PG EG S3 01 (DSC)

TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER - III

20th CENTURY NOVELS

ENGLISH

Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Subject Experts

1. Professor Bibhash Choudhury, Department of English, Gauhati University
2. Professor Lalan Kishore Singh, Department of English, Gauhati University
3. Dr. Merry Baruah, Department of English, Cotton University

Course Coordinator : Dr. Prasenjit Das, Professor, Discipline of English, KKHSOU

SLM Preparation Team

UNITS	CONTRIBUTORS
1, 6, 8, 11	**Dr. Prasenjit Das**
2-3	**Rimi Nath,** Nabinchandra College, Badarpur, Karimganj &
	Dr. Prasenjit Das
4	**Dr. Dolikajyoti Sarma,** Dept. of English, Gauhati University &
	Dr. Prasenjit Das
5	**Dr. Dolikajyoti Sarma**
9	**Maitraeye Das,** Former Senior Lecturer, Bongaigaon College &
	Dr. Prasenjit Das
10	**Maitraeye Das**
12-13	**Dr. Pallavi Gogoi,** Assistant Professor, Discipline of English, KKHSOU
14-15	**Dr. Indrajit Kalita,** Department of English, Chaiduar College, Gohpur

Editorial Team

CONTENT (Unit 1, 6) : In house Editing
(Unit 2-5, 7-10, 12-13) : **Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Nath**, Department of English, Gauhati University
(Unit 11, 14, 15) : **Dr. Manab Medhi**, Department of English, Bodoland University
Structure, Format and Graphics : **Dr. Prasenjit Das**

August, 2024

This Self Learning Material (SLM) of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike4.0 License (International) : http.//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0

Printed and published by Registrar on behalf of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

Head Office : Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017; Web : www.kkhsou.in/web_new

City Office: Resham Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022

DSC 7: 20TH CENTURY NOVELS

CONTENTS

		Pages
Unit 1:	**Trends in Modern Fiction** Important Trends in 20th century fiction, Important Authors.	**11-28**
Unit 2:	**Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness* (Part 1)** Joseph Conrad: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *Heart of Darkness*, Critical Reception of Conrad.	**29-45**
Unit 3:	**Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness* (Part II)** Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Conrad's Art of Characterisation, Conrad's Narrative Style.	**46-66**
Unit 4:	**D. H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers* (Part I)** Lawrence: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *Sons and Lovers*, Critical Reception of Lawrence.	**67-83**
Unit 5:	**D. H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers* (Part II)** Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Lawrence's Art of Characterisation, Lawrence's Narrative Style.	**84-109**
Unit 6:	**Introducing "Stream of Consciousness Novels"** History of SCN, Its flourish in the 20th century, Important Practitioners.	**110-130**
Unit 7:	**James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Part I)** James Joyce: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *A Portrait of the Artist*, Critical Reception of Joyce.	**131-150**
Unit 8:	**James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Part II)** Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Joyce's Art of Characterisation, Joyce's Narrative Style.	**151-168**
Unit 9:	**Virginia Woolf: *To The Light House* (Part I)** Virginia Woolf: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *To the Lighthouse*, Critical Reception of Woolf.	**169-185**

Unit 10: **Virginia Woolf: *To The Light House* (Part II)** **186-203**
Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Woolf's Art of Characterisation, Woolf's Narrative Style.

Unit 11: **Introducing Metafiction** **204-220**
History of Metafiction, Important Practitioners, Important Metafictional Works.

Unit 12: **John Fowles: *The French Lieutenants' Woman* (Part I)** **221-240**
John Fowles: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *The French Lieutenants' Woman*, Critical Reception of Fowles.

Unit 13: **John Fowles: *The French Lieutenants' Woman* (Part II)** **241-259**
Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Fowles' Art of Characterization, Fowles' Narrative Style.

Unit 14: **Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (Part I)** **260-276**
Salman Rushdie: Life and Works, Story of the Novel *Midnight's Children*, Critical Reception of Rushdie.

Unit 15: **Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (Part II)** **277-296**
Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Rushdie's Art of Characterisation, Rushdie's Narrative Style.

References **297-300**

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the first **Discipline Specific Course** (DSC 7) of Semester III of the MA English Programme. In this Course, the learners shall be taken through the study of six novels roughly covering the 20th century. The learners are supposed to study these representative texts in order that they comprehend the issues addressed and learn the proper modes of analysing a work of fiction from the perspectives of various critical approaches. Thus, this course is intended not just to introduce learners to the various theoretical premises of fictional narratives but also to the contextual relations of the texts to the age out of which they actually emerged.

The novel appeared as a popular literary form in the 18th century England. However, the six novels prescribed for your study in this course will take into account the preoccupations that permeate the complex of ideas of the 20th century. As major works of fiction, these novels will be the sites of explorations of characters as well as theoretical analysis of fiction. The learners will be required to gain some grasp of both narrative theory as well as cultural-historical issues at work within these texts.

The early 20th century saw a greater self-consciousness in the field of fiction writing further marked by doubt and dissension evident in works such as Virginia Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction", Percy Lubbock's, *The Craft of the Novel,* D. H. Lawrence's "The Novel" and "Morality and the Novel", Elizabeth Drew's *The Modern Novel*, E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, Edwin Muir's *The Structure of the Novel*, and so on. As discussed by Chris Baldick, the primary debate that took place during this period surrounding the form of the novel was its nature and methods, and the question whether the novel could be raised to the level of an art like sculpture by the conscious perfection of its techniques. In such an atmosphere, we find novelists like D. H. Lawrence embarking on an exploration of the nature of the novel. In Virginia Woolf and Lawrence in particular, we find a preoccupation with the novel as an 'art' form that concerns itself with life. While it is most vividly seen in the Stream-of-consciousness technique, the novelistic practice of Lawrence, as we shall see in units 4 and 5, also forms a part of this newer tendency. The "life", Woolf says, "escapes" in the works of the "Edwardian" novelists Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells and John Galsworthy (see "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" by Woolf) is a more abstract spiritual or psychological quality that goes beyond the more realist notion of its being a sum of describable persons, events and objects, according to Baldick. As a result, we can notice the significance given to experimentation in the modernist novel, whether overtly in the structure, characterisations and larger, or more subtly in the content or in the perspectives employed in it.

Therefore, while studying the prescribed novels, the learners are to address the fact that 20th century novels have an interesting intellectual background. They should note that in the course of the 19th century, the novel established itself as a genre of unparalleled variety, range and depth. By the turn of the century,

however, it seemed that this genre had no more territory left to develop, for it turned upon itself. Among some of its most important aspects, the self-analytical presentations markedly increased, the obsessions with its own structure and design grew intensely; and the concern over the texture and form led to various experimentations. While studying these novels, the learners must also make themselves aware of the fact that the Modernist phenomenon of what might be called 'narrative introversion' is quite explicit in most of these novels.

There are three Blocks in this Course i.e. Block 1, 2 and 3. Block 1shall deal with the various trends in novel writing in the 20th century besides introducing the learners to important modern novelists like Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrencewith special reference to Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Lawrences' Sons and Lovers. Likewise, Block 2 shall deal with Stream of consciousness novels with particular reference to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce and *To The Lighthouse*by Virginia Woolf. Block 3 shall deal withMetafiction with reference to two important novels i.e. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*by John Fowles and *Midnight's Children*by Salman Rushdie.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block 1 contains total five units. The details of the units are as follows:

Unit 1: Trends in Modern Fictionshall acquaint you with the various trends in novel writing in the 20th century. It is hoped that this background study shall help you to better understand the prescribed fictional texts if this course. 20th century novels, which are roughly studied as part of modern and post-modern fiction, can be traced through those fictional works which continue within the broad tradition of realism, and which display various experiments with the form of the novel. Therefore, while studying about any of the prescribed novelists from the 20th century, you must try to address their lives, literary milieu, influences, important works, and their critical reception for a better understanding of their works.

Unit 2: Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness* (Part I)shalldeal with the life and works of Joseph Conrad, who is acknowledged to be one of the greatest fiction writers of 20th century. Most of his fictional works are based on Conrad's own journey into the dark interior of central Africa. Thus, his novel *Heart of Darkness* is a forceful and out-spoken indictment of white imperialism and colonial exploitation. At the root of this novel, lie various assumptions of civilisation which is hollow at the core.

Unit 3: Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness* (Part II)which needs to be studied in connection with the previous unit, deals specifically with Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness.* The novel is presented in the form of a frame narrative (a story within a story). In Conrad's own words, this novel is "A wild story of a journalist

who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages." At the root of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* lies various assumptions of civilisation, which is hollow at the core.

Unit 4: D. H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers* (Part I) discusses D. H. Lawrence life and works with particular reference to his novel *Sons and Lovers*. Lawrence is famous for writing a kind of 'self-conscious' novels during the early 20th century which emerged as a critical concept that brought with it doubt and dissension. The primary debate that took place during this period surrounding the form of the novel was its nature, and the question whether the novel could be raised to the level of an art like sculpture by the conscious perfection of its techniques, or did its true vitality lie in its undisciplined fluidities and hybridities, its omnivorous capacity to chew and digest all manner of ideas and materials. The novels of D. H. Lawrence need to be studied against this background.

Unit 5: D. H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers* (Part II) , which is the last unit of Block 1 is to be studied along with the previous unit. It is based on D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*. From the unit, we shall gain sufficient ideas on the different aspects of the novel *Sons and Lovers,* which is an example of modernist fiction. While most of his works have elicited both negative and positive attention, *Sons and Lovers* stands out as being Lawrence's most widely read and most widely reviewed novel

Block 2 mostly deals with Stream of Consciousness novels andcontains total five units. The details of the unit are as follows:

Unit 6: Introducing "Stream of Consciousness Novels" is about 'Stream of Consciousness' fiction. It is a phrase used by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to delineate the characteristics of consciousness into fiction and to describe the techniques employed by some novelists to enshrine the vague and fleeting thoughts in their novels. This kind of fiction is marked by long passages of introspection, in which the narrator records in detail what passes through a character's awareness, exemplified by novelists from Samuel Richardson, through William James' brother Henry James, to many novelists of the modern era such as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and a few others.

Unit 7: James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Part I) deals with the Irish writer James Joyce who is one of the important representatives of the idea of the 'modern' in the novel. He is considered the most prominent English-speaking literary figure of the first half of the 20th century. Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is an extraordinary example of modernist fiction incorporating classicism, elements of 'Kunstlersroman', and a semiautobiographical account of a sensitive boy growing up in Dublin with aesthetic aspirations.

Unit 8: James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Part II) shall help you to discuss the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in terms of its various important aspects. It traces the

religious and intellectual awakening of young Stephen Dedalus, a fictional alter ego of Joyce and an allusion to Dedalus—the consummate craftsman of Greek mythology. In writing this novel, Joyce might have been influenced by Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh,* St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Goethe's *Werther and Wilhelm Meister*, and Cardinal Newman's *Aologia Pro Vita Sua.*

Unit 9: Virginia Woolf: *To The Light House* (Part I)shall help you to read about Virginia Woolf in some detail. However, for understanding Woolf's role in using the 'Stream of Consciousness' as a technique in fiction writing, we must first understand the fact that Woolf was an experimental novelist. Her experimental aesthetic, her founding of the Hogarth Press (along with her husband, Leonard Woolf), and her membership in the Bloomsbury Group, place her at the centre of British modernism in the first 40 years of the 20th century.

Unit 10: Virginia Woolf: *To The Light House* (Part II)takes you to the discussion of the novel *To The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf. The novel was written in the experimental narrative technique earlier used in the many-volumed novel *Pilgrimage* by Dorothy Richardson. Apart from the characters, setting and actions, which bear resemblance to her own family life, this novel is also built on her theory that a writer must attempt to expand the 'moments of vision' and fill them out in words.

Block 3 deals specifically with the idea of Metafiction and contains a total of five units. The details of the unit are as follows:

Unit 11: Introducing Metafiction shall introduce you to Metafiction and its different practitioners. The term Metafiction originated in an essay by the American critic and novelist William H. Gass. Usually, a writer exploring a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction or constructing fiction is referred to as 'Metafictional'. According to Patricia Waugh, the term is given to "fictional writing" which "pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality". Metafictional works were made popular by modernist writers such as Italo Calvino, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Clive Sinclair, Graham Swift, D. M. Thomas, John Fowles, John Irving and so on.

Unit 12: John Fowles: *The French Lieutenants' Woman* (Part I)introduces us to John Fowles and his highly acclaimed novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Renowned for his erudition, his experimentation with literary form, and his exceptional storytelling abilities, John Fowles was unique in his generation of English authors for achieving (and maintaining) both popular success and critical acclaim. Though his work peaked in critical reputation by the early 1990s, Fowles remains one of the most popular and important authors of Post war British fiction.

Unit 13: John Fowles: *The French Lieutenants' Woman* (Part II) introduces you to John Fowles' metafiction *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) which is considered a period novel. In its structure and contents *The French Lieutenant's Woman* very much resembles a Victorian novel, but Fowles with

his dexterity, breaks the traditional rules of narration and presents the work as an interesting post-modern narrative. Finally, the readers of this novel find that the onus rests on them to ponder upon the possible future events with the novel's open-endedness, owing to its three probable endings.

Unit 14: Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (Part I) shall introduce you to Salman Rushdie, which is a leading Indo-Anglian writer whose novel *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981. Salman Rushdie as a writer, is well known for his keen interest in history, the novel in mentioned could be approached from this perspective. Denial of official version of history reiterates Rushdie's postcolonial position, which he carries out to the extent of historiographic metafiction as presented in the novel Midnight's Children.

Unit 15: Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (Part II) discusses Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* in terms of its various aspects. Be it the choice of subject matter or the distinctive narrative style or both, what comes up in this novel is the sheer mastery Rushdie has materialised. Though the novel has heralded a new dawn in Indian English fiction, it is not simply bounded to the confines of the said category; rather it extends the horizon and turns out an exemplary rendition in respect of mapping the world fiction as well.

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 READING" 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 : TRENDS IN 20th CENTURY NOVELS

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 The Intellectual Contexts

- 1.3.1 Modernist Fiction
- 1.3.2 Post-Modernist Fiction

1.4 Important Trends in 20th century Novels

- 1.4.1 Realist Novels
- 1.4.2 Experimental Novels
- 1.4.3 French Noveau Roman
- 1.4.4 Magic Realist Novels
- 1.4.5 Feminist Novels

1.5 Let Us Sum Up

1.6 Further Reading

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

1.8 Possible Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the intellectual background of 20th century novels as a whole
- make a list of the different trends of 20th century novels and identify their characteristics
- explain why these trends became so popular in the 20th century
- mark the specific changes that occurred to fiction writing in the 20th century.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 1 of the DSC7 and it is on 20th Century Novels. In this unit, we shall try to gain some ideas on the emergence of the various trends in novel writing in the 20th century, as this background shall

help you to better understand the prescribed fictional texts in this course. 20th century novels, which are roughly studied as part of modern and post-modern fiction, can be traced through those fictional works which continue within the broad tradition of realism, and which display marked experiments with the form of the novel. Therefore, while studying about any of the prescribed novelists from the 20th century, you must try to address the author's life, literary milieu, influences, important works, and his/her reception for a better understanding of their works. Although most of the prescribed authors in this course are from the English soil, this introductory unit should keep you abreast of the developments of English language fiction in the 20th century as a whole.

1.3 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

An initial discussion of the 20th century novels can be done in connection with the rise of what came to be called "literary modernism"—a cultural phenomenon affecting the myriad extra-literary developments of early 20th century literature including fiction. Some of the common features of high modernist fiction between 1900 (Conrad's *Lord Jim* of 1900) and the late 1940s (Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* of 1947) included characteristics like—

- radical experiments with point of view
- representation of time and space
- shattering of the illusion of a unified
- preference of an omniscient narrator
- linguistic experiments
- textual self-referentiality
- literary allusiveness
- narrative fragmentation following the adoption of the Stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue, and
- the Freudian treatment of human sexuality

Therefore, in comparison to the late 19th century novels of Thomas Hardy and others, the works of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf

seemed quite different. Their radical experiments with language, form and point of view in fiction had chattered the conventional notions of fiction writing. However, a common question remains—whether experiments and innovations were made at the cost of a social awareness on the part of the authors. You should note that novelty and innovation per se were less important than making the new fiction faithful to the contemporary social, technological, psychological, epistemological, and aesthetic currents. Put in a different way, the modernist novelists were in fact creating fictional works that complied with their new understanding of the world around them. In other words, modernist fiction with all innovations should not be dismissed as a retreat from modern life. Instead, it needs to be seen as an attempt to face and depict the modern times unflinchingly.



LET US KNOW

You will note that post modernism actually follows modernism; it roughly starts in the 1930s. However, the term is now used to cover those texts that opt for a rejection of realism in favour of a more textual view of the world. The world becomes a text to be read, as they view the world as constructed and accessible through language. Post modernist fiction distrust 'grand narratives' and favours pastiche and parody.

1.3.1 Modernist Fiction

One of the most significant modernist poets T. S. Eliot in 1921, in a brilliant essay entitled "The Metaphysical Poets" famously argued that the present-day poets "must be difficult" because "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility [that of the literary artist of merit], must produce various and complex results." The same argument could perhaps be applied to the novelists. Three other seminal modern intellectuals—Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud also contributed a lot to the emergence of

'modern' ideas in fiction. All speculated that human beings created God out of their need for a protecting father, and to explain an otherwise inexplicable, threatening, chaotic world. For example,

- Marx in one of his articles namely "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction" proclaimed religion as the "sigh of the oppressed," the "opium of the people", as a means for the "haves" of society to keep the "have nots" mystified and downtrodden.
- Nietzsche in his book *The Gay Science* famously asserted, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."
- Freud in his book *Future of an Illusion* likened our devotion to the "fairy-tale of religion" to a "childhood neurosis," and, following Marx likened "the effects of religious consolations" to a "narcotic."

The views of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud were to play an important role in the creation of 'modern' fiction in the 20th century. While some saw the prospect of a godless universe liberating, others found the absence of transcendental meaning as frightening prospects. However, the important fact is that such shift in thinking had important implications for the ways in which novels were written. Subsequently, many novelists started to consider the traditional view of the world being subject to a single liberating interpretation, corresponding to God's intention, as obsolete. Supposed to be legitimate "truths" replaced the notion of a single "Truth"; "reality" was replaced by a series of competing "realities". In short, one's unique perspectives determined how one saw things now. You will see this notion informing many modernist novels–such as Conrad's *Nostromo*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Woolf's *The Waves*, and Lowry's *Under the Volcano* in which multiple narrators and shifting perspectives force the readers to reconstruct events by negotiating between the various possible ways in which those events can be understood.

Another very significant development that influenced the modernist novels in the 20th century was the flourish of the late Victorian idea of Psychology, which further eroded traditional faith

in objective norms of perception, knowledge, and certainty. You will note that in the year 1890, appeared William James's book *Principles of Psychology* that helped to understand reality not as something objectively given, but as something subjectively perceived through the "stream" of human consciousness. James' terrain was mostly the consciousness and perception, but Freud defined the unconscious, as the area of the mind that is inaccessible to conscious scrutiny, and the refuge of repressed wishes are too dangerous for us to acknowledge consciously. You should note that Freud's influence upon the modernist novels was indispensible as a critic like Kenneth Graham believes that the "shift in the basis of characterization in fiction after about 1900" largely depends on the "revolutionary impact of Freudian concepts of the unconscious."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are some of the characteristics of high modernist fiction?

Q 2: In what ways intellectuals like Marx, Nietzsche and Freud contribute to the idea of the modern in fiction?

Q 3: What was the impact of Psychology on modernist fiction?

1.3.2 Post modernist Fiction

Against the 'realism' in the fiction writing of the first half of the 20th century, there emerged postmodernist experiments in the second half. In the 1950s and early 1960s, novels most specifically in Britain and Ireland, tended to reject literary modernist innovations reacting against the modernist novel's conspicuous complexity. Novelists like Kinglsey Amis, Iris Murdoch, Angus Wilson, and many others countered in their novels with an anti-modernist, anti-avant-garde "neo-realism". Malcolm Bradbury in his book *The Modern British Novel* characterized the mood between 1945 and 1960 as the following:

"Modernism was over, even tainted; the deaths of Joyce, Woolf, Yeats and Freud had reinforced the feeling. In critical circles, it was already being historicized, defined, monumentalized, given its name and structure; it was no longer avant…but arriere."

Although it has been argued that since 1980, novelists like Anita Brookner, Margaret Drabble, John McGahern, Iris Murdoch, and Muriel Spark had been writing "postmodernist" novels, writers like Martin Amis, J. G. Ballard, John Banville, Julian Barnes, A. S. Byatt, Angela Carter, John Fowles, Ian McEwan, and Graham Swift are those writers more prominently attached to writing 'postmodern' novels. The English novelist B. S. Johnson in his article "Introduction to Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memories" published in Malcolm Bradbury edited *The Novel Today,* argued that the experimental novel died with Joyce, and also lamented that while Joyce was "the Einstein of the novel," very few novelists in Britain now followed his lead. For Johnson, "It is not a question of influence, of writing like Joyce. It is a matter of realizing that the novel is an evolving form, not a static one, of accepting that for practical purposes where Joyce left off should ever since have been regarded as the starting point." "Why then," Johnson demanded, "do so many novelists still write as though the revolution that was *Ulysses* had never happened…?" Johnson concluded his article by quoting the French Noveau Roman author Natalie Sarraute's description of literature "as a relay race, the baton of innovation passing from one generation to another," and then by accusing the "vast majority of British novelists" today with having "dropped the baton."

