefs and outlook and hence it varies in sympathy. For example, she is hard on Catherine and Heathcliff but indulgent towards the younger members. She serves her purpose in the novel well because, apart from being familiar with the actual events, she can also divine the reasons behind the actions according to her own code of ethics. Her commentaries enlighten us about both the generations of Lintons and Earnshaws and give us an insider's perspective from the novel's inception till it is wrapped up with her being a part of the story almost all the time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: How does Emily Brontë conceive the character of Heathcliff in this novel?

Q 10: How could you understand the idea of the 'Animus as Hero' in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?

Q 11: Narrate briefly the significance of Lockwood as a character in the novel.

Q 12: What role does Nelly Dean play as a character in the plot of the novel?

13.7 EMILE BRONTË'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Multiple Narrations:

Wuthering Heights is one of the most carefully plotted and constructed novels in English. It is a double generation story spanning some thirty years where the author uses the device of multiple narrations. The story is begun in medias res i.e. in the middle. The first two chapters make it look like a straightforward first person narration in diary form with Lockwood and Heathcliff being the main characters. However, as the story progresses, multiple narrators come into play and several voices jostling for attention gives rise to the concept of the polyphonic effect.

The idea behind this kind of recital is to acquaint the reader with several viewpoints within a first person account.

The problem of subjectivity that this kind of account involves is surmounted by introducing sundry narrators whose relationship to the events narrated is varied. Some of them, like Lockwood, are strangers to the households while others like Nelly Dean, Zillah and Catherine's diary occupy the positions of familiarity in various degrees. Moreover, the incidents, which are recounted to Nelly by others, are given to us in the words of those directly involved. Therefore, we have, at various points of the novel, the narratives of Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella and Cathy. The multiple narrative technique is highlighted by the fact that you have the delineation from the perspective of those who are intimately involved as well as those who, like Lockwood, are late entrants and hence are only casually associated with the story. Therefore, a fair degree of objectivity is infused into the narrative. Pursuing this line of thinking, we can also say that Lockwood, the outsider, applies certain prescriptive social norms to an environment that resists them. Therefore, his interpretation of the behaviour and incidents is far from accurate. Here, we can cite the example of his comparison of himself to Heathcliff. Nelly's recounting is also subject to her interpretation, which is conditioned by her values and expectations. Her reliability is likewise affected.

Therefore, multiple narration is one of the important aspects of the novel. The principal narrator is Ellan Dean, the secondary one Mr Lockwood– one being a native, the other a foreigner'. But, the story is also told by several other characters like Nelly Dean who are important in the plot. Among these, Isabella is probably the most important, being the source of much graphic details about Hindley and Heathcliff. Heathcliff himself narrates the Thrushcross Grange adventure. In fact, there are so many narrators that we are never quite sure who is speaking. But you should pay attention to the different versions of the same Heathcliff-Catherine story narrated by the different characters. Lockwood starts the narration in the middle, or rather chronologically speaking, towards the end. The past is unfolded by actual participants of

the drama and the resolution is brought about by Nelly enlightening him about the occurrences during his absence. It is, however, Lockwood who takes up the story again and brings it to a close with an interloper's musings about the graves on the silent heath and those in eternal sleep underneath.

The Use of Time:

One of the notable literary devices that set *Wuthering Heights* apart is the handling of time. Emily Brontë uses her narrators in a very skillful manner to go back and forth in time so that the story unfolds at a natural pace. Despite the fact that the events are not recounted chronologically there is no jarring effect at the shift. You marvel at the smooth passage of time though the narrative goes back from the present to thirty years earlier in Chapter VII, then jumps back to the present and again goes back to Hareton's birth. This back and forth technique is repeated several times in Chapters IX, XIV and XXIX but each time the transition is excellently carried out. Indeed, all these interruptions serve to infuse into the recital a soothing tone of normalcy, represented by the present, after high points of drama have been reached in the turbulent past. Lockwood is brought back to the narrative sequence time and again in order to remind the reader that it is a tale told to a visitor standing outside the convoluted world of the Earnshaws and the Lintons which is unfolding through the narratives of participant-raconteurs.

As we have noted earlier, one of the most meticulously constructed of novels, *Wuthering Heights* gives us a clear idea of the date of every important occasion though only three dates (November 1801, September 1802 and 1778) are specifically mentioned. The perfect control that the author maintains over the chronology of events only emphasises her superior artistic skills particularly as the novel was written within the space of a year.

As has been mentioned earlier, *Wuthering Heights* has the resonance of Romantic poetry, but in more ways than one. It is a poetic novel in both theme and technique. The use of linguistic devices like colloquial similes by Nelly and the evocative metaphors by Catherine and

Heathcliff enhance the lyrical quality of the prose. The rich imageries drawn from nature are highly reminiscent of the Romantic poets, as are the simple phrases, which invoke the rhythm of country life. The other major stylistic device that endows the novel with its poetic character is the powerful use of sustained imagery. The two houses exhibit certain qualities which become highly symbolic. Wuthering Heights is home to people with primeval passions but it is also a place where food is plentiful and fires are blazing. Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, houses people who are refined, formal and undemonstrative. Meals are dainty or frugal, and Lockwood at times does not have a fire in his study. One conjures up the image of wild, uninhibited behaviour and life in the raw, while the other stands for cold genteelness and a rarefied atmosphere. Doors, windows, locks and keys are the other components which are used throughout to depict certain emotional and physical predicament that the principals find themselves in. The other imagery used extensively has to do with animals. Dogs are presented as savage brutes to show the feral side of man. Besides this, eyes, teeth and blood are also important motifs. The weather as well as the elements 'hot' and 'cold' are used in an evocative manner in the novel. You, as the reader, can try to find other images which abound in the novel and heighten its poetic appeal. *Wuthering Heights*, after all, is a work where meaning is inseparable from form, where nothing is irrelevant, superfluous or accidental.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Do you think the author has made a good job of handling time in the novel?

Q 14: Briefly comment on the multiple narrative techniques in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?



13.8 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of the different sections of this unit, you must have understood that the novel *Wuthering Heights* is an original and enigmatic novel, and it is hardly surprising that there are many different views about its sources, themes and the issues raised by the story. One view is that since Heathcliff is the heart of the story, the theme is an examination of some aspects of evil. Another is the passionate love and equally violent hatred and revenge. Others seem to have suggested that the love of the two chief characters Heathcliff and Catherine is really mystical, metaphysical, a symbol of the desire for death; for survival after death; of the permanence of the non-human life of nature; of the spiritual craving of the individual for union with this universal 'soul', so on and so forth. You have read that the story is set in rural Yorkshire in the last forty years of the 18th century and the first two of the 19th that is, in the period immediately before the author's own life and therefore similar to the author's own experiences. Perhaps, Emily Brontë's primary aim in this novel was to present an image of life as she understood it, a microcosm, in which the central figure at last regains innocence, his evil elements dissolving in his passionate longing for the spiritual union with his lost love. You have gone through important aspects of the novel like the major themes, narrative technique, characterisation and the style of Brontë's writing which simply add more impetus to the significance of the novel composed in a historically important period of the 18th century.



13.9 FURTHER READING

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Attic: The Woman Writer and the 19th Century Literary Imagination. Yale University Press.

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4) Holbrook, D. (1997). *Wuthering Heights: A Drama of Being*. Sheffield Academic Press.

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7) March, Nicholas (1999). *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights.* Palgrave: Macmillan.

8) Stoneman, Patsy (1993). *Wuthering Heights: A New Casebook*. London: Macmillan.

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13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Lockwood is a foreigner who has rented Thrushcross Grange for a year in 1801… …he meets Heathcliff during his visit to Wuthering Heights, a country house in the neighbourhood.

Ans to Q 2: Heathcliff is a foundling… …he was brought to the Earnshaw family by Mr Earnshaw from a trip to Liverpool… …he did not enjoy much favour from the family as he spoke 'gibberish,'… …also he brought about a division in the family as Catherine and her father grew attached to him and Hindley started disliking him… ….this was to cause a lot of troubles in the lives of the characters of the novel.