Johnson's reference to Sarraute in his article is important, as many avant-garde English novelists of the 1970s gained their inspiration from French writers and intellectuals. In this regard, along with Sarraute, mention may be made of Samuel Beckett (born in Ireland but living in Paris and writing in French and English), and Alain Robbe-Grillet (theorist of le nouveau roman)–rather than from their British counterparts. John Fowles, for example, the author of the English postmodernist novels—*The French Lieutenant's Woman*

(1969), admits to finding himself "much more at home in French than in English literature." Be this "French connection" or not, many novels such as Fowles' *French Lieutenant's Woman*, Golding's *Darkness Visible* (1979), Gray's *Lanark* (1981), Swift's *Waterland* (1983), Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), Martin Amis's *Money* (1984), A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), McCabe's *Butcher Boy* (1992), and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1994)–all are built upon many post-modernist novelistic innovations.



LET US KNOW

While "postmodernism" as a theoretical construct defies easy definition–Malcolm Bradbury has called the term a "moveable feast," and Hans Bertens has characterized it as "exasperating" for being "several things at once"–it is clear that postmodern novels, in practice, deliberately blur categories that were formerly thought to be antithetical. That is, they blur elite and demotic narrative forms, author and reader, fiction and fact, and they attack realistic conventions of representation, notions of generic purity, and the feasibility of a unified subject. In his book *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History,* Hans Bertens observes that postmodernism: "…has meant different things to different people at different conceptual levels, rising from humble literary-critical origins in the 1950s to a level of global conceptualization in the 1980s…If there is a common denominator to all these postmodernisms, it is that of a crisis in representation: a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real, in the widest sense. No matter whether they are aesthetic, epistemological, moral, or political in nature, the representations that we used to rely on can no longer be taken for granted."

This "crisis" of representation–that representations create more than they reflect reality–is discernible in the work of the most important French theorists of the 'postmodern' namely— Jean Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. Although these French theorists had little direct influence on the British novels of the period, they nevertheless contributed to a postmodernist intellectual and artistic climate reflected in developments in

postmodernist fiction.

Another significant point to reckon with is that 20th century fiction can never be seen as a kind of fiction having the domination of the writers from the English soil. As you will delve deeper, you can see that fiction writing in the 20th century attained an 'International form', which was mostly due to the fact that writers from various parts of the world started writing fiction in the English language. This became possible also because of the fact that once the language of a few million people on a small island of Europe, English is now spoken and written on every continent and is an important language across the world. Therefore, it is easy to understand why this shift occurred. Perhaps you also know that World War II helped accelerate the break-up of the British Empire. Britain's political empire–in Africa, South Asia, and the West Indies were gone, but its "linguistic empire" became stronger than ever. The Booker Prize winning writer Salman Rushdie, in his book *Imaginary Homelands* however casts this linguistic dominance in yet more favourable terms. While it is true that English is the global language as "a result of the physical colonization of a quarter of the globe by the British," Rushdie eschews viewing this language as an unwanted imposition of formerly colonized peoples, instead regarding it as "a gift of the British colonizers," a legacy that in any case "ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago." Rushdie's point, coupled with the reality of a "globalized" world in which English-language authors from different continents so readily read and respond to each other's works, provides the rationale for the emergence of 20th century English language Fiction.

Thus, in this section, we have tried to discuss the growth and development of 20th century fiction as well as the different influences that shaped. We have seen that there are two major groups of 20th century fiction—Modernist and Post-modernist. We have also seen that with the emergence of English language fiction from different parts of the world, there has been a resurgence of fiction writing in the later part of the 20th century and this is still flourishing. An understanding of this background and the important issues is essential for you to discuss the prescribed modernist and postmodernist texts in this course.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Provide the specific characteristics of Post-modern fiction.

Q 5: Why did English language fiction writing gain an international status in the 20th century?

Q 6: Explain Rushdie's take on English language fiction in the later part of the 20th century.

1.4 IMPORTANT TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY NOVELS

Based on our understanding of the background, we have just read in the previous section, in this section, we shall further try to locate the various trends of fiction writing in the 20th century.

1.4.1 Realist Novels

It is important to note that a host of 20th century writers, essentially called modernists, continued within the broad tradition of realism. Among them, mention may be made of John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, Earnest Hamingway, John Updike and Saul Bellow. These writers present a credible picture of the fictional world, in which we are not particularly aware of the narrator's presence. They deal with social, personal and ethical problems and show us the ways people cope with life in the 20th century. In this tradition, specific mention may be made of D. H. Lawrence. His novels conform to the usual pattern of presenting characters at odds with society. However, Lawrence also feels that there must be a new way in which people can relate to each other. It is important to note that while his best novels like *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921) help to explore fresh areas of experience, we never forget that his characters are bound by all the demands of ordinary existence.

1.4.2 Experimental Novels

Another most noticeable feature of other great 20th century novelists is their use of formal experiments and innovations. This begins with the works of Joseph Conrad and Henry James. In his novels, Conrad often uses a narrator Marlow and sometimes disrupts the time sequence of events. A novel like Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) repeats the story of an innocent young women confronting a corrupt society that James had been writing for years. He uses extremely long sentences making the tracing of the line of thought almost impossible. The reasons for such experiments and innovations can be attributed to the disappearance of shared values and beliefs. This change was also caused by a newly found awareness of individual psychology following which it began to be realised that everyone has a unique perception of the world. The possible result was that Conrad employs a fallible narrator presenting his own limited views on the experiences described. Similarly, Henry James used confusingly long sentences, as he acknowledges that it is impossible to provide a definitive analysis of experiences.

With a far more emphasis on the mind of the individual and the human psychology, there emerged a technique what is called 'Stream of Consciousness'—a way of writing reflecting a new view of the human mind. It is a technique that seeks to record the random flow of impressions through a character's mind. In the novels of James Joyce [*Ulysses* (1992)], Virginia Woolf [*To The Lighthouse* (1927)] and a few others, the flow of ideas does not follow a pattern, presenting nothing except a chaos of jumbled phrases. In their works, there is an exploration of the characters' mind. Another aspect of such experimental novels is the display of their own fictionality. For example, James Joyce's *Ullysses* is written in a sequence of different styles. Against the realist fiction's presumptions of reading the world, the 20th century experiments in fiction instead draw attention to the ways in which fiction tries to structure experience, for reality is always beyond the grasp of the text. Therefore, we can say that the technical

experiments in these writers were prompted by a genuine awareness of life's complexity in the 20th century.

1.4.3 French Noveau Roman

[Adapted from https://www.britannica.com/art/New-Novel]

French **Nouveau Roman,** also called new novel and **antinovel,** is a kind of Avant-Garde novels of the mid-20th century that marked a radical departure from the conventions of the traditional novel by ignores elements such as plot, dialogue, linear narrative, and human interest. Assuming that the potential of the traditional novel had been exhausted, the writers of Nouveau Roman sought new avenues of fictional exploration. In their efforts to overcome literary habits and to challenge the expectations of their readers, they deliberately frustrated conventional literary expectations, avoiding any expression of the author's personality, preferences, or values. They rejected the elements of entertainment, dramatic progress, and dialogue that serve to delineate character or develop plot.



Avant Garde: The *avant-garde* from French, "advance guard" or "vanguard", literally "fore-guard" are people or works that are experimental, radical, or unorthodox with respect to art, culture, or society.

The term *antinovel* was first used by Jean-Paul Sartre in an introduction to Nathalie Sarraute's novel *Portrait d'un inconnu* (1948; *Portrait of a Man Unknown*). This term has often been applied to the fiction of writers such as Sarraute, Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Marguerite Duras, and Michel Butor and is therefore usually associated with the French *nouveau roman* of the 1950s and 60s. In place of reassuring conventions, these French authors offered the reader more demanding fiction, presenting compressed, repetitive, or only partially explained events whose meaning is rarely clear or definitive. In Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1957; *Jealousy*), for example, the narrator's suspicions of his wife's infidelity are never confirmed or denied. The story is not laid out chronologically, but rather the reader is subject to the narrator's obsessive review of observed details and events.

The problematic relationship between art and life turned out

to be a major characteristic of much of the French Noveau Roman in a writer like Alain Robbe Grillet. He published a series of essays on the nature and future of the novel, which were later collected in *Pour Un Nouveau Roman*. Rejecting many of the established features of the novel, Robbe-Grillet regarded many earlier novelists as old-fashioned in their focus on plot, action, narrative, ideas, and character. Instead, he put forward a theory of the novel as focused on objects: the ideal *nouveau roman* would be an individual version and vision of things, subordinating plot and character to the details of the world rather than enlisting the world in their service. In his novels, we can be deprived of a plot and characters to hold on to, so that we have none of the conventional fictional devices for making sense of life.

1.4.4 Magic Realist Novels

This term refers to a kind of novels originating in South America. Writers often referred to as magical realist include Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), and Alejo Carpentier (Cuba). One of the foremost examples of a magical realist novel is Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Similarly, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* can also be read as a magic realist novel. Such novels no longer share the traditional realist fiction's assumption of our reality to understand and describe the world. In one way or the other, they challenge realist fiction's pretentions to produce reality in literature. However, another argument is that magic realism challenges Euro centrism by expressing a Third World experience and drawing on local cultural traditions. What is also striking is that in magic realism the bizarre nature of events and stories are included in the plots. Implicit in such inventiveness is a questioning of the rational cultural tradition of the West, as the narratives mimic, subvert, exaggerate and parody the ways in which Western European culture has used the novel to make sense of experience—be it personal, social and political.

1.4.5 Feminist Novels

Virginia Woolf remains to be the central and most radical writer in women's fiction in the 20th century. In her best known novels such as *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Years* (1937), and her essay "A Room of One's Own" (1931), Woolf felt the need for women and fiction to challenge the boundaries and the social system that limit and define women and men into feminine/ masculine, emotional/rational roles. Woolf's vision of a new kind of writing by women opened up the possibility of a whole series of changes in the early part of the 20th century that would also invite a rereading of the women writers from the previous eras from a feminist perspective. The point is that many feminist writers are also engaged in the writing of feminist criticism, following which their writing as a novelist and a critic remains complementary. Their mission is to bring a sea change in the position of women in society and literature. A sense of change often invites us to the writings of other feminist novelists such as Angela Carter, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Jeanette Winterson, Margaret Atwood and so on.



LET US KNOW

Post-modern writers in their fiction often attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the [realist] novelist. As observed by Douwe W. Fokkema, in *Literary History, Modernism and Postmodernism*, "the Modernist aimed at providing a valid, authentic, though strictly personal view of the world in which he lived, the Postmodernist appears to have abandoned the attempt toward a representation of the world that is justified by the convictions and sensibility" of any single individual consciousness or historical account.

Indeed, such observably postmodern novels as Fowles's *French Lieutenant's Woman*, Swift's *Waterland*, Gray's *Lanark*, and Byatt's

Possession deconstruct traditional notions of subjectivity and history, and problematize the distinction between fact and fiction, in ways that go beyond what Joyce and other modernists envisioned. Another clear difference is that postmodernist novels tend to be far more demotic and less elitist in orientation than their modernist forerunners.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: State the characteristics of Realist 20th century fiction.

Q 8: Provide an idea of the different types of experiments taking place in 20th century fiction.

Q 9: Explain in what way the French Noveau Roman was new.

Q 10: What is Robbe Grillet's contributions to French Noveau Roman?

Q 11: How would you describe a Magic Realist novel?

Q 12: In what way, are the Feminist novelists of the 20th century different from the male novelists?



1.5 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of this unit, you have learnt that in Europe, since the beginning of the 20th century, novels proliferated. You have learnt that the novelists of the 20th century, unlike those in the previous eras, wrote two different kinds of fiction. The first kind refers to a historical and realist narrative conventions that have been familiar to the readers for nearly two centuries. In the other kind, a new form of language prevails in the writing of fiction. The trends of fiction writing in the 20th century can further be divided into Modernist and Postmodernist fiction. Some of the modernist writers continue to publish novels in the sense that they adhere to the conventions of historical thinking and of realism current in 19th century narratives. While the postmodernist novelists treat new materials with substantially new experiments and effects. We can say that Lawrence, Conrad and James, broadly belong to the modernist tradition of 20th century fiction. On the other

hand, Joyce, Robbe Grillet, Nabokov and Pynchon might belong to 20th century post modernist fiction. You have also learnt from this unit that in the later part of the 20th century, following decolonisation, English language fiction evolved like never before. Therefore, in order to have a clear grasp of the issues discussed in this unit, you should be able to read some of the modernist and post modernist novels of the 20th century. We hope that the ideas you have gained from this unit shall help you to discuss the prescribed texts of this course in terms of the characteristics of 20th century fiction.



1.6 FURTHER READING

1) Bradbury, Malcolm & James McFarlane. (Eds).(1991). *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930.* London: Penguin Books.
2) Bradbury, Malcolm. (1994). *The Modern British Novel.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
3) Bradbury, Malcolm. (Ed.).(1990). *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*. Fontana Press.
4) Brian W. Shaffer. (Ed).(2011) *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.
5) Butler, Christopher. (2003). *Post Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
6) Butler, Christopher. (2010). *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
7) Peck, John & Martin Coyle. (2002). *Literary Terms and Criticism*. (3rd edition). Palgrave Study Guide.



1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Radical experiments with point of view… …representation of time and space… …shattering of the illusion of a unified…

…preference of an omniscient narrator… …textual self-referentiality… …literary allusiveness… …fragmented narratives and so on.

Ans to Q 2: Marx proclaimed religion as the "sigh of the oppressed," the "opium of the people"… …Nietzsche proposed that "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."… …Freud likened devotion to the "fairy-tale of religion" to a "childhood neurosis"… …these views were to change people's ways of perceiving things in the 20th century.

Ans to Q 3: Appearance of William James's book *Principles of Psychology*… …reality not as something objectively given, but as something subjectively perceived through the "stream" of human consciousness… …Freud's own research on the unconscious.

Ans to Q 4: They blur the distinction between elite and demotic narrative forms, author and reader, fiction and fact… …they attack realistic conventions of representation, notions of generic purity, and the feasibility of a unified subject.

Ans to Q 5: Writers from various parts of the world started writing fiction in the English language… …because English is now spoken and written on every continent… …Following World War II, the British Empire broke… …Britain's political empire–in Africa, South Asia, and the West Indies were followed by "linguistic empire".

Ans to Q 6: Salman Rushdie in his book *Imaginary Homelands* eschews viewing the English language as an unwanted imposition of formerly colonized peoples… …instead it as "a gift of the British colonizers"… …the legacy "ceased to be the sole possession of the English"… …another facet is that in the "globalized" world English-language authors from different continents readily read and respond to each other's works.

Ans to Q 7: These writers present a credible picture of the fictional world, in which we are not particularly aware of the narrator's presence… …they deal with social, personal and ethical problems and show us the ways people cope with life in the 20th century.

Ans to Q 8: Conrad often uses a narrator Marlow and sometimes disrupts

the time sequence of events… …Henry James uses extremely long sentences making the tracing of the line of thought almost impossible… …with an emphasis on the mind of the individual and the human Psychology, authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf employed the 'Stream of Consciousness' technique reflecting a new view of the human mind.

Ans to Q 9: French Nouveau Roman is new as it marked a radical departure from the conventions of writing the traditional novel… …as it ignored elements such as plot, dialogue, linear narrative, and human interest… … as they deliberately frustrated conventional literary expectations, avoiding any expression of the author's personality, preferences, or values.

Ans to Q 10: He rejected the established features of the novel such as plot, action, narrative, ideas, and character… …he put forward a theory of the novel as an individual version and vision of things, subordinating plot and character… …there is no clear-cut plot and characters to hold on to in his idea of fiction.

Ans to Q 11: In magic realism the bizarre nature of events and stories are included in the plots... …they no longer share the traditional realist fiction's assumption of our reality to understand and describe the world... …they challenge realist fiction's pretentions to produce reality in literature.

Ans to Q 12: Their mission is to bring a sea change in the position of women in society and literature.



1.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Comment on the intellectual contexts of modernist fiction. How did this background influence fiction writing in the early part of the 20th century?

Q 2: What are the themes and characteristics of Modernist fiction? Discuss with reference to the some of the modernist authors and their texts.

Q 3: What are the basic characteristics of postmodern fiction? Discuss the nature of postmodern fiction with reference to the works of some renowned postmodern novelists.

Q 4: Discuss the origins and development of Modernism in 20th century British fiction?

Q 5: Discuss the different trends of fiction writing in the 20th century as a whole.

Q 6: Describe how did the English language come to play an important role in liberating the idea of fiction writing from the British soil in the late 20th century.

Q 7: Provide a comprehensive view on experimental fiction in the 20th century.

Q 8: Do you think that Psychology played an important role in the proliferation of fiction writing in the modern age? Justify your views.

Q 9: Postmodern novels blur elite and demotic narrative forms, author and reader, fiction and fact; and they attack realistic conventions of representation. Give your views.

Q 10: Modernist fiction with all innovations should not be dismissed as a retreat from modern life. Justify in your answer.

Q 11: Post-modern fiction deconstructs traditional notions of subjectivity and history, and problematise the distinction between fact and fiction. Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 2 : JOSEPH CONRAD: *HEART OF DARKNESS* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Joseph Conrad: Life and Works

2.4 The storyline of the Novel *Heart of Darkness*

2.5 Critical Reception of Conrad and His Works

2.6 Let Us Sum Up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

2.9 Possible Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of Joseph Conrad—an important 20th century novelist
- narrate the story of the novel *Heart of Darkness* in your own words
- place *Heart of Darkness* in the development of English fiction, taking into account the various contexts
- identify the range of critical reception of Conrad as a novelist.

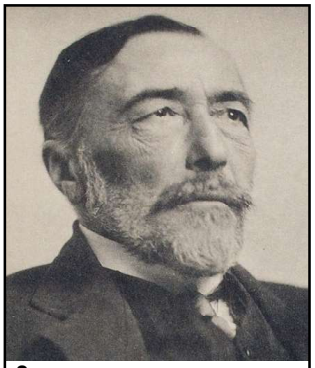
2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Joseph Conrad who is widely regarded as one of the foremost modern writers and a great prose stylist of English literature. A native of Poland, Conrad was a naturalized British subject famous both for his minutely described adventure tales of life on the sea (he drew on his own maritime experience for these) and his darker examinations of European Imperialism in action. About eight and a half years before writing the book, Conrad had been appointed by a Belgian trading company to serve as the captain of a steamer on the Congo River.

Upon arrival at his station in the Congo, he found that the steamer he was to command had been damaged and was in need of repair. Yet the next day he headed up the river on a different steamer that was captained by another. When that captain became ill during the journey, Conrad assumed command. At the company's innermost station, they picked up its agent, Georges-Antoine Klein, who died on the return trip. Conrad himself became very sick and returned to Europe before serving out the full three-year term of his contract to the trading company. This provides a proper background to the genesis of the novel *Heart of Darkness.* However, in this unit, we shall focus more on the life, works and reception of Conrad as fiction writer.

2.3 JOSEPH CONRAD: LIFE AND WORKS

Life:



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

Joseph Conrad (Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski) was born on 3th December 1857, in Ukraine, a region that had been once a part of Poland but was then ruled by Russia. Conrad's father Apollo Bobrowski was a patriot, a man of letters and was exiled by the Russian government for his participation in the secret meetings just before an uprising for Polish independence at Warsaw. In 1862, he was exiled to Vologda in Northern Russia. His parents were later punished by the Russians for their Polish nationalist activities, and both of them died when Conrad was still a child. Conrad's Polish upbringing made him sceptical about colonial expansion at an early phase of his life.

After the death of his parents, Conrad moved to Krakow, Poland to live with his maternal uncle. Although Conrad suffered as a child, in order to save himself from desolation, he turned to reading the books of Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo. He got fascinated by the tales of explorers and navigators and started dreaming of sailing the seas himself, because the sea, for Conrad, symbolised freedom. In 1874, with his uncle's permission,

he left Poland for France to enter the French merchant marine service at Marseilles and joined an old pilot ship. While learning seamanship, he also led a wild, adventurous and reckless life. He made three consecutive voyages to West Indies. Knowing just a few words in English, he then joined the British Merchant Service as an officer and commander of small wooden vessels in 1878. The sea, to a great extent, made Conrad an artist and a man of contemplation. Over the next sixteen years, he prospered as a seaman and visited various seaports in Australia, South America, India, Borneo, and the South Pacific among other places. In 1886, he became a British subject, became the master of his own ship, and changed his name to Joseph Conrad. Travelling to Africa in 1890, he ventured up the Congo River with the Belgian colonial service. Thus, before becoming a full-time novelist, he spent nearly twenty years as a sailor.

Conrad did not know the English language although he was acquainted with the works of Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and other English writers through translations. He learnt the English language as soon as he entered the British service and strangely enough, he started writing in English rather than in French, which he had known for a longer time. Conrad eventually abandoned his seafaring career in 1894, and settled in Essex, in the south of England. He then moved to London where he came in close contact with a number of eminent men of letters like Henry James and Ford Madox Ford. Conrad got married to Jessie George in 1896. To sustain the family, he started writing. Conrad lived in relative poverty until the commercial success of *Chance* (1914), which secured for him an assured income and wider reading public. In 1923, he visited the United States, and he was offered a knighthood (which he declined) shortly before his death.

Joseph Conrad died at Bishopshourne, Kent, in 1924. His Conrad's works are celebrated for their subtlety and sophistication. His works display technical complexities, which have established Conrad as one of the first English Modernists. Conrad, in the 'Preface' to his famous novel *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) writes about the idea of fiction like this:

"Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art— appeals to temperament. In

addition, in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and restless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and, in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion. All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions."



LET US KNOW

Imperialism and Colonialism:

The year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 1897, was a time of imperialistic fervour in Britain. Imperialistic domains of the Whites were spreading all over the world. Conrad had a lifelong abhorrence for all forms of Imperialism. He suspected the Russian, German, and Belgian forms of imperialism. Colonialism literally means acquiring control over another country, occupying it, and exploiting it economically. Imperialism, on the other hand, is the policy of extending a country's power and influence by establishing colonies or by military force. In *Heart of Darkness,* we find Kurtz standing as a symbol of European Imperialism.

Conrad had good reason to question the right of great powers who colonized others as he was born in a nation (Poland) which had vanished from the map of Europe after its annexation by Russia from the east, Prussia from the west, and Austria from the south-west. His many years of travels and voyages made him encounter Africa. He travelled through the heart of the Congo (captured by the Belgian King, Leopold II) and observed the brutality of the Europeans on the locals.

Works:

You must have already read that Conrad was not an Englishman,

but he took to writing in English. This should be considered important while you study his works. Conrad's first novel *Almayer's Folly* was published in 1895. The story is based on a Dutch trader whom Conrad had known in Borneo. This was followed by *An Outcast of the Islands,* also based in Borneo in 1896. Meanwhile, Conrad became friends with many of the leading writers of his day and also collaborated with Ford Madox Ford on two novels *The Inheritor* (1901) and *Romance* (1903). Then in 1897, he published *The Nigger of the Narcissus* often considered to be a more mature novel. This novel used "Poetic Realism" to describe the negative effects of one particular man upon a ship's crew. It is one of those novels in which the sea life is powerfully and vividly portrayed. Conrad's *Tales of Unrest,* published in 1898 is a collection of five stories.

Although Conrad was facing financial crisis and was even disillusioned with his creative ability, Conrad could produce books of remarkable artistic achievements and stylistic accomplishment, infusing adventure stories with profound explorations of the conflicts between and within men. In 1900, came his *Lord Jim: A Tale*, which is regarded as one of Conrad's greatest novels. Inspired by a story Conrad heard of a ship's crew's desertion, this novel brilliantly illustrates the plight of a man who had imagined himself a hero but failed when tasted by dangerous circumstances. The man then devotes all his life in restoring his conscience and honour. Besides the novel *Typhoon*, in 1902, there appeared the collection called *Youth—A Narrative and Two Other Stories* which contains Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *The End of the Tether*– first published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1899. The story is remarkable for its tropical descriptions and its overwhelming sense of evil and corruption. *Heart of Darkness* is based on his trip to Congo and it journeys into the savage nature behind man's civilized manners, while *The End of the Tether* relates to the bleak tale of a man who lived an honourable life but died in loneliness. Ian Watt argued in his essay "Heart of Darkness and Nineteenth Century Thought" that this novel (*Heart of Darkness*) presents a double vision. The significance of such a vision is that Conrad in this novel wanted both to endorse the standard Victorian moral positives, and to express his forebodings that the dominant

intellectual directions of the 19th century were preparing disaster for the 20th. This novel gradually became one of the best fictional works of Conrad.

Meanwhile, Conrad shifted his focus from the steering forces of the sea to the turbulence of the political scene. *Nostromo–A Tale of the Seaboard* (1904) received great appreciation from its readers. With this novel, he created a fictional South American country to illustrate the frustrating futility of man's efforts at change. In 1906, a series of essays relating his experiences of the seas and oceans came out as *The Mirror of the Sea – Memories and Impressions.* This was followed by the popular detective story entitled *The Secret Agent – A Simple Tale* (1907) that describes an anarchist bomb plot in London. *A Set of Six* (1908) is yet another collection of Conrad's stories. In 1911, there appeared *Under Western Eyes*, which is a tale of Russian revolutionaries. These works are noted for the unprecedented vividness with which he communicates a pessimist's view of man's personal and social destiny.

Conrad remained prolific as a writer until the end of his life. He published an autobiographical work in *The Mirror of the Sea* in 1906, and *A Personal Record* in 1912. A collection of three short stories *'Twixt Land and Sea–Tales*, came out in 1912. This was followed by *Chance– A Tale in Two Parts* (1914). After *Victory– An Island Tale* (1915) and a further collection of four short stories, *Within the Tides– Tales* (1915), Conrad wrote *The Shadow Line– A Confession* (1917), which is a short novel. His other lesser known novels include *The Rescue– A Romance of the Shallows* (1920), *The Arrow of Gold– A Story between Two Notes* (1919) and *The Rover* (1923). Conrad's *Suspense– A Napoleonic Novel* (1925) is a historical novel, which remained unfinished. Conrad's views on his own art are accounted for in *A Personal Record* (1912) and *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921).



LET US KNOW

It is difficult to read Conrad without seeing the influences of the sea on his writing and thinking. Indeed, the isolation an individual faces on a ship and pitting oneself against both nature and others on the ship, has been a common theme in literature, at least as old as Homer's *Odyssey*. The following are some more works that analyze the effects of the sea on humankind:

- *Moby-Dick* (1851), by Herman Melville, retells the story of Captain Ahab, who seeks Moby-Dick, a whale that has destroyed one of Ahab's ships.
- *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), by Jules Verne tells the story of the mysterious Captain Nemo and his famous vessel the Nautilus taking a fantastic journey through the world's oceans in the science-fiction classic.
- *Kon-Tiki* (1950), by the Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl, intrigued by Polynesian folklore, sets off across the Pacific Ocean in a raft in 1947. This book tells the true story of his adventure.
- *The Old Man and the Sea* (1951), by Ernest Hemingway is the story of an aging Cuban fisherman struggling to catch an exceptionally large marlin.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did the sea influence the writerly mind of Conrad?

Q 2: In what ways does Conrad reflect on the idea of fiction?

Q 3: How do you estimate Conrad's attitude towards the ideas of colonialism and imperialism?

Q 4: State some of the qualities of Joseph Conrad as a novelist.

Q 5: Discuss the main idea behind Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 6: Mention some of Conrad's important works.

2.4 THE STORYLINE OF THE NOVEL *HEART OF DARKNESS*

The novel *Heart of Darkness* opens (and ends) in the first person narrative. The novel is first set aboard a sailboat "Nellie, a cruising yawl," anchored in the Thames River near Gravesend, England. Along with the narrator, aboard are four others members: the Director of Companies (the captain), the Lawyer ("the best of old fellows"), the Accountant (toying architecturally with dominoes), and Marlow (Charlie Marlow)–all sharing "the bond of the sea". However, Marlow, as told by the narrator, is the only one that still "followed the sea" –they are waiting for the tidewater to turn. Therefore, *Heart of Darkness*, as its name signifies, is a story that narrates a voyage into the heart of a dark continent to Congo, in Central Africa so to say. The main narrator Marlow narrates his experiences in Congo, long after his return from Central Africa. Actually, Marlow is accounting for his visits to Brussels– one before his journey to the Congo and the other at the end of his exploration. Therefore, adopting the technique of a frame narrative that is 'story within the story', Marlow describes his trip up the river Congo to pick up the ailing Kurtz.

In the first station, Marlow discovers the plight of dying Negroes. All around him, pieces of unused machinery are lying scattered and every few minutes dynamite explosions shake the ground as the natives' batter a rock cliff to construct a railroad. There, he meets the Company's chief accountant, who first mentions Kurtz to Marlow. Marlow then visits the Central station, which looked deserted with the surrounding of forest and mud. Since his main concern was Kurtz, in the Central Station Marlow learns more about Kurtz, about his intelligence and singleness of purpose, while reports of Kurtz's illness and his imperfect recovery keep coming from the Inner Station. Marlow also learns that many see Kurtz as a threat to their own progress. Marlow's vessel eventually gets repaired and he heads towards the Inner Station. The natives attack his boat. The helmsman falls on the cabin floor with a spear in his side. Marlow finally scares the natives away by blowing the steam whistle.

In the Inner Station Marlow meets the Russian trader, a disciple of

Kurtz. Kurtz is adored by the Russian trader as well as by the natives. A survey of the surrounding, however, makes Marlow realise the extent of Kurtz's lack of restraint, but he admires Kurtz's greatness of imagination. Marlow first gets a glimpse of the mysterious Kurtz, when a group of savages comes out of the jungle carrying Kurtz on a stretcher. They carry him to the ship and finally Marlow hears the "grave, profound, penetrating" voice of Kurtz. Kurtz vows soon to return to the natives as he has grand plans to execute. At midnight, Marlow notices that Kurtz is not in his cabin. There is an enormous ceremonial fire burning on the hill above the station. Marlow finds Kurtz crawling through the grass.

Eventually, Marlow gets Kurtz back to the ship. They leave the station the following day. As they move down the river, Kurtz raves in his delirium about wealth and fame. A delay caused by machinery failure shakes Kurtz's confidence and he gives Marlow a bundle of papers to keep away from the manager in case he dies. Later in the day, the servant announces that Kurtz is dead. His last words are "The horror! The horror!" After his return from Congo, Marlow again goes to Brussels. Many seek to get Kurtz's letters from Marlow, but Marlow decides to give the letters only to Kurtz's 'intended'—a girl whom Kurtz loved. He visits the girl, who more than a year later, is still in mourning. She holds an idealistic image of Kurtz and Marlow consciously does not shatter it, as he lies to her, telling her that Kurtz utters her name as he dies.

Heart of Darkness remains the most popular of Conrad's tales. It has inspired an entire library of critical analysis till today. Many see this work as thoroughly pessimistic in its accumulation of images of absurdity, of savage and wanton destruction. However, F. R. Leavis, Jocelyn Baines, and other commentators pointed out one apparent flaw of Conrad in this novel as they disapproved the recurring adjectival phrasing in the text. However, the use of adjectival phrasing gets justified in the text as the speaker is not Conrad but Marlow, who himself again comments on Kurtz's inflated prose style and asks us to beware of waffle. The adjectival expressions also have thematic justification in that they seek to highlight experiences that are baffling and disorienting in nature. Another objection

to *Heart of Darkness* was offered by the Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe. He asserts that the tale reveals Conrad as 'a bloody racist'. Achebe argues that Conrad dramatizes Africa as 'a place of negations…' or 'the other world'. Achebe condemns the tale because according to him the tale promotes racial intolerance. The blacks are dehumanised and degraded; and they are denied speech or are given little speech only to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Achebe says that he sees no difference between Marlow and Conrad, to which one response is that Conrad has deliberately chosen to use the convention of doubly oblique narration, which tends to generate ambiguities. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Wilson Harris, Frances B. Singh, C. P. Sarvan and other 'postcolonial' writers argues that *Heart of Darkness* poses a satiric account of the colonialists. *Heart of Darkness* came out in 1890s–the heyday of Victorian imperialism, but the tale is progressive in its criticism of imperialist activities. Many feminists like Nina Pelikan Straus, Bette London, Johanna M. Smith and Elaine Showalter call Conrad as a male chauvinist. They argue that *Heart of Darkness* is both imperialist and sexist.

However, this novel has also generated a number of positive responses from a number of critics. For example, Albert J Guerard in his essay "The Journey Within" credits this novel as the most famous of Conrad's personal short novels: "a Pilgrims Progress for our pessimistic and psychologising age." James Guetti in his "Heart of Darkness: The Failure of Imagination" writes that this novel is apparently an account of one man's moral and psychological degeneration and of another's spatial and intellectual journey to understand the essentials of the matter. Ian Watt in his "Heart of Darkness and the Nineteenth Century Thought" argues that Conrad is not a philosophical novelist the way George Eliot, Thomas Hardy or George Meredith are, and in Conrad we never feel the presence of logical arguments or moral lessons. However, if Conrad does not present himself as a thinker, he strikes us as very thoughtful and his fictional works steadily invite ethical and metaphysical responses. In 1979, Francis Ford Coppola modelled his film *Apocalypse Now* on *Heart of Darkness*, with Marlon Brando as Kurtz and marten Sheen as Captain Willard (based on the character of Marlow). His "The Secret Sharer" has also been adapted as a short film.



LET US KNOW

According to Kingsley Widmer in the *Concise Dictionary of British Literary Biography*, Conrad is "a major figure in the transition from Victorian fiction to the more perplexed forms and values of twentieth-century literature..." He was simultaneously one of the last Victorian writers and one of the first modernist writers. Along with writers like Mark Twain, Conrad was able to incorporate traditional story forms—such as travelogues or journey stories—into novels with a more contemporary sensibility. Personal Quests in *Heart of Darkness* is not so much about the enigmatic character Kurtz as it is about Marlow and his discovery of good and evil in each individual; his quest is not so much for Kurtz, but for truth within himself. As such, the novella has been compared to Virgil's *Aeneid* as well as Dante's *Inferno* and Goethe's *Faust*. With the invention of his character Marlow in his novels, Conrad broke new ground in literary technique, establishing the distancing effect of reported narration, a narrative frame in which the story is told at one or more removes from the actual action. To achieve this effect, Conrad employed a character within the story who relates the action after the fact. Such a technique helped Conrad avoid what would otherwise be painfully intense subjectivity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What aspect of the story element strikes you as a reader?

Q 8: Enumerate a few difficulties Marlow faced during his voyage towards Kurtz.

Q 9: What does Chinua Achebe have to say about Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*?

Q 10: Refer to some of the positive responses on the novel *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 11: At how many levels can the idea of 'Quest' in *Heart of Darkness* be read?

2.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CONRAD AND HIS WORKS

Joseph Conrad's works met with immediate success and praise. What is more outstanding is the fact that Conrad wrote in English, which was not his native language. As time progressed, however, Conrad picked up his fair share of negative critics, including novelist Chinua Achebe, who felt that Conrad's portrayal of the native Africans in *Heart of Darkness,* and his associating people of colour with the darker forces of chaos in *Lord Jim* are racist. However, many critics contend that Conrad was no more susceptible to racist thought than the others of his time, and was in fact ahead of his time in calling attention to the ravages caused by colonialism. Contemporary reviewers praised Conrad for his insight and vivid use of language in a novel like *Heart of Darkness*. As Lillian Feder in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* noted, the novella has "three levels of meaning: on one level it is the story of man's adventures; on another, of his discovery of certain political and socia injustices; and on a third, it is a study of his initiation into the mysteries of his own mind." Critics still debate to what degree Marlow finds his evil double in Kurtz and how far, in fact, he identifies with him. Conrad would employ this theme of doubling in later works also, most notably in Lord Jim and "The Secret Sharer."

Other critics have remarked about the psychological aspects of the work as well as its tone. The American novelist and critic, Albert J. Guerard, in his *Conrad the Novelist*, noted not only Conrad's "dramatized psychological intuitions," but also the "impressionist method" and the "random movement of the nightmare," which works on the "controlled level of a poem." Guerard pointed to the contrasting use of dark and light by Conrad as a conscious symbol, and to his vegetative images, which grow to menacing proportions. Guerard wrote, "Heart of Darkness…remains one of the great dark meditations in literature, and one of the purest expressions of a melancholy temperament." As Frederick R. Karl noted in his *A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad*, *Heart of Darkness* is one of the world's greatest novellas: "It asks troublesome questions, disturbs preconceptions, forces curious

confrontations, and possibly changes us." Conrad's novella is where, according to Karl, "the nineteenth century becomes the twentieth."

From its earliest reviews, *Lord Jim* has been considered perhaps Conrad's greatest novel and has been favourably compared to the best that Western literature has to offer. A reviewer in the Spectator noted that *Lord Jim* was "the most original, remarkable, and engrossing novel of a season by no means unfruitful of excellent fiction," while an Academy critic pronounced that "Lord Jim is a searching study—prosecuted with patience and understanding—of a cowardice of a man who was not a coward." Some scholars take a biographical approach to the novel. From this perspective, Jim is a representative of Conrad himself who jumped the Polish ship of state at its most difficult moment to settle in England. The Polish Nobel poet, Czeslaw Milosz, in Atlantic Monthly, pointed out that the name of Jim's ship, Patna, is intended to resonate with the Latin patria or "fatherland." Other, more psychoanalytically minded reviewers note the fact that *Lord Jim* was published the same year as Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, both books heralding a new century of unconscious forces at work. G. S. Fraser commented in *Critical Quarterly*, "It is, in fact, part of the interest and range of Conrad that he appeals not only to the sort of reader who enjoys, say George Eliot or Henry James but to the sort who enjoys Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, or Conan Doyle."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: Write in brief on the reception of Conrad's novels.



2.6 LET US SUM UP

As you have finished reading this unit, you are in a position to discuss the life history of the Polish writer Joseph Conrad and the range of issues he sought to incorporate in his fictional works which are often considered to

be great achievements in modernist literature. You have read that the novel *Heart of Darkness* is somewhat autobiographical and somewhat fictional account of Marlow on his sea voyage to the heart of a dark continent to Congo, in Central Africa. The main narrator Marlow narrates his experiences in Congo, long after his return from Central Africa. Actually, Marlow is accounting for his visits to Brussels– one before his journey to the Congo and the other at the end of his exploration. Therefore, adopting the technique of a frame narrative that is 'story within the story', Marlow describes his trip up the river Congo to pick up the ailing Kurtz. This technique of writing makes Conrad one of the most significant modernist writers of the 20th century. However, what makes Conrad, extraordinary as a fiction writer is the way he communicates a pessimist's view of man's personal and social destiny.



2.7 FURTHER READING

1) Baines, Jocelyn. (1960). *Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
2) Batchelor, John. (1994). *The Life of Joseph Conrad*. Oxford: Blackwell.
3) Bloom, Harold. (Ed). (1987). *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. New York: Chelsea House.
4) Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (eds) (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol1.
5) Peters, John G. (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6) Said, Edward.(1966). *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
7) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.
8) Stape J. H. (Ed). (1996). *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: He got fascinated by tales of explorers and navigators… …he himself dreamt of sailing the seas… …sea, for Conrad, symbolised freedom.

Ans to Q 2: In the 'Preface' to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), Conrad writes about the idea of fiction… …fiction should appeal to temperament… …the appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses… …all art should appeal primarily to the senses.

Ans to Q 3: Conrad's Polish upbringing makes him bitter towards the issues of colonialism and imperialism… …he was saddened by the brutalities of colonial exploitation during his voyage through the African Congo.

Ans to Q 4: Conrad is known as one of the first English modernists… …his works are known for their technical complexities… …it is remarkable that Conrad started writing in English, a language which was quite foreign to him, until he entered the British service.

Ans to Q 5: *Heart of Darkness* emerged from Conrad's embittering African experience. … …the idea of European colonialism lies at the backdrop of the tale… …the tale also embodies an wonderful interplay between realism and symbolism.

Ans to Q 6: *Almayer's Folly* based on a Dutch trader whom Conrad had known in Borneo… …*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that describes the negative effects of one particular man upon a ship's crew… …*Lord Jim: A Tale* that illustrates the plight of a man imagining to be a hero but failed when tasted by dangerous circumstances… …*Heart of Darkness* is based on his trip to Congo… …*Nostromo* based on the frustrating futility of man's efforts at change… …*Under Western Eyes* a tale of Russian revolutionaries and so on.

Ans to Q 7: The natives are hardly allotted any voice… …most of the

characters are unnamed… …the tale brings about an ambience of darkness, ambiguity and horror… …the journey of Marlow (along with the hardships) has both literal and symbolic meaning.

Ans to Q 8: The journey was very hazardous… …it was bestowed with hardships… … Marlow's steamer got attacked… …in the Central Station, Marlow's boat took much longer time to get repaired… …Marlow had complex ideas regarding Kurtz.

Ans to Q 9: Chinua Achebe asserts that the novel reveals Conrad as 'a bloody racist'… … he dramatizes Africa as 'a place of negations… …the tale promotes racial intolerance… …no difference between Marlow and Conrad… …the tale promotes racial intolerance, where Africa is represented as a 'place of negations'… …he looks at the idea of civilization ironically.

Ans to Q 10: Albert J Guerard calls the novel "a Pilgrims Progress for our pessimistic and psychologising age"… …James Guetti opines that the novel is one man's moral and psychological degeneration… …Ian Watt states that Conrad's fictional works steadily invite ethical and metaphysical responses.

Ans to Q 11: This novels is a 'quest' not so much about the enigmatic character Kurtz as it is about Marlow and his discovery of good and evil in each individual… …the quest is about the truth within himself.

Ans to Q 12: Reception both negative and positive… …Chinua Achebe called Conrad a racist… …contemporary reviewers praised Conrad for his insightful use of language… …Albert J. Guerard noted Conrad's "dramatized psychological intuitions"… …Frederick R. Karl noted *Heart of Darkness* as one of the world's greatest novellas… … *Lord Jim* has been considered perhaps Conrad's greatest novel… …some scholars take a biographical approach to the novel in which Marlow and Jim are seen as representatives of Conrad himself.



2.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Conrad is considered a writer of the sea. Discuss with reference to Conrad's life and fictional works.

Q 2: What are the major achievements of Conrad as a modernist writer? Discuss.

Q 3: Write a note on the reception of Conrad as an important modern novelist with reference to his contribution to fiction writing.