Ans to Q 3: Nelly provides some important information on the character to Heathcliff… …when in 1802 Lockwood returns to Thrushcross

Grange after eight months and meets Nelly… …Nelly who now lives there informs that Heathcliff confessed to her that he no longer craved for revenge… …one morning Nelly found him dead beside the open window of Catherine's old room.

Ans to Q 4: We can say with a fair degree of certainty that the novel had its genesis in the tales of Angria and Gondal which the Brontë children had created during their lonely childhood days… … the Romantic Poets seemed to have taken precedence over Emily's imaginative mind… ...another interesting source may be found in the Brontë family's forebears in Ireland.

Ans to Q 5: Emily Brontë's relation to the great Romantic Poets pertains to deep affinities in the creative spirit… …the protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* seems to have had the groans of the Byronic hero… …the literal identification of the mind and nature which is the essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality is displayed to a great extent… …moreover, Shelley's *Adonais* evokes the image of a kind of dream more real than life.

Ans to Q 6: The essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality is displayed Emily Brontë most noticeably in Heathcliff and Catherine's out of the world interaction… …like Shelley Emily seemed to focus upon the conflict between sense and spirit… …again, Heathcliff may be seen as the archetypal 'Byronic' hero with his mysterious origins, lawlessness, fatal love and self-induced death.

Ans to Q 7: Realistic themes like family feuds traversing generations and class prejudices are set against the Gothic motifs of dark, stormy weather and supernatural intervention… …the Supernatural is not an extraneous element but integral to the theme and treatment like in case of the Romantics.

Ans to Q 8: In *Wuthering Heights,* the perverse and complicated nature of family relations acts as a severe indictment of patriarchy on several levels… …Catherine, as the Gothic Female heroine, shows her mettle from her childhood… …Heathcliff is essential in the story for understanding her personality and dilemma… …the early

relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is meant to suggest a primitive pseudo marriage, a union of soul mates.

Ans to Q 9: Heathcliff remains an enigma… …he had been a dark-skinned child speaking "gibberish"… …his demeanour and attributes are likened to the devil's by Nelly… … Hindley as a boy also calls him an "imp of Satan"… …critics point out that his cruel streak was, perhaps, the result of an infancy spent on the streets of Liverpool as an abandoned child and the subsequent ill-treatment by Hindley… …some likens his character to the forces of nature.

Ans to Q 10: In the context of Carl J Jung's criticism, Heathcliff is seen as the destructive animus of a woman… …this school sees his demonic attributes making sense only if one takes him to be a figure in Emily Brontë's psyche… … the condition of serious stress she went through could kindle the animus or the underlying masculinity in a woman.

Ans to Q 11: Lockwood is both a narrator and a surrogate reader in *Wuthering Heights*…. … although his first visit to the house is described as an unwelcome intrusion, he is once again drawn to the place by its mystery… …he also introduces us to Nelly Dean, through whom the story unravels.

Ans to Q 12: Nelly Dean, a servant, is a well drawn character who also becomes an important narrator… …although poor, she has been brought up with the Earnshaw children and gains their confidence… …her own admission, she is self-educated and not a coarse, illiterate servant ... ... she is important as narrator as her commentaries enlighten us about both the generations of Lintons and Earnshaws and give us an insider's perspective on the characters.

Ans to Q 13: Yes… …despite the fact that the events are not recounted chronologically, there is no jarring effect at the shift… … the narrative goes back from the present to thirty years earlier in Chapter VII, then jumps back to the present and again goes back

to Hareton's birth… … this back and forth technique is repeated several times in Chapters IX, XIV and XXIX but each time the transition is excellently carried out.

Ans to Q 14: Lockwood, Nelly Dean, Zillah and Catherine's diary play important role in the narrative of the novel… …the incidents which are recounted to Nelly by others are given to us in the words of those directly involved… …thus, we have, at various points of the novel, the narratives of Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella and Cathy… …the multiple narrative technique is highlighted by the fact that you have the delineation from the perspective of those who are intimately involved as well as those who, like Lockwood, are late entrants and hence are only casually associated with the story.



13.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: The characters of Catherine and Heathcliff are immortal creations in English literature. Analyse their relationship as portrayed in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 2: Comment on the narrative technique used by Emily Brontë in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 3: What is the purpose served by the use of multiple narrators such as Nelly Dean, Lockwood or the diary in the story of *Wuthering Heights?*

Q 4: Make a comparison between the relationships of Catherine and Heathcliff and those of the second generation namely: younger Catherine and Hareton.

Q 5: There is a beautiful blending of realism and romance in the *Wuthering Heights*. Discuss the truth of this statement with reference to the specific events in the novel.

Q 6: Analyse the plot of *Wuthering Heights* with special attention to the beginning and the ending and the shifts in the narration.

Q 7: Compare and contrast the characters of Catherine and her

daughter the younger Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 8: Critically comment on the themes discussed in *Wuthering Heights*. Do you think that the supernatural accords plausibility in the structure of the novel?

Q 9: Mention some of the psychoanalytic approaches to the reading of *Wuthering Heights*. How do these readings interpret the characters and their relationships?

Q10: Discuss in detail how the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine sets the story of *Wuthering Heights* in motion.

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UNIT 14: THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Thomas Hardy: The Novelist

14.3.1 His Life

14.3.2 His Works

14.4 The Story of the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

14.5 Critical Reception of Hardy

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.8 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the life and works of Thomas Hardy the novelist
- make connections between the novel and the Victorian World
- discuss *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a Victorian novel
- discuss the importance of the world of Wessex in the novels of Hardy
- trace the storyline of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will read about the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* written by the famous novelist and poet Thomas Hardy who wrote at the end of 19th century. The Victorian Era, when Hardy lived, was a time of great change. His novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is about a young country girl, Tess, whose father discovers that their family descended from one of the oldest, most aristocratic families in England. However, the discovery has tragic consequences on Tess. She is sent off to the wealthy branch of the family to "claim kin" (i.e., to borrow money), and ends up being raped by

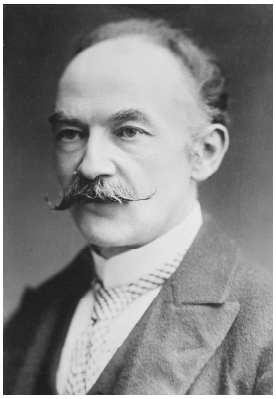
the son of that branch of the family. You should note how the social elites were endowed with the notion of 'new money' and how many of the old aristocratic families were gone into oblivion. Tess' family in the novel had gone through the same predicament as the whole Durbeyfield family loses itself in fantasising their belonging to the aristocratic family d'Urbervilles, which finally led them to the tragedy. The hardship and drudgery of the life style of the rural folk are explored most beautifully in the novel. Hardy has a dig at the religious orthodoxy as well as social values of the times. By the time, you finish reading this novel, you will learn about Hardy's philosophy of life and his concern about the changes that were taking place in his times, finding an important place in his great fictional works.

14.3 THOMAS HARDY: THE NOVELIST

This section will introduce you to some of the main facets of the life and works of Hardy as well as the main features of his novels.

14.3.1 His Life

Thomas Hardy was born on the 2nd June 1840 in Higher Bockhampton in Dorset, a rural region of southwestern England. His father was a master mason and his mother came from an established family of Dorset. He owed much to his parents for his love of music, love of reading and a strength of self that made him stand like a rock amidst all the changes that were taking place during his lifetime. Hardy first went to a village school and then he went to a school at Dorchester. At the age of sixteen Hardy was apprenticed to John Hicks, an ecclesiastical architect who lived in the city of Dorchester. In 1857, Hardy began to write verses and essays, but he decided not to leave his vocation as an architect. In 1862, he



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

went to London to look for work and became an assistant to Arthur Blomfield. He was still not sure which vocation he should go for. In 1865, his first prose work was published in a journal, though he was much more interested in poetry. He had suffered from bouts of depression as he felt utterly lonely and finally he fell sick. In 1867, he returned to Dorset and started working for Hicks again. His architectural training at Dorchester lasted for six years but it had a decisive influence on him as a novelist because his novels show a careful planning and it is not without significance that *Tess of the Urbervilles* is divided into a meticulously worked out structure.