Q 4: Conrad is a major figure in the transition from Victorian fiction to the more perplexed forms and values of twentieth-century literature. Elaborate.

Q 5: Conrad is often considered a modern novelist. Justify your views with reference to both the positive and negative reviews of his works.

Q 6: Chinua Achebe criticised Conrad's portrayal of the native Africans in *Heart of Darkness* as being racist. Do you really think that Conrad's novel is, either overtly or subtly, a racist text? Give your views.

Q 7: Give a general view regarding what distinguishes Conrad as a novelist.

Q 8: Write a note on Conrad's upbringing as a writer with reference to some of the important fictional works.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 3 : JOSEPH CONRAD: *HEART OF DARKNESS* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Reading the Novel

- 3.3.1 Major Themes
- 3.3.2 Conrad's Art of Characterisation
- 3.3.3 Conrad's Narrative Style

3.4 Let Us Sum Up

3.5 Further Reading

3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

3.7 Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the different important aspects of the novel *Heart of Darkness*
- make a list of the important themes of the novel
- analyse the notions of history and civilization presented in the novel *Heart of Darkness*
- recognize the psychological domain of the characters and trace the underpinnings of symbolism in the novel
- discuss Conrad's narrative style with reference to the novel *Heart of Darkness.*

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, our particular focus shall be on reading Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* in some detail. Based on Conrad's own journey into the dark interior of central Africa, this novel can be read as a criticism of European Imperialism. However, if one gives more importance to Achebe's criticism of the text, it is also a text that is a product of European Imperialism

'regularising' the biased European perception of Africa. The novel is presented in the form of a frame narrative (a story within a story). First published as a three-part serial, in February 1899, in the famous *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Heart of Darkness* was finally published in the book *Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories* in 1902. In Conrad's own words, this novel is "A wild story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages." At the root of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* lies various assumptions of civilisation, which is hollow at the core. Civilization, according to the writer is an illusion, a deceptive system of conventions and institutions. Moreover, during his journey through Congo, which also shapes the background of the novel *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad witnessed the brutality with which the Belgians were exploiting the indigenous population and the imported African labourers, in their quest for ivory. You should note that many of Conrad's stories are also said to have strong autobiographical significance and it is from Conrad's embittering African experience that emerged *Heart of Darkness*. Thus, this unit intends to introduce you to the different important aspects of the amazing fictional world of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

3.3 READING THE NOVEL

The following subsections will guide you to read *Heart of Darkness* in terms of its various important issues and aspects. However, it is insisted that you get hold of a standard text of the novel like the "Norton Critical Edition" and start reading it in order to gain a first-hand experience of the various important and complex issues raised in the text.

3.3.1 Major Themes

Politics, psychology, morality and religion, social order and evolution, imperialism of discourse etc. constitute the major themes of the novel *Heart of Darkness*. This *novella* can be read as a political satire, protest literature, traveller's tale, psychological odyssey, symbolic novel, and also as a mediated autobiography. It can also be read as a work, which speaks eloquently of the brutalities, and

follies of subsequent history, i.e. the novella can also be read as prophetic. Let us now discuss some of the major themes of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The Idea of Darkness:

Darkness is an overbearing theme of the story, as the title "Heart of Darkness" suggests. The phrase 'heart of darkness' could mean the centre of a dark place. It suggests the interior of Africa, which was then widely termed as 'The Dark Continent'. Darkness may also connote something obscure, mysterious, sinister or evil. Marlow describes his voyage to Congo as a weary pilgrimage; and there is an overshadowing ambience of nightmarish experience in the tale. The tale rebounds with enveloping darkness. Not only Africa, but London and Brussels are also referred as dark and sinister. London is described as the centre of 'a brooding gloom'. The station of the ivory company in Brussels appeared to Marlow as a hellish building. Two women knitting black wool before it are symbolic of dark fates. The tale is also a journey into the inner darkness– the evil that lurks in the heart of men, which is obscure, mysterious and sinister. Marlow, in the tale, depicts the darkness that lies in the heart of Kurtz and the other characters. The novella brings out the maddening horrors, sensations and experiences of those who have to face loneliness and darkness in the wilds of Africa. In the tale, darkness also connotes death, both of individual and of the human race. Darkness also connotes the 'dark ages' between periods of civilization. It may also stand for the abominable, the primordial, the inscrutable and the unknown. Darkness stands in stark contrast to light. The tale puts forward an ironic comment on the light of civilization. Here we can draw the analogy of the brightness and destructiveness of fire. Whiteness, in contrast to darkness, can also be associated with hypocrisy, ivory, bones, death, fog, and the unmapped.



LET US KNOW

Significance of the title *Heart of Darkness*

The "darkness" of the work's title can have numerous connotations: it can refer to night, death, hollowness, moral corruption, ignorance, obscurity. *Heart of Darkness* also bears signs of its Victorian origins. For instance, the word 'niggers' used by Marlow in the tale was widely and casually used by Whites in the 1890s, and even long afterwards. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* contributed to the international campaign of protest, which eventually curbed the Belgian excesses in the Congo. However, in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad makes sure that the indictment is not of Belgian Imperialism alone. It is an indictment on Colonialism and Imperialism in general.

According to Albert J Guerard, the title might suggest that "darkness" has a "heart". Marlow suggests throughout the story that at the centre lies a 'meaning', which he is pursuing. However, the intensity of Marlow's inquiries serves only to emphasise the inconclusiveness of his findings each time he seems to declare the truth about Kurtz and darkness. In this manner, we are also left with yet another assertion of the title of the novel and heart of darkness in general: It is the 'heart' above all that is composed of darkness, and that our progress must be through the apparently or partially known to the unknown.

The paradoxical title is best understood with reference to the death of Kurtz. Kurtz's deathbed cry, "The Horror! The Horror!" seems to be his response to the most private nightmare, to the unknown self, but Marlow seems to have insisted that that they are quite the reverse: "a moment of complete knowledge" so to say. He asserts that "The Horror" has to do not only with Kurtz's unspeakable history, but also with the world at large, "wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness".

Civilization and Barbarity:

Heart of Darkness appears to be a satiric indictment of colonialism in Africa. The African is not allowed to be outside European discourse. The tale, in many ways, depicts the myopic arrogance of the Europeans. The natives are hardly given any voice. The idea of bringing civilisation to the uncivilised 'other' seems to justify the apparently cruel and inhuman treatment meted out to the natives. There is an apparent contradiction between appearance and reality. The International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs asked for a report from Kurtz, and in his accustomed eloquence, he wrote seventeen pages on how to bring civilization to the black savages. Later, he scribbled in pencil "Exterminate all the brutes" (p-155, *Heart of Darkness*, 2002), a revealing post-script. By depicting the 'International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs' Conrad was perhaps talking about the International Association for the Exploration and Civilizing in Africa, of which King Leopold II was the president.

As Africa is to present-day Europeans, so, Marlow suggests, England was to Roman colonists. These ideological constructs of Imperialism and Colonialism, and their formation of the 'self' and the 'other', also constitute a major theme of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow notes that Kurtz is drawn to a nocturnal ritual in the jungle, which is attended by a sinister figure: "…A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow. It had horns – antelope horns, I think – on its head. Some sorcerer, some witch-man, no doubt: it looked fiend-like enough" (p-173, *Heart of Darkness*, 2002).Here we find a dramatically visual form of "demonization of the other". However, the tale, in a variety of ways, challenges such a contrast; as Marlow analyses that the conquest of the earth mainly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses. The cannibal crew evinces remarkable restraint in the tale, whereas Kurtz, the European, on the other hand, lacks restraint in the gratification of

his various lusts. Even Kurtz, who has brought idealistic ambitions to the wilderness, proves to be depraved and deranged. A particularly bold attempt towards dissolving the distinction between the Europeans and "the other" is made towards the end of the tale, when Marlow notes the kinship between the idealistic fiancée and the black consort. The similarity in the gesture of stretching out their arms towards the Kurtz of memory shows that both are alike in their devotion to Kurtz.

The Psychological Note:

Marlow's journey up the Congo can be seen as a voyage of self-exploration and self-analysis, which enables us to peep into the hidden recesses of the human soul. The evils and ambiguities that sometimes grip a human heart exhibit a terrain of darkness. The journey also gives Marlow an insight into his own soul. The setting too is symbolic, with its dark wilderness. The environment of Congo seems to have profound influence on the white men, as the darkness of the place seems to destroy and corrupt their mind as well as spirit. Here the primeval instincts and impulses get exposed, which lie underneath the veneer of civilization. The character, Kurtz, stands as an example of this. Kurtz may not be mad literally, but as Marlow realises, he is mad in his soul. Marlow himself resists the temptation of the wilderness. He understands the danger of yielding to primitive instincts. His sense of work and duty enables him to maintain his sanity. However, Marlow admits that he is never the same man again after his experiences in Congo. Horror gets imbibed in the subconscious of an individual, moving in the wilderness. Kurtz's last words 'The horror! The horror!' remains a highly ambiguous utterance, and they serve as a thematic nexus in the tale. Marlow interprets these words in different ways. The words may signify Kurtz's condemnation of his corrupt actions and temptations to which he has succumbed, which bears a weight upon his psyche. The words may also signify the evil that lurks in the heart and mind of human beings. The words may signify the fear that lurks in the heart

of Kurtz as he experiences the horror of the world. Africa is also represented in European colonial discourse as the site of European nightmare, as the embodiment of European unconscious or anti-self. Europe's encounter with Africa, unlike the sense of wonder at the discovery of the new world in the 16th century, is represented as a source of dread and horror. Cannibalism remains a constant source of dread in the psyche of the White colonisers.



LET US KNOW

The novel *Heart of Darkness* can be interpreted in a Freudian manner as a journey into the wilderness of sex, a fantasy shaped by Conrad's own divided impulses. Kurtz, the outlaw figure, has dared to transgress the restraints imposed by civilization. He represents Marlow's shadow self, the secret sharer, and the voyage of exploration is also the symbolic journey into the unconscious, or a discovery of the Freudian Id.

Symbol: A symbol is a word or phrase that signifies an object or event, which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond it. Symbolism runs hand in hand with the psychological tone in *Heart of Darkness*.

The Autobiographical Note:

Marlow says that as a child he had noticed a blank space on the globe and vowed to go there someday. After years of maritime service in the East, Marlow made efforts to serve on a ship sailing to Congo. This incident has biographical implications and the story is based on Conrad's actual visit to the Congo. Conrad travelled through that part of the globe, which was hypocritically named as Congo Free State. There he witnessed the brutality with which the Belgians were exploiting the indigenous population and the imported African labourers, in the quest for ivory. Conrad's travels in the Congo lasted approximately six months. He became ill there and eventually returned to London via Brussels. The memories of the horrors of the

African journey never got erased from his mind. The tale can also be read as mediated autobiography. Marlow's initial descriptions of the Roman trireme-commander and the 'decent young citizen in a toga' offer ironic counterparts to Marlow himself and Kurtz in Africa. The autobiographical note is made more significant by what Conrad himself states about his love for the sea in *The Mirror of the Sea*, 1905, 136-137. Conrad writes: "The love that is given to seas is profoundly different from the love one feels for every other works of their hands—the love they bear to their houses, for instance–because it is untainted by the pride of possession. The pride of skill, the pride of responsibility, the pride of endurance there may be, but otherwise it is a disinterested sentiment. No seaman ever cherished a ship, even if she belonged to him, merely because of the profit she put in his pocket. No one, I think, ever did; for a ship-owner, even of the best, has always been outside the pale of that sentiment embracing in a feeling of intimate, equal fellowship the ship and the man, backing each other against the implacable, if sometimes dissembled, hostility of their world of waters. The sea—this truth must be confessed—has no generosity. No display of manly qualities- courage, hardihood, endurance, faithfulness-has ever been known to touch its irresponsible consciousness of power. The ocean has the conscienceless temper of a savage autocrat spoiled by much adulation"



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Bring out the significance of 'darkness' in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 2: How do you estimate Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a political satire? Elucidate.

Q 3: Bring out the symbolic significance of *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 4: What is autobiographical about *Heart of Darkness*?

Q 5: What are the different levels that the novel *Heart of Darkness* can be studied?

3.3.2 Conrad's Art of Characterisation

The characters in *Heart of Darkness* are significant in the sense that apart from being striking character portraits, they have symbolic values. It is interesting to note that most of the characters are unnamed and they stand as representative figures. In this subsection, we will briefly discuss some of the major characters of the novel. You must note that the men aboard the boat "Nellie" are Marlow's companions who were also aboard the ship on the Thames. The other men are the un-named narrator, the lawyer, the accountant and the director. They are sitting on the deck of the small ship waiting for the turn of the tide. Therefore, it is almost clear that the narrator (who remains unnamed) is one of the five men present aboard the "Nellie", who listens to Marlow's tale. He relays to the readers Marlow's story about Kurtz and the Congo. However, the narrator is drawn towards the tale told by Marlow. The following is an attempt to look at some of the major characters of the novel.

Charlie Marlow:

Marlow is the protagonist and the most dominant narrator in the novel. He plays the role of the real narrator when they are sailing in the boat Nellie sitting cross-legged in a Buddha-like posture implying enlightenment or perpetual meditation. His intention is to tell about one of his "inconclusive experiences" while undertaking the voyage to bring back Kurtz who was ill and dying in the dark interior of Africa. Soon Marlow immediately identifies himself with Kurtz. His journey down the Congo River and into the interior of the African forest symbolises the internal explorations of his own moral integrity. Thus, he sceptically relates to his feelings and sensations as is experienced in the dark and wild forests of the tropics. Marlow's subconscious may be symbolised by Kurtz; and Kurtz symbolises what Marlow himself could have become had he stayed in the heart of darkness for a longer period. Between 1917 and 1920, Conrad wrote many prefaces to his major works for the Uniform Edition of

his Collected Works (1923-38). In one such preface, he also wrote about Marlow. As he writes:

"*Youth* was not my first contribution to Maga (Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine). It was second. However, that story marks the first appearance in the world of the man Marlow, with whom my relations have grown very intimate in the course of years. The origins of that gentleman (no body as far as I know had ever hinted that he was anything but that)—his origins have been the subject of some literary speculation of, I am glad to say, a friendly nature. One would think that I am the proper person to throw a light on the matter; but in truth, I find that it isn't so easy. It is pleasant to remember that nobody had charged him with fraudulent purposes or looked down on him as a charlatan, but apart from that he was supposed to be all sorts of things; a clever screen, a mere device, a 'personator', a familiar spirit, a whispering 'daemon'. I myself have been suspected of a meditated plan for his capture"

Kurtz:

Kurtz is a character with multiple shades. Nevertheless, the most interesting point is that his presence in the novel is primarily seen through what other people talks about him. Kurtz is half French and half-English. Marlow's narration thus cites that all Europe contributes to the making of Kurtz. The accountant at the first trading post projects Kurtz as "a remarkable man" and as a "first class agent" of the company, who is known for his momentous collection of ivory and who has a promising career. Kurtz was the chief of the Inner Station. However, Kurtz was ill; and he dwindled on the edge of civilisation and barbarism in the tale. Kurtz seemed hollow at the core. He symbolises greed and cruelty of the European colonizers. Kurtz is an overbearing character in the tale, although physically we see very little of Kurtz. Kurtz remains an enigmatic figure with his command of awe and respect from the natives, with his aesthetic sense, as well as his sense of superiority and domination over the natives. By the end of the novel he seems to have regained himself,

dying in a 'supreme moment of complete knowledge' and moral possession of his soul.

The noted French critic G. Jean Aubry has many things to say on the origin of Kurtz. He states that the accuracy of the smallest details provided by Marlow in the novel compel us to discover whether the principal character of the story is only an invention of Conrad's imagination or a more or less graphic reproduction of an actual human being. It can be supposed that in a tale which he himself has declared to be the outcome of experience, the main character would not be purely and simply a product of the imagination. In case of Kurtz, why should Conrad have chosen a name of German consonance in a place where, according to the statistics of the "Bulletin Official de l'Etat du Congo", German were extremely rare at that time? There were to be found in the Congo Belgians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Americans, and Scandinavians who were engaged in all kinds of occupations connected with the command, construction, and repair of small vessels navigating the high rivers. The significance of Kurtz is rendered still more evident by what Conrad says in the novel: "The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and, as he was good enough to say himself,—his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz." [G. Jean-Aubry, "Joseph Conrad in the Heart of Darkness," *Bookman* (New York) 63, No. 4 (June, 1926): 433-34]

The Female Characters:

There are five female figures in the story and they play symbolic roles. Marlow's aunt, who asks him to carry the light of progress to the 'savages' in Africa, symbolises the ideal world of illusions. The two women knitting black wool that Marlow finds in Brussels cast a dark, foreboding ambience. They may symbolise blind fate and the fear of the unknown. Then we encounter the mysterious native woman in Congo. She is tall and majestic and she symbolises strong passion. Her gesture demonstrates her love

for Kurtz. The fiancée of Kurtz, on the other hand, stands for silent, self-sacrificing love. She is an embodiment of faith and innocence. Kurtz's native woman appears to Marlow as a wild and gorgeous apparition. She is savage, wild eyed and magnificent. She walks proudly with her body covered with barbarous ornaments, her hair arranged in the shape of a helmet. For Marlow she embodies the spirit of the dark forests. There are many grounds to compare this savage woman with Kurtz's intended the European fiancée. Side by side, we are confronting dynamic energy with sterile hypocrisy, life with death. We can take it for granted that that Kurtz had enjoyed sexual exuberance with her in his role as a worshipped God to whom human sacrifices are offered. Her passion may seem more attractive in its vitality than the living tomb the intended has created for herself in Brussels. The intended lives in a house as still and as decorous as a well- kept alley in a cemetery. Her condition symbolises Western Europe. Both Kurtz's Intended and his African mistress function as blank slates upon which the values and the wealth of their respective societies can be displayed. Marlow frequently claims that women are the keepers of naïve illusions; although this sounds condemnatory, such a role is in fact crucial, as these naïve illusions are at the root of the social fictions that justify economic enterprise and colonial expansion. In return, the women are the beneficiaries of much of the resulting wealth, and they become objects upon which men can display their own success and status.

Other Minor characters of the Novel :

The Accountant: The first white man whom Marlow meets in Congo is the Company's accountant. The accountant, who looked very well groomed, appears to be a striking figure. His neat and flawless clothes and the proper order in which his books were arranged offer a glaring contrast to the sordid surroundings. Marlow however gets impressed by the fact that in the great demoralization of the land, the accountant is successful in keeping up his "appearance".

The Manager: Marlow next encounters the manager of the

Company's Central Station. The robust health of the manager puts him in an advantageous position in a land where all sorts of diseases play havoc on the white men coming there for exploration or trade. However, Marlow feels that nothing is "within" this man. The manager's insensitivity and empty-headedness appals Marlow.

The Manager's Uncle: This character was the uncle of the General Manager and the head of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition. Like the nephew, the uncle too came to Africa to make his fortune. However, his expedition disappeared in the jungle.

The Brick-Maker: The brick-maker is an interesting character that makes no brick, but acts as the manager's spy. He seems hollow to the core according to Marlow. He is described as a man of no substance who perhaps has nothing inside him but a "little loose dirt". Marlow terms him as 'papier-mache Mephistopheles'.

Pilgrims: Marlow notices a group of white men at the Central Station, who are the Company's agents and dealers in ivory, whom Marlow ironically describes as "pilgrims" or "faithless pilgrims". They carry long wooden staves with them everywhere, which reminds Marlow of religious pilgrims. They put up the veneer of civilization but are entirely motivated by self-interest. Ironically, they treat natives like animals, while they themselves appear less than human.

Cannibals: Natives hired as the crew of the steamer are referred to as cannibals. However, they are a surprisingly reasonable and well-mannered bunch of men. Marlow marvels at their restraint and their calm acceptance of adversity. The leader of the group, in particular, seems to be intelligent and capable of ironic reflection upon his situation.

Russian Trader: The Russian Trader is a devoted disciple of Kurtz. He has gone into the African interior as the trading representative of Dutch Company. He is boyish in appearance and temperament. His brightly patched clothes remind Marlow of a harlequin.

Helmsman: The helmsman is a young man from the coast

who is trained to pilot the steamer. He is a serviceable pilot, although he cannot be viewed much more than a mechanical part of the boat. He gets killed when the steamer is attacked by natives hiding on the riverbanks.

Fresleven: Fresleven is Marlow's predecessor as captain of the steamer. He is killed in a dispute over some hens, apparently after striking a village chief. However, he is described as a good-tempered and non-violent man.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: How would you like to consider the characters of *Heart of Darkness*?

Q 7: Do you consider Marlow and Kurtz to be similar characters?

Q 8: How is Kurtz described in the novel? What does G. Jean-Aubry has to say about Kurtz?

Q 9: Comment briefly on the female characters of the novel.

Q 10: Do you think Conrad sidelines the women characters in the novella? Justify your answer.

3.3.3 Conrad's Narrative Style

The narrative style of *Heart of Darkness* provides the story with several layers of meaning. The narration is not chronological. It moves backward and forward in both time and space. However, the most important stylistic effect that this novel succeeds in producing is the way Conrad the author distances himself from Marlow the narrator, sometimes with considerable amount of irony, but allows the narrator Marlow to be very likable. Marlow is presented as a moralist, but unlike Conrad, he seems to be rather more confused. However, the novel also raises questions in the mind of some critics about the author's own clarity.

You must have already realised that another way to consider the narrative style of Conrad in this novel is the elements of obscurity

that lingers in the entire text. For example, Kurtz means too many things at the same time. *Heart of Darkness* employs doubly oblique narration: an anonymous character reports the story told by Marlow. The doubly oblique narration tends to generate ambiguities. The baffling and bewildering experiences were sought to be expressed through adjectival expressions like "unspeakable rites", "unspeakable secrets", "inconceivable mystery" etc. in the narration.

Richard Ambrosini in his book on Conrad [*Fiction as Critical Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.88-90] presents a very lucid description of the narrative style of Conrad in this novel. The exchange between Marlow and the frame narrator in the beginning of the novel provides the key for reading the novel in different linguistic levels sketched by the linguistic frame. The frame narrator has a double role to play in the first pages. His most explicit function is to describe the setting, to introduce the characters, and to remind the readers that he is the same narrative voice of "Youth": "Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea." His second more important function, begins when he launches the hymn to the 'spirit of the past', which the Thames evokes in a seafaring man. Some commentators have identified the frame narrator with Conrad himself. In his essay "Legends" (1924), Conrad wrote, "Legends are a form of memory…a fine form of imaginative recognition of the past." Therefore, when the frame narrator reflects on the feelings arising out of the sun set on the river, the "legends" become the banners of civilization. When Marlow first speaks, it becomes clear that he is pursuing a completely different thought. He too is thinking, "this also…has been one of the dark places on earth." And when he recalls the light that "came out of this river since," he stops to address the frame narrator like this: "you say Knights?" thus questioning the narrator's reference to "all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knight errands of the sea." This is a unique style of writing on the part of Conrad as

he is having Marlow question the frame narrator's generalisation about how they all "looked at the venerable stream", differentiating the internal narrator's outlook from the one of his audience, and setting up the ironic perspective, which characterises the conflict between the wandering seaman and the listeners.

You should note that the question of reliability of the narrators is very important in this novel. Conrad uses his comments on what Marlow is saying to point out the way in which Marlow is telling his story. Through a series of duets and asides, it has been made to understand that in this tale, 'telling' of the story is extremely problematical. The tale's critical discourse is first made explicit through the frame narrator's famous disquisition about "the meaning of an episode" for Marlow, and the latter's own reminder that his first concern is with "the effect of an experience on me." This implies the narrative's dual quality. Marlow is described in opposition to other seamen. He is a wanderer, they are 'sedentary'; their minds 'are of the stay-at-home order'. For Marlow, the frame narrator explains, "the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine." Thus, the only way to extract a 'meaning' would be to crack the tale's shell and obtain the meaning one wants to find. The frame narrator thus alerts the reader about such a procedure so that their attention is diverted towards the tale itself rather than the story.

Conrad in this novel also uses a number of motifs, which are the recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that help in developing the text's major themes. For example, Conrad uses Observation as a motif. Marlow gains access to the information by observing the world around him and by overhearing others' conversations. Similarly, through frequent comparison between Interiors and Exteriors, Conrad inverts the usual hierarchy of meaning. Thus, Marlow is confronted with a series of exteriors and

surfaces—the river's banks, the forest walls around the station, Kurtz's broad forehead and so on that he must interpret. These exteriors are all the material that provides him with a more profound source of knowledge about the 'interior'. While Darkness is another important motif made explicit in this novel. Africa, England, and Brussels—all described as gloomy and somehow dark, even if the sun is shining brightly. Darkness here is more metaphoric than literal. Along with Darkness, the use of Fog is yet another significant aspect of Conrad's narrative technique. Marlow's steamer is caught in the fog, meaning that he has no idea where he's going and no idea whether peril or open water lies ahead. Thus, you will note that while trying to discuss the narrative technique of *Heart of Darkness*, the most important aspect that needs to be understood is that the frame narrator is drawing the attention of the readers to the duality of Marlow's story. He is urging the readers that they must not concentrate on Marlow's account of the events in which he is the protagonist, but rather on the distortions, which his subjective experiences produce in the narrative.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: Comment on Conrad's narrative technique of *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 12: Do you think Marlow is reliable as a narrator?

Q 13: Mention some of the motifs used by Conrad in this novel.



3.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a novella that brings to light the subtle nuances of African Congo, which the Belgian King, Leopold II, had claimed as his personal property. The literary excellence of *Heart of Darkness* lies in its evocative vividness, its suspense,

its linguistic play, and its power to evoke thought provoking questions. The novella has a complex style, structure and characterization. The several themes in the tale run parallel to one another, and it is difficult to segregate them in watertight compartments. The character of Kurtz, which is the most interesting character in the tale, remains a mystery. The appeal of the work resides in the fact that the work can be read as something which speaks eloquently of the brutalities and follies of subsequent history, i.e. the novella can also be read as prophetic. *Heart of Darkness* thus remains the most popular of Conrad's tales. The tale is also sometimes seen as prophetic. Although the tale is being criticised for being pessimistic, racist and sexist, the subtle nuances of symbolism, satire and the exotic descriptions make it one of the most striking tales of Conrad. From this unit, you must have gained necessary insights on *Heart of Darknes*s as a significant 20th century work of modern fiction, as well as into the significance of Conrad as one of the greatest 20th century writers.



3.5 FURTHER READING

1) Achebe, Chinua. (1988). *Hopes and Impediments*. London: Heinemann.

2) Bloom, Harold. (Ed). (1987). *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. New York: Chelsea House.

3) Bloom, Harold. (Ed). (2007). *Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer.* New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.

4) Bloom, Harold. (Ed). (2007). *Heart of Darkness.* New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.

5) Kimbrough, Robert. (Ed). (2002). *Heart of Darkness*. A Norton Critical Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

5) Lothe, Jocab. (1989). *Conrad's Narrative Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

7) Sarvan, C. P. (1988). "Racism and the *Heart of Darkness*", *International Fiction Review,* 7 (1980); repr. in Kimbrough.

8) Singh, Frances B. (1988). "The Colonialistic Bias of *Heart of Darkness", Conradiana*, 10 (1978); repr. in Kimbrough.

9) Straus, Nina Pelikan. (1980). "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness", Novel*, 20, 1980.

10) Watts, Cedric. (Ed.). (2002). *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Websites and Electronic Resources:

http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Conrad.html



3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: 'Darkness' may signify the heart of Africa… …it may signify the evil that resides in the heart of man… …Darkness may also stand for loneliness, ambiguity, corruption, something unknown, death etc.

Ans. to Q 2: *Heart of Darkness* can be seen as a satire on the politics of imperialism. The tale draws an indictment on the corruption, greed and self-interest, which drives the mind of men towards brutality and ruthlessness.

Ans to Q 3: The characters in the tale are symbolic… …Marlow's voyage into the 'heart of darkness' is also symbolic… …the psychological domain also brings about the symbolic significance of the tale.

Ans to Q 4: After years of maritime service in the East, Marlow made efforts to serve on a ship sailing to Congo… …Conrad travelled through that part of the globe which was hypocritically named as Congo Free State… …there he witnessed the brutality with which the Belgians were exploiting the indigenous population and the imported African labourers, in the quest for ivory… …so this tale can be read as mediated autobiography.

Ans to Q 5: This *novella* can be read as a political satire, protest literature, traveller's tale, psychological odyssey, symbolic novel, a mediated autobiography… …tells the follies of history… …the novella can also be read as prophetic.

Ans to Q 6: The characters, apart from being striking character portraits, are also symbolic… … It is interesting to note that most of the characters are unnamed and they stand as representative figures.

Ans to Q 7: Perhaps yes… …because during his journey Marlow immediately identifies himself with Kurtz… …Marlow's journey down the Congo river symbolises the internal explorations of his own moral integrity… …Marlow's subconscious may be symbolised by Kurtz; and Kurtz symbolises what Marlow himself could have become had he stayed in the heart of darkness for a longer period of time.

Ans to Q 8: Kurtz is a character with multiple connotations… …Kurtz is the chief of the Inner Station… …he symbolises greed and cruelty of the European colonizers… …by the end of the novel he seems to have regained himself, dying in a 'supreme moment of complete knowledge' and moral possession of his soul. G. Jean-Aubry said, "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."

Ans to Q 9: There are five female characters and most of them play symbolic roles… …Marlow's aunt symbolises the ideal world of illusions… …the two women knitting black wool may symbolise blind fate and the fear of the unknown… … the mysterious native woman in Congo symbolises strong passion… …the fiancée of Kurtz is an embodiment of faith and innocence etc.

Ans to Q 10: Yes we do not get to see much of female characters in the tale… …many feminists called Conrad a male chauvinist as the female characters seem side lined in the tale. … …on the other side, we see that the female characters in the tale appear to be strong and influential… …Marlow's aunt in Brussels and the strong-built African woman in Congo. Kurtz's intended symbolise strong faith, which many lack.

Ans to Q 11: The narrative is not chronological… …the tale employs doubly oblique narration… …an anonymous character reports the story told by Marlow… …the narrative style provides the tale with multiple layers of meaning… …the characters in the tale are rather types, than individuals.

Ans to Q 12: Reliability in narration is an important issue with the novel… …The frame narrator is drawing the attention of the readers to the duality of Marlow's story… …he is urging the readers that they must not concentrate on Marlow's account of the events in which he is the protagonist, but rather on the distortions, which his subjective experiences produce in the narrative… …Marlow is not reliable as a narrator.

Ans to Q 13: Motifs are the recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that helps in developing the text's major themes… …Conrad uses the motifs like observation, interiors and exteriors, darkness, fog and so on to develop the narrative.



3.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Comment on the structure and mode of narration of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Does the mode of narration enhance the power of the story?

Q 2: Do you think *Heart of Darkness* explores the duality between the real and the psychological, the conscious and the subconscious? Elucidate.

Q 3: How is the theme of 'civilization' dealt with in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*? Give your own opinion in this regard.

Q 4: Would you say *Heart of Darkness* is a denunciation of white Imperialism in Congo? Give reasons to substantiate your answer.

Q 5: Why is it said that Marlow is Kurtz's double? Explore the themes of "evil" and "darkness" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 6: Bring out the significance of the title of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Q 7: In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad ensures that the indictment is not of Belgian Imperialism alone, it is an indictment on Colonialism and Imperialism in general. Discuss.

Q 8: Marlow's narration thus cites that all Europe contributes to the making of Kurtz. Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 4: D. H. LAWRENCE: *SONS AND LOVERS* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 D H Lawrence: Life and Works

4.4 Story of the Novel *Sons and Lovers*

4.5 Critical Reception of Lawrence

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

- discuss the life and works of the author D. H. Lawrence
- situate the author within the time and milieu of the early 20th century
- describe in your own words the importance of a novel like *Sons and Lovers*
- comment on the reception of D. H. Lawrence as an important modern novelist

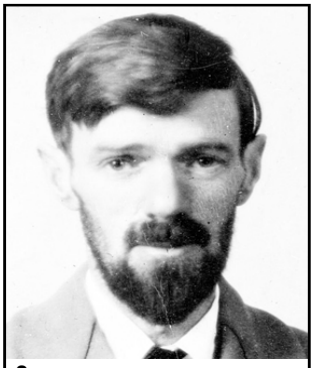
4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall introduce you to D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930), an English writer who just like Joseph Conrad, wrote some of the most popular, challenging, and controversial fiction in the modernist period. His collected works represent, among other things, a critique of the dehumanising effects of modernity and industrialisation. Some of the issues Lawrence explores in his oeuvre are sexuality, emotional health, vitality, spontaneity, and instinct. Lawrence was also a celebrated poet, a skilful dramatist and translator, an essayist of rare insight on diverse subjects, and a phenomenal letter writer.

His fictional works maintain his position at the heart of 20th century British literature with its combination of social and domestic realism and poetic intensity in works that bear witness to a deeply felt belief that the conditions and repercussions of political modernity required a new kind of writing, a new relation to language. A major and central figure of British Modernism, Lawrence remains a writer whose work inspires a range of often conflicting critical responses–viewed by some as a reactionary and by others as a flawed but radical thinker. As you finish reading this unit, you will be able to discuss the life and works with particular reference to his novels *Sons and Lovers* in detail.

4.3 D. H. LAWRENCE: LIFE AND WORKS

Life:



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

David Hubert Richards Lawrence was born on September 1, 1885, in the village of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire to Arthur Lawrence, a miner, and Lydia Beardsall, a middle-class lady who had been a schoolteacher before her marriage. Lawrence was the youngest of three sons and the fourth child in a family of five. The Lawrence family was, primarily due to Lydia Lawrence, marked by its social aspirations, seen in the succession of progressively better houses that they moved into by the time the children grew up, as well as Lydia Lawrence's emphasis on education as a means towards rescuing oneself from the constraints of a working-class life to a more intellectually stimulating and socially privileged middle-class life. Lawrence's eldest brother George (nine years older than him) became a textile engineer, while the second brother William Ernest (seven years older than David) became a clerk. Lydia Lawrence had pinned almost all her hopes on William, but unfortunately, all this ended when he died of erysipelas and pneumonia in London. When Lawrence wrote *Sons and Lovers* William Ernest became the model for Paul's elder brother William.

D. H. Lawrence, or 'Bert' as he was called as a child, was weak and

sickly from birth, but was, however, constantly reminded by his mother that he had to continue the potential of William Ernest. While not as athletic as his brother, Lawrence however was academically far ahead and won a country scholarship to the Nottingham High School at the age of twelve. He studied at this school till he was sixteen but this education entailed a severe financial pressure on the household of the Lawrences. After he left school, Lawrence entered the professional world as a clerk at a Nottingham surgical goods firm in 1901, earning a salary of thirteen shillings a week. In that same year, the tragedy of Ernest's death at the age of twenty-three years struck a huge blow to the Lawrences. Lydia Lawrence was especially affected by this and only emerged from her depression when he fell dangerously ill with pneumonia. From that point onwards, she seemed to transfer her love and ambition from Ernest to him, something that he later expressed as unduly suffocating.

At about the same time, in 1901, Lawrence became acquainted with the Chambers family and more significantly, with their daughter Jessie Chambers, who figures as Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. After the Chambers family moved to Haggs farm (Willey Farm in *Sons and Lovers*) in Eastwood, Lawrence used to visit them at their farm with his mother, who had become a good friend of Mrs. Chambers. Their friendship deepened over the years, and Lawrence frequently visited Haggs farm, talking with the family in the farmhouse, going for long walks with Jessie, and helping with the farm work. It was, again, this farm that gave Lawrence his first personal experience of country life and physical activity and presented him with a world where he could escape from the tensions in his own family and the economic problems at home, as well as the sordidness of Bestwood. With Jessie Chambers, Lawrence read and discussed literature, philosophy and history, which left a deep impact on Lawrence's subsequent life and career.

In the autumn of 1902, Lawrence took up a post as a pupil teacher at the British School in Eastwood though he did not enjoy teaching. From 1906 to 1908, he enrolled in the teachers' training course in the University College at Nottingham, earning his Teacher's Certificate at the end. During this time, he had started work on *The White Peacock* and had produced

many poems and short stories as well. At about this time, Lawrence's relationship with Jessie Chambers had also begun to deteriorate one of the reasons being the overbearing nature of Lawrence's mother (as suggested by Salgado). It was at this point that Lawrence became friendly with a woman named Louise (Louie) Burrows. This friendship subsequently developed rapidly till at a point they were engaged (though it was broken off subsequently). Burrows became the model for Ursula Brangwen in *The Rainbow*, though here again Lawrence's imposed his own feelings and experiences on Louie Burrows, similar to what he had done with Jessie Chambers in *Sons and Lovers*. It was during his stay in college that Lawrence became interested in philosophy, reading such philosophers as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, William James and Schopenhauer.

In October 1908, Lawrence joined the Davidson Road School in Croydon in South London as a teacher. Jessie Chambers had meanwhile sent some of his poems, and his short story "Odour of Chrysanthemums" to *The English Review*, which published a series of his poems in 1909, and two more series in 1910. *The English Review* was then being edited by Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford Madox Ford) and it was he who was responsible for introducing Lawrence to the London literary society. As his romantic spiritual but unsatisfactory relationship with Jessie was ending, he was cultivating the friendship of Helen Corke, culminating in another relationship of love and intimacy. However, between October 1910 and February 1912, Lawrence became engaged with Louise Burrows. It was also during this period that Lydia Lawrence was diagnosed with cancer (in August 1910) and she died in the same year in December. *Sons and Lovers*, again, vividly recounts this period of her final illness, and it is also believed by many that the final scene of Paul and his sister apparently giving their mother an overdose in an act of carrying out euthanasia had an element of truth. This period was traumatic in Lawrence's life since the death of his mother left a huge void in his life. Lawrence wrote very little during 1911, but by this time, he had written early versions of *The Trespasser* and *Sons and Lovers*.

In April 1912, when Lawrence visited his former teacher Professor

Ernest Weekley, who taught French at Nottingham University, he met Professor Weekley's wife, Frieda Weekley, who was a member of the Von Richtofen family and was herself a baroness. Frieda Weekley had three children when she met Lawrence, and bored with the mundane life of respectability, had several affairs, one of which was in 1907 with Otto Gross, the Viennese psychoanalyst and follower of Freud and Nietzsche. Moreover, her exposure to the modern permissive society in the continent had made her sympathetic towards the cause of sexual liberation and free sexual expression. The love affair between Frieda and Lawrence grew rapidly and they eloped on May 3, 1912, to the Continent. When they reached Frieda's hometown of Metz, Lawrence was arrested as a British spy and only released after the intervention of the Van Richtofen family. They spent the last week of May together in a Bavarian mountain village; on their honeymoon, Frieda rented a flat in the village of Itching and they lived there a simple country life while Lawrence and Frieda found this life ecstatic. After this, the two stayed for some time in Munich, after which they went off on a walking tour across the Alps to Italy, finally settling at Gargnano in Italy on the shores of Lake Garda. By this time, Lawrence had abandoned his plan of obtaining a teaching post in Germany and decided to be a full-time writer. Their experiences in the pastoral landscape of Italy are incorporated into Lawrence's short novella *Love Among the Haystacks*, while Frieda Weekley became one of the models for Clara Dawes in *Sons and Lovers*. It was also during this time that Lawrence wrote the poems that appeared in *Look! We have come Through!* Later, *Sons and Lovers* was also completed and revised in 1912.

By 1925, Lawrence's illness had significantly worsened and the Lawrences had to come to Switzerland and then to southern France where he was recommended complete rest in a sanatorium. Accordingly, Lawrence very reluctantly entered a sanatorium in Vence above Nice in France. However, his condition worsened and the doctor diagnosed pleurisy and Lawrence was moved to a villa in Vence itself after Lawrence expressed discomfort in the sanatorium. He was brought to the villa on 1 March 1930, but died on the very next day (2 March 1930). Five years later, his remains

were exhumed and the ashes were taken to Taos where they were mixed with the cement used to make a small shrine in Lawrence's memory at Kiowa ranch.



LET US KNOW

You should note that from 1912 onwards, the rest of Lawrence's life was spent with Frieda. Their relationship, however, was far from peaceful, with Lawrence being jealous, possessive and demanding with Frieda, and Frieda being involved in various love affairs with other men. This was compounded by Lawrence's failing health from the mid-1920s, which rendered him an invalid during the last stages of tuberculosis. In spite of all this, Lawrence and Frieda Lawrence Weekley could escape the constraints of their respective personalities and stay committed to each other (something of this is to be seen the Ursula–Birkin relationship in *Women in Love*) till Lawrence's death in March 1930. Frieda Lawrence Weekley, in her autobiography *Not I But the Wind*, published after Lawrence's death, records this commitment powerfully.

His Works:

To discuss the works of Lawrence you must note that he had written a play *Fight for Barbara* based on his relation with Frieda and their triangular situation, and also started work on *A Lost Girl* (subsequently published in 1920). A collection of poems *Love Poems and Others* and *Sons and Lovers* also came out in 1913. Apart from this, Lawrence also started writing the novel initially titled *The Sisters* that went on to become two of his major works – *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. During his stay in Germany, Lawrence wrote some of the stories that later became part of the collection *The Prussian Officer*, published in 1914.

When Lawrence and Frieda Weekley returned to England in June 1913, they found themselves in the midst of the fashionable literary society. Lawrence became acquainted with Lady Ottoline Morrell (the model for Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*), and the philosopher Bertrand Russell, along with a group of Cambridge intellectuals. The Lawrences stayed at

first at the Cearne with the Garnetts and later at Kingsgate on the Kentish coast. The couple met the critic John Middleton Murry and the New Zealand-born short-story writer Katherine Mansfield, who were also not married but living together like Lawrence and Frieda. The two couples shared an intense and stormy and ultimately unsuccessful relationship over the next few years. Some other important acquaintances during this period were Edward Marsh, editor of *Georgian Poetry*, who published some of Lawrence's poems; and Herbert and Cynthia Asquith (son and daughter-in-law of the Prime Minister). They were finally married on 13 July 1914, with John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield as witnesses.