In 1870, Hardy took to writing novels by following Meredith's advice and published *Desperate Remedies* in 1871, *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1872 and *A Pair of Blue eyes* in 1873. In 1874, he produced the masterpiece *Far From the Madding Crowd* which brought him immense fame. He married Emma Lavinia Gifford the same year. After marriage, Hardy and his wife wandered about Europe and finally settled at Sturminster Newton, in a villa amidst calm and serene natural surroundings. In 1878, *The Return of the Natives* was published and after this Hardy decided to go back to London. In between 1878 and 1912, Hardy had contributed immensely in the genres of novels, poetry, and short stories. He was gradually getting recognition and became famous for his works. The Order of Merit was conferred upon him in 1910.

Hardy's marriage life with Emma was not a peaceful one. Neither of them sustained in matrimony the joys and affinities they had dreamed of in their courtship days. They did not have any kids. However, she encouraged him to pursue his literary career and shared a caring for their pets; yet their temperamental differences, domestic disagreements and Emma's feeling of being neglected by her husband made their relation bitter. His wife was never happy with him as she thought that she had married much below her parental status. She insulted Hardy publicly; yet Hardy never complained about it. In 1912, Mrs. Hardy passed away unexpectedly.

After the death of his wife, Hardy made a trip to Cornwell to revive his memories of his courtship with his dead wife and his poems 1912-1913 portrays his feelings at her death. In 1914, Hardy married Florence Dugdale who was much younger to him. His domestic life with his second wife became peaceful. However, this new found peace was destroyed by the First World War as he visited the English and German soldiers lying in the hospitals in Dorchester. He was utterly disturbed at the sight of the destruction. However, he went on writing poems and enjoyed the poetry reading sessions of his wife. His death came in 1928, which had created a vacuum in the literary circle of England. He has been regarded as the last great Victorian for his immense contribution to the literary field.

Hardy showed a wide range in his novels. He delineated a perfect picture of the Victorian conflict between the rural surroundings and life and the newly emerging mechanical and materialistic urban life style. Most of his novels portray the village life and the complexities and intrigues that were seen in the rural societies of his times. Hardy felt that the conduct of the upper classes was screened by the conventions, and thus the real character was not easily seen. However, in case of the lower classes, conduct was a direct expression of the inner life and thus characters could be directly portrayed through the act. Thus, Hardy was more at ease in delineating the lower strata of life, the rural folks and the growing shift of the rural folk to the urban set up which had resulted in utter despair. Hardy believed that the novel should have a total effect like living organism, in which all the component parts like plot, character, dialogue, and scenery are set in such a way that it gives the impression of a harmonious whole. He was immensely successful in elevating fiction writing to a conscious art.



LET US KNOW

Wessex: *Wessex* was the name given by Hardy for a territory in the South-west of England. Hardy set most of his major novels in *Wessex, which* he named after the medieval Anglo- Saxon kingdom that existed in that part of the country prior to Norman Conquest. Hardy used "Wessex" in *Far From the Madding Crowd* for the first time and in its preface, he described *Wessex* as "a merely realistic dream country". Gradually Hardy began to divide Wessex into different regions. In *The Return of the Native* (1878), he introduced South Wessex; in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) Upper- and Mid-Wessex and in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) he tells us about North, Nether and Outer Wessex. In the words of Lea Hermann—"We have it on his own assurance that the Wessex of the novels and poems is practically identical with the Wessex of history, and includes the counties of Berkshire, Wilts[hire], Somerset, Hampshire, Dorset, and Devon-either wholly or in part." (*Thomas Hardy's Wessex*, 1913: xvii) Wessex plays a crucial role in Hardy's works as it provided him with a space to present the significant issues like progress, religion, nature, sexuality, primitivism and so on in his works.

Hardy's philosophy of life was influenced by his age to a significant extent. The scientific and intellectual thought of the times had a great impact on the literature of the era. Naturalism, which advocated a frank and full portrayal of life, was in the air. It stressed the treatment of man as an ordinary component in the indomitable forces of Nature. Hardy too came under the influence of Naturalism and in his novels, we get in varying degrees the themes like the immutability of Nature and the transience of human being, the grandeur of Nature and the littleness of man, the justice of Nature and man's relentless struggle to evade Natural justice, which are so common in Hardy's works. His philosophy of life presupposes that there is an inherent cruelty in the pattern of the Universe and that

human beings try to defy that until they are taken over by hostile destiny. Chance in its malevolent aspect is an important facet of his themes. A struggle between man and an omnipotent Fate interprets Hardy's notion of human situation. Fate manifests itself in different guises. Sometimes it appears as a Natural force, sometimes as an innate weakness of character. Chance exerts a conspicuous influence in the course of events. Love is another incarnation of Fate in Hardy's novels. Destiny as an inscrutable force beyond human's comprehension is as constant a part of Hardy's vision as that of the Greeks. It is beyond man's power to rule his destiny—a fact so poignantly portrayed in Hardy's fictions that many critics call him a 'Fatalist'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What ideas of the lower class people can be derived from Hardy's novels?

Q 2: How does the term Wessex appear in Hardy's novels?

Q 3: Briefly state Hardy's philosophy of life.

14.3.2 His Works

In the section entitled "Early Life and Architecture" of the book *Life of Thomas Hardy* by Thomas and Florence Hardy, Hardy describes the three strands of his life— the professional life, the scholar's life, and the rustic life. In the scholar's life, he went through an intense programme of study to equip himself for a career in writing. Having failed to get any of his poetry published Hardy began to write novels and *Desperate Remedies* his first novel was published in 1871. The novel failed but the next one *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) achieved some success and the success of *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) heralded the arrival of a novelist of promise and he became a full time writer.

Hardy's literary career could be divided into three distinctive phases. The **first phase** was started with *Desperate Remedies*

(1871), followed by the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and ended with *Jude the Obscure* (1895). He attained gradual recognition as a novelist who was concerned with themes like inscrutable fate, man in conflict with the world etc. Some of his famous novels are *Under the Greenwood Trees* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Well Beloved* (1892). Let me tell you that Hardy had earned fame for his short stories also. We can even include the volumes of Short stories in this phase. His Short Story collection *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891) and *Life's Little Ironies* (1894) brought him recognition as one of the greatest short story writers of English literature.

The **second phase** is the phase when his epic poem *The Dynasts (1903-1908)* was published. Before that, in 1898, he published the first of the eight books of verse but until the publication of *The Dynasts*, his poetry was not taken seriously. However, critics opine that this poem is the single greatest achievement of his career. This poem represents in dramatic form the course of the Napoleonic Wars that took place from 1805 to 1815.

The **third phase** begins with the publication of his poetry collection *Time's Laughing Stocks* in 1909. This was followed by the publication of a few of other poetry collections, namely, *Satires of Circumstances* (1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), and *Human Shows, Far Phantasies* (1925).

Hardy had ranked his works in different orders. Critics observe that he used to arrange his works according to the responses of the public. For the Wessex edition, Hardy classified his works into three groups:

Novels of Character or Environment: *Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure, Wessex Tales* and *Life's Little*

Ironies.

Romances and Fantasies: *A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Trumpet Major, Two on a Tower, The Well-Beloved* and *A Group of Noble Dames.*

Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment: *Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta* and *A Laodicean.*

You should note that tragedy in Hardy's novels arises out of the influence of the modern competitive lifestyle over the simple old, rural life. The plots of the novels *Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are based on this conflict between old and the new world, between characters belonging to the countryside, and the characters coming to the countryside from the urban places. His novels portray the loss of rustic simplicity and innocence at the onslaught of the urban, capitalist world views. Another interesting fact is that Hardy was highly influenced by Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) which had a great impact on his thought.