During his stay in London, Lawrence again came into conflict with Freudian psychoanalysis (he had already had some exposure to Freud's theories through Frieda Lawrence) through Dr. David Aldington and his wife, the poet Hilda Doolittle (more popularly known as H.D.), as well as the American Imagist poet, Amy Lowell. In January 1915, the Lawrences moved into a cottage lent by Viola Meynell (daughter of the Catholic poet Alice Meynell) at Greatham near Pulborough in Sussex. There he carried on with his revisions of his novel (that had now become *The Rainbow*) which also seemed to reflect his interest, and his reaction to what he saw as the massive and monstrous inhumanity of the War. It was also during this time that Lawrence came into contact with the Bloomsbury Group particularly G.E. Moore and E.M. Forster, though he did not find any common cause with them, finding them snobbish and artificial. *The Rainbow* was published the same year (1915) in September but immediately after, met with hostile reviews that branded it as pornographic, so that within three weeks of publication, a thousand copies were seized by the Scotland Yard. At the trial, the novel was condemned and banned for obscenity, and this suppression proved to be a major setback, especially in economic terms, to the professional career of Lawrence as a writer.

In January 1916, the Lawrences moved to Cornwall, where, however, they were hounded as German spies. Moreover, Lawrence also had to undergo a medical examination to determine whether he was fit to be enlisted in the War, but was rejected due to his poor health and physique. Such

experiences were traumatic for Lawrence and are recorded in the "Nightmare" chapter in *Kangaroo*. Again, the figure of Rawdon Lilly in Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod* closely resembles Middleton Murry who had temporarily settled in Cornwall near the Lawrences. In the same year, Lawrence began working on the other half of *The Sister* that was to become *Women in Love*, finishing it in September, though it was published only in 1920. In 1917-19 Lawrence began writing *Aaron's Rod*, he also wrote essays on American literature (to be revised and enlarged as *Studies in Classic American Literature* in 1922) apart from a school text- book on European history he was commissioned to write finally published in 1921 as *Movements in European History* under the pseudonym Lawrence H. Davison) and another collection of poems titled *New Poems* (published in October 1918).In 1919, Lawrence revisited Italy, stopping at Florence, Rome and Capri and coming to Sicily in February and setting at Taormina. There were also a brief excursion to Sardina, Germany, and the Austrian Alps. The works resulting from this period are *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (a collection of poems); *Sea and Sardinia; Aaron's Rod; Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*; the first draft of *Fantasia of the Unconscious,* a sequel to *Psychoanalysis* and the short fiction "The Captain's Doll". *The Lost Girl* and *Women in Love* had also been published in the meantime, but received bad reviews.

In the beginning of 1922, the Lawrences were invited by a wealthy American admirer, Mabel Dodge Sterne, to join a colony of artists at Taos in New Mexico. They accepted and travelled to America via Ceylon and Australia, arriving in September. They stayed there for three years with only an interval of a few months between 1923 and 1924 being spent in England. They also travelled extensively in Mexico but came back to Taos where they bought the Kiowa Ranch from Mabel Dodge Sterne (now Mabel Luhan, after marriage to her American-Indian lover). During the excursion to Mexico, Lawrence suffered his first pulmonary haemorrhage that anticipated his later emaciation and death. In the third year at Taos, the Lawrences stayed in their own ranch, leading a rough frontier life, an experience they longed to revive after they left the place. However, Lawrence

never did return to the place due to various reasons. Lawrence wrote his *Kangaroo* during the early part of this period namely during his 3 month stay in Australia and revised a novel *The Boy in the Bush* by the Australian woman writer M. L. Skinner. After recording his experiences and responses to Australia in these novels, he recorded his Mexican experiences in Quetzalcoatl (that later became *The Plumed Serpent*, published in 1926).

In September 1925, the Lawrence again went back to Europe. It was here that Lawrence studied the Etruscan culture of the dead (Marsh 196) that finally came out as *Etruscan Places*. This stay was interspersed with travels to Switzerland, France, Germany and various parts of Italy. Lawrence made a couple of visits to England as well which became the basis for his last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (written in three successive versions). In addition, during his last years he wrote the short story "The Escaped Cock" (later called "The Man who Died"); essays about the Tuscan countryside; the last collection of his stories, *The Women who Rode Away*; a volume of short poems *Pansies*; various essays like "Pornography and Obscenity", poems like "Bavarian Gentians" and "A Propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*"; and finally *Apocalypse* (published posthumously).



LET US KNOW

Range of Lawrence's Works

Lawrence used all of the literary forms successfully, except perhaps for drama. The following is a quick recap.

- He wrote notable short stories throughout his career, including "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "The Rocking Horse Winner."
- He proved himself a master of the short novel (novelette) form in *The Fox* and *The Virgin* and *The Gipsy*.
- His poetry ranges from early rhymed poems in *Love Poems and Others* (1913) through the highly experimental and free forms of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, and on to the deliberately crude satire of much of *Pansies* (1929) and *Nettles* (1930).

- Among travel books, a more casual, less structured Lawrence is shown in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), and *Etruscan Places* (1932).
- The short journalistic pieces collected in his *Assorted Articles* (1930) are witty and challenging.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What image do we have of Lydia Lawrence?

Q 2: Discuss the significance of Haggs Farm in Lawrence's life.

Q 3: Name some of Lawrence's best novels.

Q 4: In what way, the return to London in 1913, proved rewarding for Lawrence?

Q 5: Comment on the range of Lawrence's works.

4.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL *SONS AND LOVERS*

Gertrude Coppard becomes a schoolteacher to escape the tyranny of her father who is overbearing and harsh. Soon she gets fascinated by Walter Morel, the miner, whose earthly liveliness is in stark contrast to her Puritan father at home. Soon Gertrude and Morel get married and live happily for some time. However, complicacies arise because Morel is a heavy drinker and a big liar and defies all efforts by Gertrude to change him. Therefore, Mrs Morel concentrates all her efforts and energies on her children—three sons and a daughter, and herself joins the Co-Operative Women's Guild to seek some stimulus for her mind. The eldest son Williams starts earning to sustain the family. Later, he moves to London and dies there. Mrs. Morel is shocked by the sudden death of William, but when her second son Paul also falls ill, she nurses him back to health and transfers all her emotions and concentrations on him. Subsequently, Walter Morel is avoided by Mrs Morel and her children.

Paul starts working as a junior clerk in Nottingham. He spends much of his leisure time as a painter in which he achieves some success. Then,

he falls in love with Miriam Leivers, a very intense and reserved girl. But, Mrs Morel starts being possessive of Paul and jealous of his relationship with Miriam. The turn of events sends Paul to fall in love with another woman Clara Dawes who is married to Baxter. Subsequently, Mrs Morel suffers for a long and pain full illness which Paul relieves by administering morphine. However, after her death at the end of the novel, Paul becomes free and is now determined to set out and make his own life.

You should note that this novel is largely autobiographical and reflects Lawrence's life at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire before he left home.



LET US KNOW

Points to Remember: *[Adapted from Gale Encyclopaedia]*

Lawrence produced as many as fifty volumes that included his novels, stories, plays, and essays, and a large number of personal letters to a vast number of friends, important and influential writers, critics, philosophers, and patrons of the arts of the early 20th century. He took as his major theme the relationship between men and women, which he regarded as disastrously wrong in his time, but he also had a special gift for portraying what he called the spirit of place. Landscape is an essential character in his narratives, but often it is more a spiritual than a physical landscape.

Following his preparation for immigrating to America with a view to forming an ideal colony of like-minded individuals, whom he wanted to call 'Rananim', Lawrence read several American authors including Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe. While working on *Sons and Lovers*, it seems clear that he read Freudian theory on the Oedipus complex, although he denied intentional use.

Lawrence's impressions of people in other countries also made their way into his depictions. Too often, however, these depictions, sexually explicit in many of Lawrence's books as well as paintings, inflamed contemporary public opinion and resulted in several notorious court cases on charges of obscenity and pornography.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is Lawrence's most pervading theme in his novels?

Q 7: What are some of the objections to the novels of D H Lawrence?

4.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF LAWRENCE

As Fiona Becket writes, throughout his literary career, Lawrence remained exceptionally productive and often controversial, as he compulsively took issues with the unexamined assumptions of his time and culture. The reception of his work and the attempts to suppress it, as exemplified by the censored *Lady Chatterley's Lovers*, is part of British social and intellectual history of the early 20th century. Lawrence's work has contributed to the shaping of attitudes in the 20th century, and to public debates about sex, censorship, and freedom of expression. Lawrence took risks in believing that the novel form was a highly significant medium for cultural critique. For example, in his "Why the Novel Matters" he famously wrote, "The novel is the one bright book of life." As a novelist, he thus rendered a profound influence on the development in the 20th century fiction with a concentration on the life and language of the feelings, as he also stated, "We have no language for the feelings." After his death, his extraordinary works have had an effect on writers such as John Cowper Powys and Doris Lessing. Lawrence's writing, extensively translated, continues to challenge and provoke critical debates on intellectual freedom across cultures till today.

Despite all sorts of negative criticism on his works, interest in Lawrence is getting restored time and again. After relative neglect following his death, his books came back into print, and he is the subject of numerous memoirs, biographies, and critical studies. This is because so many of the problems he dealt with in his novels are always contemporary and increasingly urgent, and he explored them with great commitment and style that appeal especially to the young generation. When World War I broke

out, he felt that it was then more important to find the grounds of faith in life itself and the means to a new integration of the individual and society. To this, he added the question of the nature of human relationship and how it needs to be restored to maintain a proper balance in human behaviour.

Lawrence received a great deal of criticism for both his writing and his attitude. He believed the goal for society was to keep the sexes pure, not in the sterile sense but in the sense of keeping women purely feminine and men purely masculine—because they were "dynamically different in everything." Various contemporary writers have supported this belief of Lawrence. The feminist writer Kate Millet labelled Lawrence "a counterrevolutionary sexual politician." Other critics have argued that Lawrence was an androgynous artist attuned to the inner experience of both the sexes. Contemporary Spanish novelist Ramon Sender said that Lawrence saw the world as if he were the first man. The *Plumed Serpent* (1926) was poorly received by readers in England but better received by the American public and press. *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920, 1921) have been claimed to represent "a supreme creative achievement" by "the greatest kind of artist." *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the subject of intense controversy for decades, was classified by critic F. R. Leavis as being among Lawrence's "lesser novels" because of its "offenses against taste."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Why does the novel matter, according to Lawrence?

Q 9: Despite negative criticism, Lawrence's reputation as a novelist still reigns high. Explain.

Q 10: How have the contemporary writers viewed Lawrence's novels?



4.6 LET US SUM UP

From your reading the various sections of this unit, you must have gained clear ideas regarding D. H. Lawrence and his oeuvre. Being a radical writer of his time, Lawrence took as his major theme the relationship between men and women, which he regarded as disastrously wrong in his time. However, he also had a special gift for portraying what he called the spirit of place. Landscape is an essential character in his narratives, but often it is more a spiritual than a physical landscape. Lawrence's impressions of people in other countries also made their way into his depictions. Too often, however, these depictions, sexually explicit in many of Lawrence's books as well as paintings, inflamed contemporary public opinion and resulted in several notorious court cases on charges of obscenity and pornography.



4.7 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M.H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Bangalore: Prism Books Pvt. Ltd. Peck, John and Coyle, Martin. (1993). *Literary Terms and Criticism* (New Edition). London: Macmillan.
2) Becket, Fiona. (2011). "D. H. Lawrence". In Shaffer, Brian W. edited *Encycloepdia of 20th Century Fiction. Twentieth Century British and Irish Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Company.
3) Celly, Ashok. (Ed). (2006). *Sons and Lovers* Delhi : Worldview Publications.
4) Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (Eds). (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol.3.
5) Ousby, Ian. (Ed). (1994). *Companion to Literature in English*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions.
6) Trotter, David. (Ed). (2009). *D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers*. Oxford World's Classic.
7) Williams, Linda Ruth (1997). *D.H. Lawrence*. Plymouth: North Cote House.

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Lydia was from a middle-class background… …because of Lydia's farsightedness the Lawrence family was marked by its social aspirations… …she emphasised education as a means towards rescuing oneself from the constraints of a working-class life to a more intellectually stimulating and socially privileged middle-class life.

Ans to Q 2: Lawrence used to visit Haggs farm with his mother… …this farm gave Lawrence his first personal experience of country life and physical activity… …it was also the where he could escape from the tensions in his own family and the economic problems at home… …the discussions in the farm with Jessie Chambers on literature, philosophy and history, rendered deep impact on Lawrence's subsequent life and career.

Ans to Q 3: *The White Peacock* (1911)… …*The Trespasser* (1912)… …*Sons and Lovers* (1913)… …*The Rainbow* (1915)… …*Women in Love* (1920)… …*Aaron's Rod* (1922)… …*Kangaroo* (1923)… …*The Plumed Serpent* (1926)… …*Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and so on.

Ans to Q 4: Met critic John Middleton Murry and the short-story writer Katherine Mansfield… …met Edward Marsh, editor of *Georgian Poetry*, who published some of Lawrence's poems… …met Herbert and Cynthia Asquith—son and daughter-in-law of the Prime Minister. All of them influenced the writerly life of Lawrence.

Ans to Q 5: Short stories including "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "The Rocking Horse Winner."… …short novels (novelette) like *The Fox* and *The Virgin* and *The Gipsy*… …rhymed poems in *Love Poems and Others,* experimental and free forms of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers… …* travel books such as *Sea and Sardinia*, *Mornings in Mexico*… …collection of journalistic pieces *Assorted Articles.*

Ans to Q 6: His major theme of the relationship between men and women,

which he regarded as disastrously wrong in his time.

Ans to Q 7: Lawrence's impressions of people and their sexually explicit depiction in many of Lawrence's books as well as paintings inflamed contemporary public opinion and resulted in several notorious court cases on charges of obscenity and pornography.

Ans to Q 8: The novel is the one bright book of life.

Ans to Q 9: The problems he dealt with in his novels are always contemporary and increasingly urgent… …he explored them with great commitment and style that appeal especially to the young generation… …to find the grounds of faith in life, Lawrence added the question of the nature of human relationship.

Ans to Q 10: Kate Millet labelled Lawrence "a counterrevolutionary sexual politician." … …the Spanish novelist Ramon Sender said that Lawrence saw the world as if he were the first man… …*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the subject of intense controversy for decades, was classified by critic F. R. Leavis as being among Lawrence's "lesser novels" because of its "offenses against taste."



4.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss D. H. Lawrence as a modernist writer? Why is it that he faced with lot of negative criticism during his life and after his death?

Q 2: What are the important aspects of D. H. Lawrence's writings? Discuss with reference to his novels.

Q 3: To what extent does Lawrence uphold individualism of his characters in his novels?

Q 4: How is Lawrence different from his contemporary novelists like James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, as far as modernist fiction is concerned?

Q 5: Which are the major achievements of Lawrence as a 20th century novelist? Discuss.

Q 6: Write a note on the critical reception of Lawrence as a radical English writer.

Q 7: Do you consider Lawrence's views on man-woman relationship to be controversial? Discuss.

Q 8: How does D. H. Lawrence uphold the idea of the self and identity in his novels? Explain.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 5: D. H. LAWRENCE: *SONS AND LOVERS* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Reading the Novel

- 5.3.1 Major Themes
- 5.3.2 Lawrence's Art of Characterisation
- 5.3.3 Lawrence's Narrative Style

5.4 Critical Reception of *Sons and Lovers*

5.5 Let Us Sum Up

5.6 Further Reading

5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

5.8 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- analyse the significance of the title of the novel *Sons and Lovers*
- discuss the themes, major events and characters in the novel
- trace the narrative style of Lawrence and identify the subtle patterns within the writing
- learn how to build on your own sensitive reading of the novel.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth unit of the course you are reading. This unit is based on D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*. From the unit, you should be able to gain sufficient ideas on the different aspects of the novel *Sons and Lovers,* which is an example of modernist fiction. While most of his works have elicited both negative and positive attention, *Sons and Lovers* stands out as being Lawrence's most widely read and most widely reviewed novel.

5.3 READING THE NOVEL

The following is an attempt at reading the novel in terms of its various concepts.

5.3.1 Major Themes

The Novel as an Oedipal Drama

This theme is evident in the title of the novel itself as it emphasizes the relationship between Paul and his mother as an oedipal drama. The initial title of the novel had been "Paul Morel" which was afterwards changed to *Sons and Lovers* when it was published in 1913. Lawrence came into contact with Freudian psychoanalysis only when he started writing the novel and after his acquaintance and relationship with Frieda Weekley. By that time, he was working on the final stages of *Sons and Lovers*, so that the change in the title might have been influenced by this knowledge. In his non-fiction, most notably *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence was hostile towards psychoanalysis, terming it "pollyanalysis". However, as can be seen in the novel, he changed his views by the time he finished writing the novel.

The first part (as well as some sections in the second part) of *Sons and Lovers* builds up the Oedipal drama in which Mrs. Morel and Mr. Morel wage a battle for the psychological control of their children. Due to Mr. Morel's brutal behaviour towards his wife the children gradually begin to side with their mother. Instances in Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 8 substantiate this theme a central one in the novel. For example, in Chapter 4, the narrator describes the special intimacy between Paul and his mother:

"Paul loved to sleep with mother. Sleep is still most perfect, in spite of hygienists, when it is shared with a beloved. The warmth, the security and peace of soul, the utter comfort from the touch of the other, knits the sleep, so that it takes the body and soul completely in its healing. Paul lay against her and slept, and got better, whilst

she, always a bad sleeper, fell later into a profound sleep that seemed to give her faith." (Chapter 4)

Similarly, in Chapter 8 in the Second Part of *Sons and Lovers*, there is an intimate moment between Paul and his mother in which Paul and his mother, after arguing over Miriam, reach a mutual reconciliation and Paul strokes his mother's hair while "his mouth [is] on her throat." Mrs. Morel kisses him a "long, fervent kiss".

These are some instances in *Sons and Lovers*, which show the eroticised relation between Mrs. Morel and her sons, particularly Paul, within the family. However, this apparently oedipal relationship is also qualified by the social context.



LET US KNOW

Lawrence had independently come to depict a structure that was to gain considerable influence (through Freud) as the 'Oedipus complex'. Beginning with an examination of Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*, Freud in "The Oedipus Complex" goes on to describe the Oedipus complex as the choice of the mother as love-object" of the child. The Oedipus complex is characterized by the child's (rather, infant's) fantasizing about competing with the father sexually in order to obtain control over the body of the mother. The culmination of the Oedipus complex, however, is the child's rejection of the castrated mother in favour of the phallic father and entry into the social world of the father. Due to the father's taboo on incest with the mother, the child (which is male in Freud) withdraws his libidinal desire from his mother and effects a reconciliation with his father. Traces of the Oedipal complex, however, exist in the psyche of the individual even when he grows up into adulthood.

Class and Society

Sons and Lovers records a strong sense of alienation that partly has its roots in the transition from a working-class society to middle-class intelligentsia and the conflict consequent to clash of ideologies underlying

the two classes. Raymond Williams (in *Culture and Society* and *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*) sees Lawrence as registering a transition from an older organic community to a more individualised and lonely social world. He also analyses how literary forms both respond to and are shaped by particular social and class experiences at different points in history. Lawrence as Williams argues, evolves a fresh language to depict this particular experience of transition and dislocation at the same time of reworking some of the nineteenth-century conventions in literature (chiefly, the tradition of realism in the Victorian novel). In Chapter 1 of *Sons and Lovers* for example, there is a picture of the Bottoms, followed by a more detailed description of the neat and decent front view of the houses countered by the ugly, dirty and "scrubby" back portion of the houses opening to the ash-pits. In this description, we have a particularly stark account of the working class family and the particular nature of its lifestyle. As Lawrence points out, the alley of ash-pits became the place where the children played and the miners and their wives socialised. It meant that the parlours at the front were largely uninhabited; to be used only on special days or on Sundays or when there were guests in the house.

Parallel to this is the role of the woman in the working-class family (especially the period to which Lawrence belongs) of a somewhat different nature than they are in the middle class. The miner's wife was at the centre of the family both as an economic and a social unit, but her life, even when there was a maid, was one of drudgery. The inside and outside worlds were more starkly divided in the miner's life – the miner had the fraternity and comradeship at the pit and after working hours, at the pub, while his wife's world was mostly limited to the narrow confines of her house, from which she could only occasionally escape through socializing with the other women in the alley, an infrequent visit to a relative or going to the chapel.

While Mr. Morel has a working-class background, Mrs. Morel on the other hand, enters the working-class only through her marriage, and therefore possesses an essentially bourgeois sensibility. This makes her different from the other women in the community. Mrs. Morel avoids contact with the women at the Bottoms, and also from the "unsavoury" lifestyle,

they are forced to adopt. Again she does not like the wakes, and prefers solitude rather than gossiping with the stay-at-home mothers". She is pregnant with her third child, Paul, when she first appears, and feels it a burden. There are similar instances in Chapter 3, where the reader encounters the changes seen in the mining community during the early years of the 20th century. Though the general structure of the working class (here the miner's) family remained more or less the same, many of the women in this community had begun to come out of their homes and organize themselves into groups which would meet at regular intervals and where the women could share their experiences. In the case of Mrs. Morel, the Women's Guild becomes one of the ways through which she keeps her connection with her middle-class origins. Mrs. Morel presents papers at times, commanding the respect of her children, who are awed at the sight of "their mother, who was always busy about the house, sitting writing in her rapid fashion, thinking, referring to books, and writing again" (Chapter 3). The Guild, however, and its work towards consciousness raising, elicits the division and hostility of the colliers who think that their wives are getting too independent. Nevertheless, it provides a space for the women of the mining community in which to come out from the confines of their domesticity and create a community in a more public domain.



LET US KNOW

The woman also became the centre of the family as a social unit. This was largely because it was she who was usually at home at all times, and looked after the children and accompanied them in their leisure. The miner was usually away for most of the day in the pit and the evening in the pub. It was only during the weekends and on rare holidays that the miner could spend his leisure hours with his family. In *Sons and Lovers,* the occasions when the children go out in the weekends in summer, searching for mushrooms and blackberries for their mother are some of the happiest moments of their lives. Again, Lawrence underlines the fact that in

the case of Mr. Morel, who embodies the ambiguous values of working class life in the novel, it is work rather than leisure activities that become central to his life.

Industrialisation

In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams argues that Lawrence critiques the mechanical, disintegrated and artificial life and an accompanying effect on the condition of mind of the individuals that are generated through industrialism. It is not industry in itself but the consequences felt in society that becomes a preoccupation with Lawrence. The materialism of such a life and the willing surrender to the depersonalisation of the people to industrialism is something that exists not in the past but in the present. In this, Lawrence is in a unique position of being both inside and outside the industrial structure, explaining the ambiguity of both Lawrence and Paul. However, for Lawrence, the liberation from this system is not a mass liberation but a very individual and personal liberation. This however, cannot be achieved merely through an ascent into the middle classes (see Mr. Braithwaite, for example, who is as much subject to the system as Mr. Morel), nor by getting a superior education (as imagined by Mrs. Morel), since these themselves are part of the materialistic goals established by the society. The individuality comes, for Williams, through the idea of community as envisaged by Lawrence. Lawrence "attacked the industrial society of England not because it offered community to the individual, but because it frustrated it. In this, again, he is wholly in line with the tradition. If in his own life he rejected the claims of society, it was not because he did not understand the importance of community but because, in industrial England, he could find none" (Williams: 204). This is because, the industrial community loses its 'quick of life', its spontaneous living through the routine of industrial work. The idea of community for Lawrence is what James Hillman, a Jungian psychologist, describes as a more "ecological", a "psychic" field (Hillman, quoted in La Chapelle: 121), something that includes both the organic and the inorganic elements in one's environment. This is initially reinforced by the working-class family, which is the site for "close quick

relationship," where "there [are] no such devices of separation of children and parents as the sending away to school, or the handing-over to servants, or the relegation to the nursery or playroom." In such a life, the suffering and giving of comfort, the common want and the common remedy, the open row and the open making-up, are all part of a continuous life which in good or bad, for a whole attachment. "It is through this continuous flow and recoil of sympathy, "William argues, that becomes in Lawrence's writing, "the essential process of living" (William: 205). This comes out pertinently through the descriptions of the changing landscape and the responses that the narrator and the characters in the novel make regarding it.

In "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside" (1929) Lawrence gives a historical account of the change in the country landscape of Nottingham over the last century due to mining activities and the modernisation of mining techniques. In *Sons and Lovers,* as well Lawrence dwells on the changes industrialization has brought into the English landscape, particularly the English countryside, as well as their effects on the way of life of the mining community such as in Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 12: "Already he [Paul] was a prisoner of industrialism. Large sunflowers stared over the old red wall of the garden opposite, looking in their jolly way down on the women who were hurrying with something for dinner. The valley was full of corn, brightening in sun. The collieres, among the fields, waved their small white plumes of steam. Far-off on the hills were the woods of Aldersley, dark and fascinating. Already his heart went down. He was being taken into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home valley, was going now." (Chapter 5)

Again, in the early half of Chapter 6 ("Death in the Family") when Mrs. Morel and Paul are on their way to Willey Farm, the home of the Leivers family, they see a "little group in silhouette against the sky, a horse, a small truck, and a man". While Mrs. Morel's response alludes to the beauty of the entire scene and the landscape, for Paul, it is the line of trucks that became central to it. He compares the pit to a strange big creature that is alive, and the row of trucks to a string of beasts to be fed. The vitality of this string, and also its beauty, is because they've been handled with men's hands, all of them. "Paul likes the feel of men on things, while they are

alive." For him, the landscape and its elements become significant by being touched with the spontaneous vitality of "men" that itself is derived from an organic relation with nature. For Paul this life is embodied in the miners that marks a difference of perspective between him and his mother. This aspect will be taken up in another context in this unit. However, what is important here is Paul's ambiguous relation with the mining life which is at once "common" dehumanized, and vital, alive. Towards the end of this chapter, however, after William's death, we get to see the miner completely sidelined by the importance of the machine. Paul is sent to the colliery to bring his father back home and break the news of William's death to him. He waits for his father; but while chair after chair comes up from the pit carrying coal, Mrs. Morel comes up only after a considerable amount of coal has been hauled up. Even on such an occasion as death, the human comes second to the machine, to the factory, what is still more significant is that the colliers surrender themselves to this structure. In Chapter 12, as against Paul's reiteration of the vitality and life the pits seem to embody. Mrs. Morel and Clara share a revulsion against the ugliness of the individual landscape compared to the beauty of the English agricultural landscape.

Gender and Patriarchy

Lawrence has been seen as controversial through his depiction of the gender relations in his works, both fictional and non-fictional. In a significant non-fictional work "The Study of Thomas Hardy" he maintains a difference between 'male' or 'maleness' and 'man' and between 'female' and 'woman', he, however, associates the Male with "the Love, the spirit, and Mind, the consciousness" and the Female with "the Law, the Soul, the Feelings". Though personality is created, in part, through the continual struggle between these two elements, nevertheless, in man, it is always the male struggling for dominance while in woman it is the female. The most authentic relationship between a man and a woman would transcend the conventions of society regarding love, family responsibilities, society, religion, and so on in order to attain an absolute individual self through the union with the other. In other words, the unity through the other in a male-female relationship in Lawrence is essential in order to fulfil to the utmost

the female elements in the woman and the male elements in the man; they can find their individuality as woman and man only through this union. In the process, the two will have to go beyond not only the contingencies of society and industrial life but also their own instinct for competition and survival and a misleading ego that prevents the dissolution of self in the desire for the other in a relationship. However, the dominant perspective from which the problematics of the man-woman relationship is viewed in much of Lawrence's fiction is that of the man.

Several feminist critics like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and Judith Ruderman have commented on the sexual politics inherent in Lawrence's novels. In *Sons and Lovers*, the narrative manipulates Mr. Morel, Miriam and Clara as vehicles for the quest for selfhood or self-identity for Paul. In Lawrence's fiction this quest is chiefly masculine, though provisions are made for a woman's sense of self as well. However, even for this, the woman has to subordinate herself to the man and acknowledge him as a master. This is seen for example in the division between the male fraternity in the pits in *Sons and Lovers* and the woman's world at home and in the Women's Guild. Women are reduced to nagging, and even the Guild is seen with derision by the miners. Even though the self can be realized only with a larger sense of community this community exists outside the family, with the woman remaining peripheral to it. Secondly, the figure of Mrs. Morel, as the mother, is seen as trying to devour or consume the identity of her sons, thereby making it necessary that Paul move away from her. Miriam is also blamed for precisely this reason, that she wants all of him to herself; that she will not give Paul his own space. Again, Clara is rejected when she refuses to yield herself up completely to him.

Individual Identity

Several critics (Raymond Williams and John Goode, for example) have dwelt on the transitional nature of the family and the community in Lawrence's fiction, as in the present novel in this case. In order to arrive at a sense of self, Paul must throw off the demands of the community. Thus, the struggle for individual identity that is dictated by the mother's ideology is necessarily a struggle, which will alienate him from the social and even

the familiar, since a true individual identity must ultimately base itself upon impersonality and separateness. (This argument is especially forwarded by John Goode in Rylance:131). However, this quest for self-discovery is situated in the communal itself, since the individual in Lawrence is always embedded in the social. This accounts for the incompleteness of this journey in *Sons and Lovers* since Paul steps towards the town, a more modern manifestation of the social community than Paul's home in the minority locality of Bestwood. However, this apartness of the self ultimately has to generate a newer sense of community that goes beyond conventional notions of the social that feature in both Morel and Mrs. Morel's ideas on community. Morel would like his sons to enter the world of the miners while Mrs. Morel initiates them into her world of the church and the women's guild and wants them to 'get on' in life though a rise into the middle class. Both these, for Paul, ultimately become inadequate because of the refusal of both to take into account the necessity of the other. The fraternity of the miners is a community that bears the imprint of industrialization, and so, surrenders its vitality and spontaneous living to the machine dominated system. The bourgeois world, on the other hand, refuses to take into account on organic sense of community and is more individualistic.

As Raymond Williams points out, the undercurrent of sympathy and the possibility of establishing close quick relationships are what characterises a working class family, where relations between parents and children are not mediated by external figures like those of a nurse or a governess (Williams: 205). The 'self' that emerges from this context is a 'self' that takes into account not only its own self-contained nature but also acknowledges alterity, the otherness of the other as equally self-contained. Thus, this relationship is not underlined by a structure of dominance but by a structure of mutual and reciprocal recognition and acknowledgment. From this perspective, we can see Paul failing in each of his relationships with Mrs. Morel, Miriam and Clara. It is because in each relationship there is a struggle for dominance and power. Paul becomes triumphant is each case but is also, consequently, irrevocably destined to isolation and even alienation, since what he achieves is, in some senses, the overcoming (and

possibly annihilation) of the other. There is only one exception, which is an occasion of lovemaking between Clara and Paul in Chapter 13. Significantly, it takes place out of doors in the midst of nature. It is fulfilling and liberating precisely because it enables the dissolution of their self-contained subjectivities or egos and the emergence into a deeper and more expansive sense of being:

However, such an experience is extremely short-lived, and both revert to themselves. It is this elusive sense of quick, vital life that Lawrence's protagonists are in search of and that defines the quest for self-identity in them.

Nature

This sense of individual identity in Lawrence approaches a deep ecological position that views humans and nature as interrelated, giving a value to each animate and inanimate element of the world that goes beyond and at times contrary to their functional value. This relatedness and the resultant vitality has ideal models in ancient civilizations of Europe and America (from Lawrence's perspective, as seen in his travel writing in particular), but is also present in the world of the English mining countryside. This spontaneous life in England, and elsewhere in similar modernized societies, face a constant threat by the more materialistic mores in the modern world. Sons and Lovers explores this aspect fully as discussed in the other themes since ultimately, all the other themes centre round this primary aspect of nature that builds up the world-view of Lawrence.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is meant by the term Oedipus Complex? How can Paul's relation with his mother be seen as Oedipal?

Q 2: In what ways, according to you, does the theme of class and gender get reflected in the novel *Sons and Lovers*?

Q 3: How are the women characters portrayed in the novel?

Q 4: In his "The Study of Thomas Hardy" how does Lawrence reflect on the difference between 'male' or 'female'.

Q 5: How does Lawrence portray the communal and the individual in his novel?

5.3.2 Lawrence's Art of Characterisation

In a letter to Edward Garnett on 5 June 1914, Lawrence wrote: "You must not look in my novel for the old stable ego—of the character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it was, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element. (Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon. The ordinary novel would trace the history of the diamond – but I say, Diamond, what! This is Carbon, and my diamond might be coal or soot, and my theme is carbon.) You must not say my novel is shaky – it is not perfect, because I am not expert in what I want to do. But it is the real thing, say what you like. And I shall get my reception, if not now, then before long. Again, I say, don't look for the development of the novel to follow the lines of certain characters: the characters fall into the form of some other rhythmic form, as when one draws a fiddle-bow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown."

This is an indication towards the complex characterization in Lawrence's fiction that does not subscribe to an orthodox and absolute moral scheme but explores the changing circumstances of modern life that bring in a sense of estrangement in most of the characters. Most of the characters in Lawrence, therefore, are inevitably torn between contending allegiances to the self and the society. Much of the complications in the plot also result from the attempts of the individual characters to break away from the demands of the human society and culture and turn instead to the more liberal

and dynamic community of a larger natural world. This is also important due to Lawrence's belief in the impersonality of the self that he refers to as "the same single radically unchanged element" in the letter to Edward Garnett. This aspect of the self is thus amoral and therefore comes into conflict with the impositions of social morality. This can be seen for example in the sense of alienation that Paul Morel experiences in the mining community, as well as in the urban milieu. Miriam and Clara also show this sense of estrangement in different ways: Miriam with her withdrawn personality bordering on the asocial, and her fear of sexuality and motherhood instilled by her witnessing the plight of her mother; and Clara with her Suffragette ideology who suffers under the subordination of herself within, first, the domestic setup with Baxter Dawes, and later in her relationship with Paul.

Let us now have a look at some of the major characters of this novel.

Mrs. Morel: Gertrude Coppard, before her marriage to Walter Morel. Mrs. Morel is a woman of small build and great strength of personality that is much more than her husband's. She aspires to move upward in society, and this is indicated by her intellectual interests such as reading newspapers and arranging discussion groups in the Women's Co-operative Guild that she is a member of. Another significant pointer is her pride in what for her is their superior and more intellectual way of life. Her strength of will makes her the centre of the Morel family, and her death in a way has a traumatic impact on the narrative as well as on Paul.

Mr. Morel: Walter Morel. He belongs to the working classes, working as a miner, well satisfied with his position, and possessing an earthly and vital cheerfulness. At the same time, he is poorly educated and has a quick temper due to which he has frequent problems while working with his superiors, although he is a good workman and popular among the miners. Initially he put up a spirited defence of

his authority on his children, but ultimately he proved weaker to Mrs. Morel's mental strength.

Paul Morel: The protagonist of the novel. There is a strong autobiographical streak in his character. The story begins before his birth, but by the second half, it becomes clear that the narrative centres round him.

William Morel: The eldest son of the Morels, he remains to a great extent, an early version of Lawrence's own brother William Ernest in an autobiographical sense and anticipates Paul's position and predicament in the novel. Even though feeling an oppressive intrusion of his mother into his own life as he grows up, William is nevertheless on the way to professional success when he succumbs to his illness. His death at the end of Part 2 brings Paul and his mother closer to each other.

Annie Morel: She is the second child of the Morels. She is given only secondary importance in the narrative, though the incident in Chapter 4 where she watches Paul "sacrificing her doll Arabella, is important in underlining her relationship with Paul, even as it exposes a disturbing streak of brutality in the latter. Since William is too older to Paul to accept him as a companion, Paul as a child "belong[s] at first almost entirely to Annie". Annie is shown as "a tom-boy and a flybie-skybie, as her mother called her. However, she was intensely fond of her second brother. So Paul was towed round at the heels of Annie, sharing her game" (Chapter 4). She waits upon Mrs. Western when the latter visits them with William after she becomes a trainee teacher and moves to Sheffield after she marries, and appears again towards the end during Mrs. Morel's illness. In fact, Mr. Morel becomes ill during her visit to Annie.

Arthur Morel: The youngest of the Morels. He is the one who most closely resembles Morel in his vitality, becoming consequently his father's favourite. Unlike the other members, he is rather distant from his family and ultimately joins the army where he is moderately successful.

Miriam Leivers: The daughter of the Leivers family at Willey Farm, she is fourteen when we first see her in Chapter 6. She develops into a beautiful and sensitive young woman who is constantly held up for comparison by Paul with himself. Her shyness, intensity and religiosity is labelled by Paul as spiritual, and she is ultimately rejected by Paul on this ground even as he is goaded into making a final break by his mother. Thus, she is defeated in her battle with Mrs. Morel and later in her struggle with Clara Dawes for winning the love of Paul. In spite of her ultimate defeat, her role is significant as one of the central persons in Paul's life who helps him in this quest of acquiring self-identity. She, however, is frequently, criticised as moody, withdrawn and limiting, though she is constantly exploited by Paul as a threshing floor for his ideas.

Clara Dawes: Miriam's rival in love. She appears first in Chapter 8 walking with Miriam, and exerts the power of her sexuality on Paul. She is part of the women's Movement and is independent and self-willed. Paul's affair with Clara (largely on physical terms) gradually begins to threaten his relationship with Miriam. Paul frequently visits Clara at her home in Nottingham and after a time, she rejoins her work at Jordan's. Their lovemaking unlike Paul's with Miriam, takes place outdoors, amid nature, not in the claustrophobic confines of the house, signifying the liberating and cathartic effect it has on both. Unlike Miriam, who has a small build and holds traditional and romantic views, Clara is large and physical and her views and opinions are progressive. The narrative, taking Paul's point of view, tends to posit Clara as the body as opposed to Miriam as the soul.

Baxter Dawes: Clara's husband. He, like Morel, is a working-class man who is vulgar and coarse. Baxter Dawes and Clara seem to enact a marriage that closely follows the pattern of the Morel marriage, thereby creating of them some kind of surrogate father and mother figures in the narrative. Paul's fight with Baxter, thereby takes on an oedipal angle similar to Paul's mental struggle against or hostility to Mr. Morel. Paul's restoring Clara to Dawes, therefore, can be seen as compensatory or a return to the symbolic in the act

of restoring the wife to the husband or the mother back to the father, given that the same does not happen in Paul's own family. Though Baxter Dawes is hostile to Paul because of the perceived intellectual superiority of the latter, both share a capacity for passion.

Mrs. Leivers: Miriam's mother. Since she also does not belong to the mining society like Mrs. Morel, both become good friends. However, unlike Mrs. Morel who is shown in a continual struggle both inside and outside the home for the survival of her self-identity, Mrs. Leivers is resigned to her conventional roles as mother and wife, and retreats into a spirituality that is inherited by Miriam.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Briefly state Lawrence's own ideas of Characterisation.

5.3.3 Lawrence's Narrative Style

Sons and Lovers shows aspects of Lawrence's modernism even though it differs in nature from the formal experimentation that novelists like Woolf and Joyce made. The novel had established its dominance as a literary form during the nineteenth century and closely stuck to realism in the first half. However, the second half of the nineteenth century saw a revolution in ideas that confounded the rationalist tradition continuing from the Enlightenment. The mid- and late-nineteenth century novelists like Charles Dickens, Emile Zola, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Thomas Hardy had questioned some of the prevailing assumptions of technological, industrial and scientific progress and explored the impact of modernity on the ethical and moral structures in society. Accordingly, the novel manifested this change even in its form and structure, which was erstwhile based on a realist and naturalist model. This manifested itself for example in the allegorical, symbolic and grotesque nature of Dickens's later novels and Hardy's visionary rather than naturalistic description of

nature especially in the later works *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). The break with the nineteenth century world was decisively made further by the combined ideas of Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Lawrence, who grew up in the backdrop of such a paradigm shift in the world of ideas, also naturally echoed it in the manner he approached novel writing and the major preoccupations inherent in his novels.

With regard to the structure of the novel, newer and more experimental approaches of capturing live experiences and the unconscious mind's responses to them and representing them through the form of the novel had yielded to the narratives of "Stream-of-consciousness". It was tentative, fragmentary, non-linear and devoid of a conventional plot, it was thus an attempt to subvert the old conventional reality and its representation that found its way into novels such as James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Light House*. On the other hand, there were the other modernists like E.M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence who apparently remained within the conventional form of the novel in their works, but if we analyse their novels closely, we can see how the sequential narrative of events, characters and novels are distorted by holes within them in the shape of events that cannot be accounted for, or possess an intense inner life that goes beyond their dependence on linearity and realist representation (Marsh 208-9).

Another aspect that is present in *Sons and Lovers* and influences the narrative style is the *Bildungsroman* tradition, as well as the tradition of psychological realism in English fiction. Though the term Bildungsroman became current in English only in 1910, the form itself was dominant in Victorian fiction with some famous novels like Dickens' *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss.* By the fag-end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, through novelists like

Henry James and Joseph Conrad, this tradition of subjective fiction underwent another revision, when these novelists put more emphasis on the characters' perceptions and interpretations of them in the perplexing mazes of 'consciousness' than on the events and action within the novel. This brand of psychological realism had in fact preceded the 'Bildungsroman' tradition, going back to the 1740s and Samuel Richardson (Baldick: 189). The narrative of *Sons and Lovers*, accordingly, can be seen from this perspective as it explores the gradual development of Paul's individual sense of identity as well as his growing apartness as an autonomous subject. Again, there is the subject of education (making way for the relevance of the Bildungsroman tag to the narrative) in as much as it is through education, (literally) and through the dynamics of Paul's relationships with his parents (his mother in particular) and his lovers that he struggles to emerge as an autonomous self. Psychological realism, in a larger sense, incorporates a subjectivity in the novel that opens up the inner world of the character's consciousness, so that external reality ceases to be centre-stage but instead, is mediated through the subjective self of the character herself or himself. This aspect is strongly evident in *Sons and Lovers*, especially the character of Paul whose subjectivity is the most dominant in the novel.

The narrative technique adopted in *Sons and lovers* is that of the third-person point of view. That said, however, it becomes necessary to see how the omniscient or third-person point of view is qualified in the narrative through the focalization of the various characters. Furthermore, there are shifts even in the narrator's perspective, as Graham Holderness points out ["Language and Social Content in Sons and Lovers", from *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction*, reprinted in Rick Rylance (ed.) *Sons and Lovers: New Casebooks*]. For instance, Holderness sees the opening of *Sons and Lovers* as an instance of the distinction between "detached" and the "direct" perspectives on the mining community. Starting from an "aerial" view while describing the location of the

Bottom, the narrative perspective comes nearer (even though the detached perspective of the superficial observer is continued) when the narrative concentrates upon the appearance of the houses themselves. Accompanying this detached description is the use of the impersonal "one". However, when the perspective moves still closer, from the parlour and the front gardens of the houses to the kitchen and the alley and them into Mrs. Morel's house, the detachment of the narrative perspective is replaced by a direct inside view, expressed in "a language of real existence". "The observer's perspective is contrasted with the participant's knowledge". Lawrence, thereby, shows two kinds of "impersonality" namely that which derives from superficial observation or ignorance and that which derives from the ability to see the life of a mining community with both inward knowledge and a wider perspective". (Rylance: 136-137).