As a novelist Hardy enjoyed his most popular period in the late Victorian era. His popularity rests more with his novels than his poetry. In his novels, he dealt with many complex issues like clash of principles and motives, right and wrong, courage and cowardice, duty and desire, free will and Chance or Fate. Virginia Woolf opines that Hardy's vision of the world is a vision of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul. However, the helpless condition of human beings in the hands of destiny leads to a state of pessimism that is present in Hardy's works. His pessimistic outlook of life was the result of his ill health, morbid temperament and the life experiences. He experienced and witnessed a bitter struggle for existence, thwarted desire, undeserved pain and suffering, disappointments and disillusionments, higher aspirations ending in utter failures and so on. All these made him highly pessimistic towards life and this

pessimism was present in his works. He saw despair, dejection, failure, frustration and tragedy in the life of the rural folks of Wessex who were poor and dependent. He witnessed them undergoing all sorts of oppression and social exploitation and also the suffering due to the Immanent Will. All these made him view life with pessimism, which he presented in his novels.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Reflect on Hardy's portrayal of characters in his novels.

Q 5: Discuss briefly some of the core issues of Hardy's novels.

Q 6: What are the three strands in Hardy's life?

Q 7: Enlist the three phases in Hardy's writerly life.

Q 8: Briefly explain the three types of Hardy's works that express his interest in the Wessex?

14.4 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

This section will help you to have some ideas regarding the story of the novel. However, it is insisted that you collect a standard text of the novel and start reading it to gain a better grasp of the issues raised in the text. *Tess of d'Urbervilles* is regarded as the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. Let me tell you that the novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* has seven phases; each phase presents a shift or new development in the plot. Critics have praised Hardy for the opening chapter which gives a comprehensive account of d'Urberville's descent, the racy humour of the dialogue, the picture of John Durbeyfield etc.

The novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* has seven phases and each phase presents one significant development in the storyline. **The first phase** is "The Maiden" where the novelist introduces us to Tess and her family. The opening chapter presents John Durbeyfield, who, on his way home to Marlott comes across an old Parson who addresses him as "Sir John". Then Mr. Durbeyfield comes to know from parson Tringham that Durbeyfield descends

from a noble family, the d'Urbervilles. Knowing about this family history Durbeyfield feels self important and sends for a horse and a carriage on hire to carry him home. Then we are introduced to Tess and Angel. Tess takes part in a dancing procession in their village Marlott and their dancing is disturbed by the comic appearance of Mr. Durbeyfield. Angel Clare passes through the village and sees Tess amidst the dancing maidens. Both the individuals have their wistful sight at one another. Then Hardy introduces us to the depressing picture of the sordid Durbeyfield household. The final blow comes with the death of Prince, the horse and this practically necessitated Tess to go for earning money. Tess is persuaded to apply for a work at their rich relation Mrs. d'Urbervilles, who lives with her son Alec in a big house the Slopes. Tess's mother puts in her mind the idea of marriage with Alec which Tess accepts with some kind of resentment. Tess starts working at the Slopes and looks after Mrs. d'Urbervilles' poultry and Alec follows her every now and then. One fine day, Tess joins a Saturday night excursion to Chaseborough and witnesses a vulgar fight in the course of which a girl called Car Darch attacks Tess. Alec rescues Tess and carries her off on horseback to the woods. Tess was exhausted and falls asleep. Alec takes the opportunity and seduces her. Hardy makes it clear that Tess is a little dazed at the seduction of Alec as she partially has a belief that Alec loves her. With this tragic act, the first Phase of the novel ends.

The second phase "Maiden No More" narrates Tess' condition post her seduction by Alec. She comes back home and narrates her condition to her mother. She is only seventeen and tells her mother that when she left her house she was only a child and that she didn't know about all these. However, Tess goes into depression as she feels that she cannot be a part of the normal gathering, even going to the church. She starts going to the woods and feels some kind of solace thereby being in solidarity with Nature. However, she is always disturbed by her guilty conscience. Tess delivers a baby and starts working in the field, as she wants to work and earn. Her baby boy falls sick and Tess realises that the boy has to be christened. She decides to christen him herself and gives the name Sorrow. When the next morning her baby dies, she talks to the parson and asks him if she can bury

him in the churchyard. The Parson is moved and asks her to bury the child herself, as they cannot do so. That night Tess buries the child and makes a little cross for his grave. The whole winter she stays at her father's house and finally decides to take a job of milkmaid in a dairy farm many miles to the Southward.

The third Phase "The Rally" marks the new beginning of Tess's life at the Talbothays. When she reaches the dairy farm, she is warmly received by the master of the dairy farm. Tess starts a new life full of zest. She makes friend with other milkmaids. There she meets Angel Clare who is an apprentice at the Dairy. Angel has resolved to open a farm of his own. Initially Angel could not recognise Tess, but gradually they develop some kind of affinity for one another. Though they share some kind of passionate feeling for each other, they try hard to keep themselves out of it. Tess comes to know that three of her milkmaid friends too love Angel and she tries to give a hint to Angel to choose one of them. All the episodes finally lead to Angel's declaration of love for Tess. Tess accepts his love without much reflection. Tess is blissfully happy when Angel embraces her.

In the fourth phase, "The Consequence", the love of Angel for Tess gets more intense and Tess persists with her reluctance to give any commitment. Angel's admirable intellectual qualities are highlighted here and we come to know about his family. She is disturbed by pangs of conscience and feels that she should tell Angel about her past. Many a time she tries but of no result. In the meantime, Angel keeps on telling her to marry him to which she finally gives in. Finally, the date has been fixed. However, Tess is still in a dilemma and writes a confessional note and slips it under his door, but it slides under the carpet and Angel never sees it. After the wedding, Angel confesses about a past relation with a woman and seeks Tess's forgiveness. Tess readily forgives him and confesses about her past relation with Alec.

The fifth phase "The Woman Pays", we find Tess falling in adverse situation again. Angel cannot accept Tess after learning about her past. He tells Tess that she is not the woman he loved. Therefore, they pass their wedding night in different rooms. Next morning Tess talks about divorce,

but Angel tells her that divorce was not legally possible. Tess tells him of her thoughts of drowning herself, but Angel tells her that the thought of suicide is unworthy of her. So finally, they decided upon a separation. The last night which Angel and Tess lived together in the house at Wellbridge, Tess finds Angel sleepwalking when he lifts her and takes her to the graveyard adjoining to the nearby church. All along, he keeps murmuring "My poor, poor Tess– my dearest, darling Tess" and finally he puts her on the ground as if she is a dead body. However, in the morning he does not even remember anything. Finally, they part their company and Angel gives money to Tess so that she does not face any financial hardship. Tess returns home and tells her parents about her broken marriage. Her mother scolds her for not following her advice. Her father asks her mother if this time she was married to Angel or like last time she was used by him and then discarded. Tess is heartbroken thinking that if her father does not believe her, how will other people do so. Angel decides to go to Brazil to seek some new job. Angel too goes back home but decides not to tell anything about Tess to his family. When he plans to go to Brazil, he meets Izz and asks her if she would like to go with him to Brazil. She accepts his proposal, but during their conversation, she tells him that no one can love him like Tess. This makes Angel drop the idea of taking Izz with him to Brazil. Eight months later, Tess starts feeling the financial crisis more acutely and decides to go in search of a job. Finally, she arrives at Flinscomb-Ash and gets employed as a Farm hand. Marian helps her in getting this job. Tess's new master is a hard task master and Tess has to really slog hard the whole day. Izz joins the farm as a worker and Tess comes to know about Angels' proposal to Izz. She is happy that Angel did not take her to Brazil, but feels sad also as Angel asked her to accompany him to Brazil. Tess waits for Angel's letter and is very sad as Angel has not written to her. So thinking of getting some information from Angel's parents, she decides to visit them. She visits the vicarage where Angel's father is the in charge. However, she reaches late and so fails to meet him. On her way, she finds two men who are Angel's brothers and Mercy Chant, the girl whom Angel's parents had chosen to be his wife, who speak ill of her. Therefore, she decides not to go

to their house, returns to Flinscomb-Ash, and is surprised to see Alec d'Urberville, who is preaching sermon to a gathering in an earnest voice.

The sixth phase "The Convict", presents Alec D'Urbervilles once again. This time he is a preacher who keeps on persuading Tess to marry him and then to go with him with his missionary work. She comes to know that Angel's father has converted Alec without understanding his evil nature. Alec comes to her and proposes to her every now and then to marry her. Realising the danger in which she finds herself, Tess writes a letter to Angel to help her. On the other hand, Angel has a realisation that the conventional moral beliefs made him accept Tess in that way and he decides to come back to Tess. One day Tess gets the news that her parents are very sick and she needs to go home. At this point also, Alec offers him money to help her out of her difficulties. However, Tess does not respond. Her father dies which makes them leave their cottage they have been occupying under a lease. The whole family is in utter difficulties. Alec keeps on extending his help to them and Tess keeps on refusing it. Finally, the Durbeyfield family shifts to Kingsbere and there too they don't find any accommodation. Even here, Alec offers to help them, which is thwarted by Tess. Seeing Tess and her family in trouble, Izz and Marian writes to Angel about Tess's difficulties.

The seventh phase "Fulfilment" presents Angels' return from Brazil and he gets the two letters of Tess and the one written by Marian and Izz. He broods over the matter and finally decides to accept Tess as his wife and goes out in search of her. Finally, when he meets her, it is too late because by then Tess has given in to Alec's persistent offer to help her brothers and sisters. Alec persuades her to believe that Angel would never come back to her. Tess goes back to her room and fights with Alec. Her landlady finds Tess go out after sometime and then discovers that Alec has been stabbed. On the other hand, Tess runs and meets Angel on the way. This time Angel accepts her in spite of hearing what she has done. He embraces Tess and tells her that he loves her. Tess is happy and satisfied. They begin to roam around the countryside and feel blissfully happy. They spend five days at Bramshurst Court. However, angel insists that they should move ahead or else they will be caught. Finally, they arrive at Stonehenge

and spend a night there where Tess asks Angel to marry her sister Liza-Lu in case something happens to her. However, Angel is not ready to do that. The next morning they find themselves surrounded by policemen. Tess is arrested. On a July morning, Angel and Liza-Lu go to the city of Wintoncester because this is the day of Tess's execution. At eight o clock, Tess is executed. Both Angel and Liza-Lu bent down as if in prayer and remain there for a long time. Then they get up, join hands, and walk out.

Therefore, you find that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the natural world is portrayed both as a representative habitat and a literary metaphor. Let me tell you each phase has an excerpt about nature; the setting of each phase is always full of nature which symbolises the fact that nature is directly related to the emotions of Tess. In each location, from Talbothays to Flintscomb-Ash Tess's life is greatly influenced by the natural world. The external world and her inner consciousness reflect one another. Hardy believed that the constant shift of human feelings between pain and pleasure is also reflected in seasonal nature of life. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, let me tell you that Tess's life begins and ends in the spring, she falls in love during the summer months, and she marries in the dead of winter. Thus, all the phases of the novel cover the seasonal cycles of a year by including all of nature and its corresponding changes.



LET US KNOW

During Queen Victoria's reign from1837 to 1901, England became the most powerful and rich country in the world through its colonial expansion and the industrial revolution. The population in England doubled during Victoria's reign, and there could be seen a change in the country's economy because of the eruptions of industries. Along with the constant flow of people from the rural areas to the urban centres, there also emerged a transition from the conventional Victorian values to a less rigid modern worldview. Hardy stands at this transitional period and reflects on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and modern innovation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What are the incidents that led Tess to leave her house to work at the d'Urbervilles?

Q 10: Narrate in your own words Tess's experiences at the Talbothays farm.

Q 11: In what ways, is phase five "The Woman Pays" of the novel, significant?

14.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF HARDY

Thomas Hardy was a prolific writer with immense contribution to have enriched the literary world of late Victorian England. He started his literary career as a novelist though his early experiments in this genre were failures. George Meredith, his astute critic had severely criticised his early novels like, *Desperate Remedies* and *The Poor Man and Lady.* However, it was Meredith himself who had guided him to come up with better creation in the novelistic genre. He has been regarded as the last great Victorian, though his poetry and short stories cover a few years of the twentieth century. Hardy crafted artistically a link between the 19th and 20th century. Being born at time of transition, Hardy had witnessed the effects of the traditional values on the one hand and the emerging trends of a Capitalist society on the other. This conflict was evident in his writings. This remains one of the most significant traits of his career as a novelist.

When the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was published in three volumes in 1891, its improper 'exploitness' was criticised by many readers. "The Quarterly Review" called it a clumsy, sordid tale of boorish brutality and lust. "The Saturday Review" called it an 'unpleasant story' written in an 'unpleasant way.' A reviewer in "The Nation" dismissed Tess as 'a sensuous woman' as against Hardy himself calling her 'a pure woman.' However, favourable critical comments soon began to appear and the novel came to be taken as a classic of English fiction. Whatever unfavourable criticism was there, it was mostly about Hardy's pessimism and style rather than his views on Church and sexual morals. Clementina Black in 1892 wrote that in

many respects Tess was Hardy's finest work and its superiority was largely due to a profound moral earnestness. Another critic Margaret Oliphant wrote in the same year that Tess is the history, as Hardy tells, par excellence, of a pure woman. However, you will find it interesting to see the diverse ways in which Hardy's novel has been received in the modern era. Irving Howe in 1967 praises Tess's character in very glowing way. He opines that Tess is one of the greater examples that we have in English Literature of how a writer can take hold of a cultural stereotype and, through the sheer intensity of his affection, pare and purify it into something that is morally ennobling. Lionel Johnson observes a general trait in Hardy's novels that "they present either the resolution of a discord into a harmony or the breaking of a harmony by a discord" and mentions Tess as an example. D. H. Lawrence focuses on the tragedy of Tess as a result of a division between the bounds of the community and her natural, individual desire.

The novel has caught the attention of the feminist critics too. Rosemarie Morgan in her book *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* talks about the treatment of the protagonist Tess in the novel from a feminist perspective. She praises Hardy for retaining for Tess, with her emotional generosity, sexual vitality and moral strength, the capacity to rise above her fall and, ultimately to redeem the man who, bearing the values and sexual prejudices and double-standards of the society, fails to rise above them in the hour of need. Tess is not bereft of will, self-determination and courage at the last hours of her life. Thus, Morgan is highly appreciative about Hardy's treatment of Tess. However, another feminist critic Ellen Rooney argues that Tess was disempowered by Hardy's self-bowdlerising. Rooney argues that the very terms 'rape' and 'seduction', as the binaries for phallocentric discourse, collapse into one another, each supposing the female subject as victim barred from desire. She opines, "Hardy is unable to represent the meaning of the encounter in the Chase from Tess's point of view because to present Tess as a speaking subject is to risk the possibility that she may appear as the subject of desire. Yet a figure with no potential as a desiring subject can only formally be said to refuse desire, to testify to the absence of desire; the possibility of action lie

elsewhere. Hardy is blocked in both directions. To preserve Tess's purity, he must insist on her passivity, situating her firmly in the problematic of consent: a 'subject' who does not speak her silence guarantees our sympathy." (Gribble,13) Thus, you can see that the novel has gained different perspectives as the time has passed by; but nobody can deny its important position in the history of English Literature as a masterpiece of Hardy.



14.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have learnt that Thomas Hardy is one of the most significant writers of The Victorian Era which had been the time of great changes. During Queen Victoria's reign from1837 to 1901, England became the most powerful and rich country in the world through its colonial expansion and the industrial revolution. The population in England doubled during Victoria's reign, and there could be seen a change in the country's economy because of the eruptions of industries. Hardy, in many of his works reflect on how with the constant flow of people from the rural areas to the urban centres, there also emerged a transition from the conventional Victorian values to a less rigid modern world view. Hardy stands at this transitional period and reflects on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and modern innovation as one can find in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*



14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Hardy depicts the condition of the lower class people through their sense of despair… …the conflict of the rural surroundings with the newly emergent urban life style… …direct expression of the inner life of the poor rural folk against the hypocrisies of the upper class people etc.

Ans to Q 2: *Wessex* first appears as "a merely realistic dream country" in

his novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*… …gradually in his other novels it appears in terms of different regions like South Wessex, Upper- and Mid-Wessex and Nether and Outer Wessex and so on… …it provided him with a literary space to present many significant issues.

Ans to Q 3: Hardy is often termed a fatalist… …his philosophy on life seems to be guided by Naturalism that portrayed man as ordinary components against the indomitable forces of Nature…. …he also felt that there is an inherent cruelty in the pattern of the Universe and that human beings are bound by destiny.

Ans to Q 4: Portrayal of characters is the most striking feature of Hardy's novels… …fixed characters, mostly belonging to Wessex countryside… …rural folks like peasants, shepherds, labourers, singers etc.

Ans to Q 5: Fatalism and Pessimistic philosophy… …conflict between rural and urban life… …role of chance and coincidences… …Naturalism… …destruction of peasantry and impact of industrialisation… …blend of tradition and modern… …portrayal of Wessex life.

Ans to Q 6: The professional life, the scholar's life, and the rustic life… …in the first he went through an intense programme of study to equip himself for a career in writing.

Ans to Q 7: Three phases… …the first phase started with his great novels that won him recognition as a novelist concerned mostly with themes like inscrutable fate, man in conflict with the world etc… …the second phase is the phase when his epic poem *The Dynasts* (1903-1908) was published… …the third phase begins with the publication of his poetry collection *Time's Laughing Stocks* in 1909.

Ans to Q 8: Novels of Character or Environment… …Romances and Fantasies… … Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment.

Ans to Q 9: John Durbeyfield's tracing the roots of their family to aristocratic origin… …Death of Prince… …The haggling business of the family got disrupted and so Tess, though reluctant, had to go to the d'Urbervilles family to seek job and also to claim kinship.

Ans to Q 10: Tess was cordially welcomed by Richard Crick, the master of the Talbothays farm… …Tess met a lot of other milkmaids who became her friends… …Tess met Angel Clare, an apprentice at the Dairy farm… … affinity develops between Tess and Angel… …growing fondness leads to Angel's declaration of love for Tess.

Ans to Q 11: This phase shows how patriarchy works… …Angel who had an early affair with a girl cannot accept Tess after learning about her past…. …finally Angel decided upon a separation.



14.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Provide a detailed idea of Thomas Hardy's development as a Victorian novelist with particular reference to his fiction.

Q 2: What significance does the term 'Wessex' hold for Thomas Hardy? Write a note on hardy's Wessex novels.

Q 3: Discuss the critical reception of Thomas Hardy as a Victorian novelist with reference to his *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*

Q 4: Hardy is equally significant as a writer of tragedy? Do you think that Tess has a 'tragic flaw', or is she better understood as a victim of external circumstances? Elaborate.

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UNIT 15: THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Reading the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

15.4 Major Themes

15.5 Hardy's Art of Characterization

15.6 Hardy's Narrative Style

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

15.10 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the important themes that add to the significance of the novel
- discuss the narrative techniques and Hardy's art of characterization
- relate the text with the issues of class conflict prevalent in Victorian society
- examine the position of women in the society of 19th century.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of this Block, and it is based on a detailed reading of Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented.* This novel has been the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. It was published in 1891, but Hardy had been working on it since 1887. The manuscript had gone through many different versions, and the controversy revolved around it made it difficult for

Hardy to find a publisher. Hardy's willingness to describe the rape, and his defiant insistence that Tess herself remains pure in spite of it, made the novel controversial. Like in his other novels, in this novel too Hardy has shown his deep sympathy towards the lower classes of England, especially the women. He had also shown his compassion for the victimised women who became the prey of the self-righteous rigid morality of English society of his times. This novel initially appeared in a censored and serialised version, published by the British illustrated newspaper The Graphic in 1891, and in book form in 1892. Though now considered one of the major 19th century English novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* received mixed reviews when it first appeared, in part because it challenged the sexual morals of the late Victorian period. In the following subsections, you will get an opportunity to read about the various important aspects of the novel.

15.3 READING THE NOVEL *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

15.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are some of the most important themes of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*:

Wessex as the Locale:

The action of the novel is set at Wessex and it is a perfect specimen of Wessex novel modelled on greater Dorset, one of the maritime counties of southern England bordering the English Channel. Tess's village home is situated at Marlott close to the Vale of Blackmoor (sometimes Blackmore Vale), a pastoral valley that baffles one with tiny lanes and field pathways. The book provides enough details that record the local geography. In addition to this, the countryside and the rural folks who live in that area provide more than a mere backdrop upon which Hardy based his tale. Hardy makes full use of the diversity of his settings stressing Dorset's distinctive geological formations. The different locales have been presented as Tess moves from one locale to another

and experiences with wonder the difference in the landscapes, bounty of nature and so on. In the novel, Hardy portrays Wessex as a geographical locale that includes a variety of landscapes, from fertile valley to arid limestone beds, bordered by heaths, sands and the sea. The whole countryside acquires a life of its own and is almost like a character. The whole setting reflects the happenings in Tess's life. Marlott is a secure place for her where she feels the security of her mother's care. Talbothays is portrayed as a beautiful place, in a rich agricultural region where she meets Angel. The place is presented as fertile and expansive and is apt for any romance to develop. Likewise Flintscomb-Ash where she waits for her husband's return is presented as a desolate place, with mud, rocks, poor conditions everywhere which make it appear almost a wasteland.

Industrialisation and the Breakdown of Peasantry:

One of the major themes that Hardy addresses here is *industrialisation and the breakdown of peasantry*. Tess suffers a great deal from the unavoidable consequences of the rapid process of urbanization and modernisation in the Victorian society. The transformation from the rural to urban lifestyle brought in enormous social changes. Tess is a peasant girl and her struggles and misfortunes represent the sufferings of the peasantry. Again, Angel's act of leaving Tess behind represents the society's rigid and orthodox code of morality with a double standard– one for man and another for woman. Hardy has depicted the rural people's occupations, their problems, their trials and tribulations at the onset of the changing condition. Tess represents this class and through her life Hardy has portrayed the destruction of the peasant class. At the onslaught of industrialisation the old societal structure got changed. Workers were forced off their land and turned into proletarians, either industrial or agricultural. In the novel Hardy captures, the scenario just prior to Industrial Revolution, which transformed the English countryside, and in the novel he very poignantly depicts the inevitable consequences of rapidly changing society in the countryside of Wessex. Wessex represents the real social and economic disruption of

the society of Hardy's times. However, in the novel fate is the thematic basis for the failure of life Hardy projects alienation, isolation, estrangement of characters in the newly emerged impersonalised social bonds as the core motif for the tragedy that occurs.

Position of Women and Men's Domination:

Another recurrent theme is the position of women and men's domination. Women are shown as subjected to the dictates of men. At times even women are presented as passive and are responsible for their own subservience. Alec's seduction of Tess presents in a symbolic way the dominance of men over women. Again, Angel's seeking forgiveness from Tess for his past conduct is a taken for granted kind of a situation. However, he deserts Tess for the same mistake. Thus, society prescribes two different norms for man and woman. Tess accepts her fate passively. She suffers from the wrong doings of others. However, she does not protest or resents it. The conservative society of the Victorian period was patriarchal and so there was no voice of women. Women have to protect the honour and values of the society. However, if some wrong occurs without their being consciously involved, they have to face the opprobrium of the society as in the case of Tess.



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Portrayal of the Priests:

Hardy in this novel has expressed in a subtle manner his disapproval of the orthodox Christian church. The portrayal of the priests that he presents in the novel is somewhat satirical and he digs at the religious functioning of the churches of that era. Parson Tringham, Felix, the Curate, the writer of the Biblical Text whom Tess meets, the Vicar at Mellstock, Angel's religious scepticism and Alec's conversion, all these hint at Hardy's attitude towards the Christian church. Moreover, Hardy mentions that even the rural folk throng at the church not for any religious purpose but because they regard it as a social duty and habit.

The Injustice of Existence and the Role of Chance:

This can be seen as one of the most prominent themes. Throughout the novel, we see injustice of existence. The death of the horse Prince, seduction of Tess and the slip of the letter under the carpet are all chances that were destined to happen and which had made the tragedy of Tess happen. Again the forces that govern human life are shown as absolutely unpredictable and not necessarily well disposed to us. Tess' life journey remind us of a world where the Gods are not just and fair and this made Hardy conclude the novel as *"Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in the Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess"*. You will find many such instances where chance and coincidences play a significant role in bringing about the tragedy of Tess.

Agrarian Order vs Industrial Order:

Tess's fate mirrors the destruction of the agricultural class in England. The novel is a potent document of the 19th century society where the capitalist form of life took over the old peasant's independence resulting in a huge transformation of the society. The difference between the upper class and lower class and the resulting exploitation of the latter in the hands of the former became a glaring aspect of the society. Tess's predicament is one example of such kind of tragedy. The proletariat kind of life at the farm at Flintscomb-Ash made Tess suffer a great deal. There she worked for meagre wages in the most degrading condition. The scene at the threshing is particularly significant as it symbolises the dehumanising relationship at the new capitalist farms. This situation was in stark contrast with the working atmosphere at the Talbothays where there was a feeling of cordiality and fellow feeling among the workers and also with the master dairyman. In a way, Tess represents the old agrarian order in conflict with the new industrial order which is represented by Alec. Alec can be seen as the representative of the newly emerged middle class rulers of Britain who have much money and power that comes from industry. As a symbol of new order, Alec is portrayed as having no communion with nature, irresponsible, unfocused and insensitive to everyone around. Tess as the representative of the old

agrarian order is seen as warm, charitable and always in harmony with nature. The seduction of Tess by Alec is seen as the forceful perpetration of the newly emerged industrial system over of the agrarian life order.

Pessimism:

Pessimism is a pervading note in Hardy's fiction. No other novelist of his times or before him was so acutely aware of the tragic fate of life. This makes his major fiction filled with a note of pessimism –a fact that entitles him to be placed along with Shakespeare and the Greek tragic dramatists. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was a great success, marred only by controversy raised over its frank treatment of sex and its pessimistic view of life. The conservative Victorian society was reluctant to accept it with all the details of Tess's sexual encounter with Alec. Moreover, the all-pervading pessimism in the novel has also raised some controversy. However, Hardy's pessimistic portrayal of life was a known fact by that time. Hardy's subtitle "A Pure Woman" caused enough controversy in his day, but it does succinctly convey the social commentary that is implicit in the novel: that Tess is a victim of circumstances and remains pure in heart and spirit if not in body.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you get a picture of Wessex in the novel?

Q 2: How does Hardy portray the position of women in the society?

Q 3: What is the role of chances and coincidences in the tragedy of Tess?

Q 4: Mention briefly how Hardy has portrayed the social issues in the novel.

15.5 HARDY'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Hardy's creative power is best exemplified in his character portrayal. The most striking feature of Hardy's character portrayal is that his characters are fixed characters. His characters mostly belonged to

the Wessex countryside. He convincingly portrays the characters of peasants, labourers, shepherds and singers with authentic details. But, he is not equally successful in portraying people from the aristocratic society. His characters in general are emotional rather than intellectual. The male characters as vivid, passionate, emotional and impulsive and very often they suffer from indecision. While in his portrayal of women, there can be seen a blend of cynicism and tenderness. Coventry Patmore talks about Hardy's portrayal of women characters: "It is in his heroines, however, that Hardy is most original and delightful... ...each has the charm of the simplest and most familiar womanhood, and the only character they have in common is that of having each some serious defect, which only makes us like them more." (Cox, 1970:105) Thus, the women characters in Hardy's novels share some kind of commonality.



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Henry Charles Duffin opines that Hardy's understanding of women characters is deep and absolute. He divides Hardy's women characters into three groups– the first group includes full length portraits of women who are in the higher order of personality, like Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane; the second group consists of full length study of women, but they have less personal significance, like, Ethelberta, Elfride, Grace, Mulberry, Viviette, and Anne; and the third group consists of women of much less significance, like, Lucetta, Arabella, Tamsie, Marty South, Paula and Fancy Picotel. Hardy's grasp of the human personality is not only extensive but also deep and this is very nicely reflected in his character portrayals.

The following are the three immortal characters in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles:*

Tess Durbeyfield:

Tess, the protagonist of the novel, is the daughter of Joan and John Durbeyfield and is the eldest of the seven children. She is a

beautiful young woman living with her family. Her beauty is such that it attracts the attention of the opposite sex. Not only Alec but even Angel is attracted to her by her physical charms, her 'real vitality' and her 'real' warmth. Angel Clare finds something unearthly about her when on one occasion he finds a visionary essence of woman– a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He calls her Artemis, Demeter and so on. Tess has studied till Sixth standard and is considerably ahead of her mother as far as her beliefs and outlooks go. As you must have realised by now that hardships and injustices were heaped upon her, but she never wallows in self pity or gave up hope. She is a very selfless, honest and kind woman and has been presented as a 'pure woman' as the subtitle of the novel indicates. Her purity is part of the spirit and conscience. She has been praised by critics who admire her steadfast hope under adversity. The misfortunes that she faces come in a train. The death of the horse Prince, her seduction, the death of her baby "Sorrow", Angel's deserting her, her marriage with Alec, Angel's return and finally her own act of murdering Alec are a series of misfortunes which she suffers in her own quiet, stoical way. She fights against all the obstacles and fate to the end. In a way, she is stoical about her suffering. Tess endures her misfortunes with a rare fortitude and this makes her character tragic. The entire crisis leaves her crushed, but she moves on. After Alec's seduction, she is haunted by a sense of guilt. She refuses Angel's proposal only for this guilty conscience. She is a deeply moral person who cannot bring herself to hide the truth when Angel accepts her as a spotless woman. After her marriage, she confesses the truth, which is a sign of her sense of guilt. Angel's reaction comes as a big shock for her. Her attempt to meet Angel's parents proves to be futile. Throughout the novel, one observes her sacrificial nature and her concern about her family. When she marries Alec, it is only for the sake of her own siblings and not for herself. She cannot resist the pressure, as her siblings are homeless and her husband Angel does not reply to her letters. Therefore, she has to succumb to Alec's pressure to marry him and in a vague manner, she starts believing him to be her husband. Finally, she redeems

herself from this by killing Alec for deceiving her by telling that Angel will never come back again.



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Tess is central to the novel and Hardy describes her with all the details needed to present her as physically attractive, emotionally balanced and morally strong. She is almost a human angel 'with a touch of the imperfect'. She has been created as both as an individual and a symbol. At the end of the novel when she lies on the sacrificial stone at Stonehenge she appears more a symbol than an individual. She dominates the novel to the extent that it is given her name as the title.

Alec D'Urbervilles:

Alec is regarded as the villain of the novel who has brought the tragedy in Tess's life. He is the handsome and amoral son of a wealthy merchant named Simon Stokes. He casts an evil eye on Tess the day she comes to work for his mother. He is manipulative and we know about his intentions towards Tess when he drives the carriage very fast to frighten Tess out of her wits and then forces her to kiss him. He is always in the look for an opportunity to get close to Tess. His villainy is revealed when taking opportunity of the situation he forces himself upon Tess and robs her of her virginity. He, however, has no knowledge about the damage that has been done to Tess. Then we hear about his misbehaviour to Mr. Clare, the Parson. Later we find him a transformed man who is converted and has become a priest. However, Tess is sceptical about his transformation which is confirmed when he asks Tess to swear that she will not tempt him by her beauty and charm. However, his conversion proves to be a temporary affair as his newly acquired religious faith begins to crumble. He begins to pester Tess to marry him. He makes her believe that her husband Angel will never come back to her. He further helps her family to move on after the death of Tess's father. On another level, Alec provides Tess employment when asked for

and treats her well to induce her to stay on at Trantridge for three months. His obsession for Tess makes him to go to any extent and he was happy to get her at the end though for a short span of time. He has to pay for his obsession with his life. It is worth noting that Alec is always associated with darkness by which, perhaps, hardy intends to make him a symbol of evil. "I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there is nobody to be responsible to" betray his absolute lack of scruple in contrast with Tess's fortitude and acceptance of her 'fate'. Alec is also presented as an outsider to the community of poor farmers to which Tess belongs. He is the son of a moneylender and believes that money can buy anything. In a way, he is the playboy of the world of Wessex and Tess's own attitude to him is more ambivalent than utterly critical and dismissive.

Angel Clare:

Hardy presents Angel Clare as a far more complex character than Alec. He is the son of a Parson, who wanted him to be a clergyman. Angel's father and two brothers are respected clergymen, but his religious doubts keep him away from joining the religious order. He is an intelligent man who decides to become a farmer to preserve his intellectual freedom from the pressures of city life. Unlike his father and brothers, Angel is free from religious dogmas and orthodoxy. He is a secularist who represents a rebel striving toward a personal vision of goodness. His disdain for tradition and the conservative ideologies of the times is evident in his love and marriage with Tess who is a milkmaid and his social inferior. He exhibits a poet's soul in his love for Tess. When he talks to his parents about Tess, he describes her in very practical and rational terms. He mentions about her being religious and her regular going to church, as he knows that these are the things that his parents would want to know. Angel's religious views are exactly those that Hardy is said to have held. However, his double standard nature becomes evident when he rejects Tess after her confession. While he himself had a sexual encounter with a woman before he met Tess. He expects Tess to understand him and forgive him for his forty-eight hours dissipation

with a woman in London where he was in his senses. However, Tess's forced seduction by Alec made him desert her and leave her. He keeps himself away from Tess for quite some time. However, his deep love for Tess is well understood. His sleep walking scene is enough proof of this love. He makes financial provision for Tess so that she does not have to face any financial crunch. Angel finally awakens to his real senses of real world morality when he failed in Brazil, which makes him realize that he has been unfair to Tess and he comes back to her. Their last stay together is very short and at the end, the final separation takes place. Critics opine that though there are several reasons for the tragedy of Tess, it is Angel's deserting her that brings the final blow to her life and the final tragedy. Thus, Hardy delineates Angel's character as a complex blend of good and bad, as one who is crucial enough to reject his newly married wife at the wedding night after hearing her confession and yet feels the pangs of separation and atones for his error by accepting her, albeit for a while only because Tess has become a fugitive after murdering Alec.

15.6 HARDY'S NARRATIVE STYLE

The narrative technique of a novel is a crucial aspect to guide the readers grasp the events as through it the author conveys the time, place and people in the society. In the novel Hardy uses a variety of narrative technique to portray the society in which he or Tess lived. Hardy uses a third person omniscient narrator to present the tragedy of Tess. In the course of the novel Hardy has offered his personal comments on the events of the novel and on the characters. This is done with a view to giving a direction to the events of the story. Again, Hardy has provided a more direct means of communication between the readers and the characters with dialogue, letter writing and songs and poetry. Through the conversation between the characters and even through the letter writing the readers are in a position to judge the characters and the events directly without the intervention of the author. Hardy has presented religious and mythological allusions too to convey the religious

and social environments of the Victorian society in which his characters lived. Through the characters from the religious sphere like Parson Tringham, the Vicar of Mellstock and the Vicar Clare Hardy presents the functioning of the religious institutions and the people involved with it.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss briefly the narrative technique that Hardy has used in the novel.



15.7 LET US SUM UP

From a reading of this unit, you have learnt how *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* on the basis of its various aspects, introduces you to the English society and culture of the Victorian era. Though technically it is a 19th century novel, this work anticipates the 20th century in regard to the nature and treatment of the subject matter. By now, you must have realised that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the plot is developed in seven parts and each part coincides with a new development in Tess' life. The plot of the novel moves on a succession of accidents and coincidences. Tess's tragic fate depends on some disastrous mischance over and over again. In Hardy's works, chance and coincidences always play a greater role in influencing the course of action. The novel also displays several significant contemporary issues of the times including the religious orthodoxy and the change in outlook of the people of the times. With the development of science and technology, men's religious faith had undergone a significant change as they began to question the conservative religious beliefs. This attitude is reflected in the character of Angel Clare who resists the conservative religious beliefs of his father and embraces a more secular outlook towards life. The novel also reflects Hardy's preoccupation with the idea of class struggle, the destruction of the peasantry, and also the emergence of the urban middle class. The novel very clearly portrays Hardy's attack on the Victorian

attitude towards premarital sex and woman's predicament in such situations. Hardy proves that Tess was a pure woman as she was a victim of Alec's clever design to take advantage of her innocence and her mother's selfish desire to get her married off to the rich family. Further, Hardy's pessimistic philosophy, which permeates the novel, has been mentioned along with his insistence on the role of destiny and chance.



15.8 FURTHER READING

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WEB RESOURCES:

http://escholarship.usyd.edu.au/journals/index.php/SSE/article/viewFile/539/510.

15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The local geography of Wessex region… …the seasonal settings are carefully chosen… …the agricultural problems… …intrusion of machinery in the Victorian era at the advent of Industrialisation… …the rural folk mostly belonged to Wessex, their life style, their hardships, sufferings… …women's position in the society of that region has been presented through Tess and other characters.

Ans to Q 2: Women are shown as subjected to the dictates of men… …Tess, the protagonist, represents the rural women always at the receiving end in a male-dominated world… …double standard regarding the moral ethics of men and women… …victorian notion of honour, chastity, morality are presented through the women characters who are under the patriarchal dominance.

Ans to Q 3: The plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* turns on a succession of accidents and coincidences… …it begins with the death of the horse… …seduction of Tess and Tess's written confession to Angel going under the carpet… …Tess's chance encounter with Alec… …the death of Tess's father and its consequences… …the overall impact of those coincidences in the total effect of the novel.

Ans to Q 4: Changing notions of social classes in Victorian England… …clash between tradition and modernity, rural and urban life… …the hardships and drudgery of the rural folks… …impact of industrialisation… …Women's position in society… …attitude towards God and Religion… …rural orthodoxy and religious values are questioned.

Ans to Q 5: Hardy uses a variety of narrative techniques to portray the society in which he or Tess lived… …use of third person omniscient narrator to present the tragedy of Tess. … …use of personal comments on the events of the novel and also on the characters… …use of direct means of communication between the readers and the characters through dialogue, letter writing and songs and poetry.



15.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Alec wrongs Tess through his lack of principles. Angel wrongs her with his excess of principles. Which do you see as the more unforgivable betrayal?

Q 2: What is the role of fate in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*? To what extent does Tess's tragedy hinge on improbable coincidence?

Q 3: The sub-title of Hardy's novel describes Tess as "a pure woman." Discuss the aptness of the subtitle with reference to Tess.

Q 4: Give your own idea of Hardy's philosophy of life as reflected in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*

Q 5: Why does Hardy divide his novel into "Phases"? What apparent transformation separates each phase from the other? Discuss in the context of Tess's changing fortunes?

Q 6: Write a note on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a Wessex novel presenting the significance of Wessex as the locale of the novel

Q 7: In what ways, according to you, does Tess' life embody the indomitable will to enjoy and the circumstantial forces against enjoyment?

Q 8: Chose one particular scene from the novel and explain how the author has presented it effectively?

Q 9: Discuss the role of Nature in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* Critically examine the influence of natural environment upon Tess in various phases of the novel.

*** ***** ***



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