Other commentators like Louis L. Martz and Diane S. Bonds, have explored the ambiguity in the narratorial voice that destabilizes its authority. Martz, in "A Portrait of Miriam: A study in the Design of *Sons and Lovers*" (Rylance: 49-73) examines the infiltration of Paul's point of view into the narrator's 'voice' and its implications for the portrayal of Miriam in the narrative. Miriam becomes ambiguous because the action in the sections featuring Miriam conflict with the narrative voice interpreting them. In chapter 8 for example in the novel, in the scene featuring Miriam and Paul in Miriam's grandmother's house, we see the interpretation of the narrative voice. Miriam is sensuous and her love for Paul at this point is not only spiritual/emotional but physical also, but it is Paul who recoils and is subsequently filled with hatred for her. Therefore, we can see the impersonal narrative voice being supplanted with the focalization of Paul. In fact, this occurs through much of Part 2 especially. However, Paul's point of view also comes into conflict with Miriam's and Clara's when the narrative voice, on certain occasions, seems to align itself with the points of views of the latter two.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Comment on the different narrative techniques used in this novel.

Q 8: Mention the three different narrative techniques used by Lawrence?

5.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *SONS AND LOVERS*

Sons and Lovers has been taken by many critics to be more an "apologia than a novel" (Salgado (Casebook) (1993): 11) due to the degree of the author's involvement in the book, so that the initial criticism of the book was largely biographical in nature, concerned with the question of how truly and faithfully he had depicted real people and real events in the book. A significant commentary of Lawrence's portrait of Miriam, for example was provided by Jessie Chambers under the pseudonym 'ET' in *D H Lawrence: A Personal Record.* However, such criticism ultimately serves to take away the attention from the novel in itself to an examination of the private life of the author and the degree to which it is reflected in the novel. Secondly, almost immediately after *Sons and Lovers* appeared another school of criticism, based largely on Freudian theories emerged, perceiving a strong dramatization of the Oedipus complex in the book. While contemporary psychoanalytic criticism of *Sons and Lovers* frequently made it too reductive in the process, later theorists have, however, provided a fresh and interesting perspective through its concern with the processes of repression and sublimation. (Salgado: 1993, 15). On example of such criticism is Simon Lesser's *Fiction and the Unconscious* (1957).

Since the late 1960s, however, there has been a tremendous shift in Lawrence criticism especially in the methodology of the critics. As Rick Rylance notes in the New Casebook on *Sons and Lovers*, earlier criticism "searched the novel for evidence of coherence, growth and moral wisdom. *Sons and Lovers* was assumed to have a cohesive stylish and formal organisation and demonstrating a view of life from which something could

be learnt. Today, these things are no longer looked for. Feminist and socialist critics, to take the most obvious examples are more interested in the novel's ideological limits and possibilities while, in the discussion of literary form, much recent criticism emphasizes, not the integrity of the text, but ambiguities, eddies of meaning and disturbing sub-texts (Rylance : 1). One example of such a shift is Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969), where she vehemently attacks patriarchy and closely examines the political aspects of sexuality, and the workings of power and violence in it as manifesting a "systematic condition of patriarchal culture (Rylance: 9). Lawrence, one of five male authors taken up by Millett, is attacked for representing and reinforcing male domination as an eternally valid truth or a given, and masculinity as superior in the very order of nature. *Sons and Lovers*, for Millett, is a novel remarkable for its depiction of working-class life and its forceful delineation of the limited and almost non-existent opportunities for self-fulfilment in the life of women like Mrs. Morel and Mrs. Leivers.

Millett's radical feminist position on Lawrence became a landmark in Lawrence criticism and paved the way for diverse feminist readings of his novel, though Millett herself was regarded as guilty of being too reductive in her equation of Lawrence with Paul, the protagonist of *Sons and Lovers*. A similarly radical position on the question of gender in Lawrence was taken by Louis Martz in his essay "A Portrait of Miriam" that explored the narrative point-of-view in the novel in order to reveal the gaps in the depiction or "portrait" of Miriam. This essay resists the dominant interpretation of Miriam as insipid and excessively spiritual, arguing that this is only one perspective produced primarily by Paul's point of view that dominates the narrative. Martz closely reads Chapter 7-11 in order to question the supposed realism of the narrative. For Martz, as against the relative neutrality of the earlier and later parts of the narrative, its middle (comprising the above mentioned chapters) seems to self-consciously incorporate a forcefulness of commentary on Miriam that is resonant not of the point-of-view of a largely neutral third-person narrator but of the confusions and tensions arising in Paul's consciousness itself. Thus, the narrator in these chapters, though still technically omniscient, becomes to a great extent, unreliable. Following

Martz, critics like Diane S. Bonds, Graham Holderness and Tony Pinkney have questioned the validity of the novel's association with realism, insisting more on the constructed and fictional nature of such an ostensible neutrality that the realistic mode proclaims.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that significance of the title *Sons and Lovers* can be seen in the light of the Freudian theory of the Oedipus Complex. However, the novel can also be read against important and contextually relevant themes like Class, society and social Mobility, the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the loss of the Industrial Landscape, Gender and Patriarchy and, struggle for Individual Identity. However, implicit in such themes is also an account of certain other related themes, like the dominance of a mother figure, human relationships and psychosexual identity. You have also learnt to see that Lawrence's narrative technique focuses chiefly on the problematisation of the third-person point of view. These have been some of the significant areas for critical discussion of *Sons and Lovers* since it was first published till the present time. Much of contemporary criticism has capitalized on the radical processes evolved by theories such as post-structuralism, narratology and psychoanalysis, gender studies, cultural studies, and film studies, and so on, while earlier criticism of the novel had tended to place it in a largely autobiographical and moralist and ethical framework.



5.6 FURTHER READING

1) Butler, Lance St. John. (1980). *D. H. Lawrence: 'Sons and Lovers'*, Houlow, Essen: Longman & Beimt: York Press.

2) Celly, Ashok. (Ed.). (2006). *D.H. Lawrence, 'Sons and Lovers'*. Delhi: Worldview Publications.

3) Clarke, Colin. (Ed). (1969). *D.H. Lawrence*: *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* : A casebook London : Macmillan.

4) Freud, Sigmund. (2006). "The Oedipus Complex" in *D.H. Lawrence*: *Sons and Lovers*, (Ed.) Ashok Celly, Delhi: Worldview Publications. pp. 433-39

5) Holderness, Graham. "Language and Social Context in Sons and Lovers" in *Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebook Series, 133-154.

6) La Chapelle, Dolres. (1996) *D. H. Lawrence: Further Primitive*. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press.

7) Marsh, Nicholas. (2000). *D.H. Lawrence: The Novels*. London: Macmillan.

8) Martz, Louish "A Portrait of Miriam : A Study in the Design of Sons and Lovers". In *'Sons and Lovers' : Contemporary Critical Essays*. Pp. 49 –73

9) Millett, Kate. "Sexual Politics in *Sons and Lovers*" in *Sons and Lovers: Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 74-88.

10) Rylance, Rick. (Ed.). (1996). *'Sons and Lovers'; Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebook Series. London : Macmillan.

11) Ruderman, Judith. (1984). *D.H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother*. Durham, NC : Duke University Press.

12) Sanders, Scott "Society and Ideology in Sons and Lovers". In *Sons and Lovers: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Pp. 155 – 170.

13) Sklenicka, Carol. (1991). *D.H. Lawrence and the Child*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press.

14) Salgado, Gamini. (Ed). (1969). *D.H. Lawrence: 'Sons and Lovers': A Selection of Critical Essays*, Casebook series, London: Macmillan.

15) Williams, Raymond. (1963). *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell*. Harmousworth: Penguin.

16) Worthen, John. (1979). *D.H. Lawrence and the Idea of the Novel*, London: Macmillan.

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Oedipus complex is the choice of the mother as "love-object" of the child… …the child's rejection of the castrated mother in favour of the phallic father and entry into the social world of the father… …traces of the Oedipal complex, however, exist in the psyche of the individual even when he grows up into adulthood… …there are some instances in the novel (in chapter 8) which shows the eroticized relation between Mrs. Morel and Paul, within the family.

Ans to Q 2: *Sons and Lovers* beautifully records the transition from a working-class society to middle-class and the consequent ideological clash… …Raymond Williams sees Lawrence as registering a transition from an older organic community to a more individualized and lonely social world… …Lawrence presents a picture of the Bottoms, followed by a more detailed description of the neat and decent front view of the houses countered by the ugly, dirty and "scrubby" back portion of the houses opening to the ash pits.

Ans to Q 3: The woman becomes the centre of the family as a social unit… …this was largely because it was she who was usually at home at all times, and looked after the children and accompanied them in their leisure… …the father who was mainly a worker or a miner was usually away for most of the day in the pit and the evening in the pub.

Ans to Q 4: Lawrence argued that the most authentic relationship between a man and a woman would transcend the conventions of society regarding love, family responsibilities, society, religion… … a male-female relationship in Lawrence is essential to fulfil the utmost the female elements in the woman and the male elements in the man… …several feminist critics like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett and Judith Ruderman have commented on the sexual politics inherent in Lawrence's novels.

Ans to Q 5: Lawrence projects the quest for self-discovery as situated in the communal itself, since the individual in Lawrence is always embedded in the social… … this apartness of the self ultimately has to generate a newer sense of community that goes beyond conventional notions of the social that feature in both Morel and Mrs. Morel's ideas on community… …the bourgeois world, on the other hand, refuses to take into account on organic sense of community and is more individualistic.

Ans to Q 6: The characters in Lawrence's novels fall into the form of some other rhythmic form… …this is an indication towards the complex characterisation in Lawrence's fiction that does not subscribe to an orthodox and absolute moral scheme but explores the changing circumstances of modern life that bring in a sense of estrangement in most of the characters… …most of the characters in Lawrence, therefore, are inevitably torn between contending allegiances to the self and the society.

Ans to Q 7: The narrative technique adopted in *Sons and lovers* is that of the third-person point of view. But this view is qualified through the focalization of the various characters… …Holderness sees the opening of the novel as an instance of the distinction between "detached" and the "direct" perspectives on the mining community… …commentators like Louis L. Martz and Diane S. Bonds, have explored the ambiguity in the narratorial voice that destabilises its authority.

Ans to Q 8: *Sons and Lovers* shows aspects of Lawrence's modernism even though it differs in nature from the formal experimentation of Woolf and Joyce… …with regard to the structure of the novel, the novelist adopts "Stream of Consciousness" to capture live experiences and the unconscious mind's responses to them… …another aspect that is present in *Sons and Lovers* and influences the narrative style is the *Bildungsroman* tradition, as well as the tradition of psychological realism in English fiction.



5.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How does *Sons and Lovers* connect autobiography with Freudian psychology? Support your answer with the examples from the novel.

Q 2: Explore the idea that Paul Morel is a type of the "modern" protagonist whose experiences reflect on a modern conflict-ridden society.

Q 3: *Sons and Lovers* can be seen as a novel, which is simultaneously 'realistic', 'psychological', and 'symbolic'. Elaborate.

Q 4: Discuss the role played by the women characters in Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Q 5: Examine to what extent *Sons and Lovers* displays the modernist preoccupation with 'consciousness' as its major theme.

Q 6: Discuss Lawrence's definitions of 'sex' in terms of his concept of 'life' and 'community'.

Q 7: In what way is a 'modern' novel like *Sons and Lovers* concerned with issues of identity?

Q 8: Analyse the portrayal of Paul and Miriam in terms of Lawrence's study of gender roles.

Q 9: Explain the point of view adopted by Lawrence in his descriptions of the industrialised countryside in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Q 10: How does the novel *Sons and Lovers* project the sense of community against the dehumanising effects of industrialisation?

Q 11: Discuss how the novel *Sons and Lovers* documents social tensions. What kind of social aspirations are epitomised by the Morels in the novel?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 6 : INTRODUCING "STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS" NOVELS

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Impact of Psychology

- 6.3.1 William James (1842–1910)
- 6.3.2 Henry Bergson (1859–1941)
- 6.3.3 Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
- 6.3.4 Alfred Adler (1870-1937)
- 6.3.5 Carl Gustav Jung (1875 –1961)

6.4 Important Novelists of Stream of Consciousness

- 6.4.1 Dorothy Miller Richardson (1873–1957)
- 6.4.2 Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)
- 6.4.3 James Joyce (1882-1941)
- 6.4.4 D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930)

6.5 Use of Interior Monologue

6.6 Let us Sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.9 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the technique of Stream of Consciousness in the context of the 20th century fiction
- discuss the impact of Psychology on the development of the Stream of Consciousness as a technique of fiction writing
- identify the 20th century fiction writers who made optimum use of the technique in their novels and appreciate their works
- discuss the significance of Stream of Consciousness novels in the development of modern fiction.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the Block 2 of the Course on 20th century novels. This unit shall introduce you to Stream of Consciousness fiction. Stream of Consciousness is a phrase used by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to delineate the characteristics of consciousness into fiction and to describe the techniques employed by some novelists to enshrine the vague and fleeting thoughts in their novels. With this concept, James tried to describe the unbroken flow of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings in the waking mind; which later came to be adopted broadly to describe a narrative method in modern fiction. This kind of fiction is marked by long passages of introspection, in which the narrator records in detail what passes through a character's awareness, exemplified by novelists from Samuel Richardson, through William James' brother Henry James, to many novelists of the modern era such as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and a few others. This technique became synonymous with new experiments in language and techniques to present the inner workings of the mind in to words. However, you will note that these experiments were motivated by diverse forces, revolutionary theories in the field of Psychology, Art and Science. This unit will provide a detailed analysis of the Stream of Consciousness technique used in modernist novels, which shall further help you to discuss the prescribed Stream of Consciousness Novels in this Block.

6.3 IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGY

In this section, we shall try to briefly look at the history of the emergence of the "Stream of Consciousness" as a representational technique in modernist novels. In order to do so we shall try to look at the contribution of those thinkers and philosophers whose discussions and researches over human psychology helped in the emergence of the Stream of Consciousness Technique.

6.3.1 William James (1842–1910)

He was an American philosopher and psychologist, and the first educator to offer a psychology course in the United

States. James was one of the leading thinkers of the late 19th century and is believed by many to be one of the most influential philosophers the United States has ever produced, while others have labelled him the "Father of American psychology."

James published the book *The Principles of Psychology* in 1980, and there he proclaimed that thought belonged to a personal consciousness and it is always changing. Thus, James used Stream of Consciousness as a technique to signify the continuous flow of thought and its variations. Sometimes we feel that we have smelt the same perfume or same pain as experienced before. The physical and the ideal objects in the outside world seem to steer up same thoughts repeatedly, as we look at them second or third times. However, this is an erroneous impression, as one cannot have the same sensation of an object twice. Again, two sensations of the same object can never be alike, because as we grow, our experience changes, our sensibility changes. James believed that thought belonging to a personal consciousness is never stationary; it always moves and is continuous. Even the intervention of time cannot break the continuity of consciousness and self both. James believed that consciousness runs in a stream and flows like a river, therefore he preferred to use the term "Stream of Thought". The outside object of the world may sometimes appear to be broken or discontinuous, it may be isolated and separated in space and time, but according to William James, their thought in the brain is not to be taken as broken and discontinuous. This shifting of thought in the consciousness from one object to the other does not mean any break in thought. When a huge explosion takes place, there is an abrupt transition of thought from one object to another. In fact, there is no break in the flow of consciousness. In James' opinion, Stream of Consciousness has different rates of change, and in the shift of thought, there are various stages. It can sometimes be compared to the life of a bird, which consists of 'alteration of flights and perchings.'

Along with providing his views on thought and consciousness, James also took up the question of self. According to him, the self is constantly changing and varying. The present self is different from the previous self. Thus, by nature, a person is the blend of changing and moving thoughts and other psychological states. The personality is not just in the state of being but always in the state of becoming. Thus, James would like to believe that a person is actually a 'flux of identities'. This view had important bearing on the Stream of Consciousness novels.

6.3.2 Henry Bergson (1859–1941)

Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941) was a French philosopher who was influential in the tradition of continental philosophy, especially during the first half of the 20th century until World War II. Bergson is known for his influential arguments that processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality. Breaking with the traditional philosophers, Bergson denounced intellect, which does not help a person to grasp the reality. Intellect analyses, classifies, conceptualises and splits the flow of reality as if it were a thing existing in space. The breaking of reality into parts may serve the cause of the language and society, but it will never help us to comprehend the reality. Because, reality is a continuous flow and can be understood through intuition and sympathy. Reality is an 'immediate experience' and is in a constant state of flux.

In his famous work *Time and Free Will*, Bergson reiterates that analysis and description only distorts the feelings, and do not enable us to understand the experience. According to Bergson, reality means the real duration. It is 'time perceived as invisible'. Although there is an element of succession in time, in this succession, it cannot be specified that so much is before and so much is after. Bergson related the idea of succession with that of the melody. In melody,

there is no impression of 'simultaneity', we rather think that one note is following the other, but at the same time, the succession can never be split up. The continuity cannot be broken. Bergson further makes a distinction between psychological time or inner time and mechanical time or the time of the clock. It is elastic and is the prolongation of the past into the present and the future. This concept of time has been beautifully portrayed into the novels of Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Bergson regarded personality as the sum total of mental states i.e. sensation, feelings, desires, memories and ideas. These mental states are dynamic. In personality Bergson perceives 'the continuous melody of inner life—a melody which is going on and will go on indivisible from the beginning to the end of our conscious existence.'

6.3.3 Sigmund Freud (1856—1939)

Freud was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst. In the proliferation of the psychoanalytic movement, Freud is among the three most brilliant names along with Adler and Jung. Freud employed the method of 'free association' to cure all his patients. His patients were supposed to relate all their mental experiences pleasant and unpleasant, trivial and significant, without any inhibitions in order to enable the analyst to diagnose his ailment. This way, the patient was under no restriction or control but was free. The dreams related by the patients were also of great use, as they according to Freud concealed the real cause of ailment and neurosis, and by analysing and interpreting the dreams, Freud tried to get at the truth. Sometimes, the patients recounted their childhood sex experiences, and the causes of neurosis could be traced back to infantile sexuality. Thus, Freud attached a great significance to the study of dreams. When we are asleep, most of our experiences appear in the form of visual images and are also mixed with thoughts and feelings.

However, in Freudian Psychology, the study of the unconscious is also very important. The thoughts and feelings coming from the unconscious into the conscious are not allowed to enter the focus of consciousness, but they are repressed. As found in M. H. Abrams *Glossary*, Freud's model of the mind has three functional aspects: the **id** (which incorporates libidinal and other desires), the superego (the internalization of standards of morality and propriety), and the **ego** (which tries as best it can to negotiate the conflicts between the insatiable demands of the id, the impossibly stringent requirements of the **superego**, and the limited possibilities of gratification offered by the world of "reality"). Freud recommends **free** living for removing repression. In his analytic treatment, the dormant thoughts are brought out from the unconscious into the conscious. In the field of fiction writing in the 20th century, treatment of the unconscious became a common feature in the works of Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, Green and so on.

6.3.4 Alfred Adler (1870-1937)

Alfred W. Adler, one of the most cited psychologists was an Austrian medical doctor, psychotherapist, and founder of the school of individual psychology. His emphasis on the importance of feelings of inferiority, the inferiority complex, is recognized as an isolating element, which plays a key role in personality development. Adler was the first to emphasize the importance of the social element in the re-adjustment process of the individual and who carried psychiatry into the community. In collaboration with Freud and a small group of other colleagues, Adler was among the co-founders of the psychoanalytic movement and a core member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. He was the first major figure to break away from psychoanalysis to form an independent school of psychotherapy and personality theory, which he called individual psychology because he believed a human to be an indivisible whole, an *individuum*. He also imagined a person to be connected or

associated with the surrounding world.

His book *The Neurotic Character* defines his key ideas. He argued that human personality could be explained teleologically: parts of the individual's unconscious self ideally work to convert feelings of inferiority to superiority (or rather completeness). The desires of the self-ideal were countered by social and ethical demands. If the corrective factors were disregarded and the individual overcompensated, then an inferiority complex would occur, fostering the danger of the individual becoming egocentric, power-hungry and aggressive or worse.

Adler placed great emphasis upon the interpretation of early memories in working with patients and schoolchildren, writing that, "Among all psychic expressions, some of the most revealing are the individual's memories." Adler viewed memories as expressions of "private logic" and as metaphors for an individual's personal philosophy of life or "lifestyle." He maintained that memories are never incidental or trivial; rather, they are chosen reminders:

"(A person's) memories are the reminders she carries about with her of her limitations and of the meanings of events. There are no 'chance' memories. Out of the incalculable number of impressions that an individual receives, she chooses to remember only those which she considers, however dimly, to have a bearing on her problems."

Adler's idea of inferiority and the psychical compensation have been beautifully depicted in *Ulysses* through the hallucinations and daydreams of Leopold Bloom.

6.3.5 Carl Gustav Jung (1875 –1961)

[Adapted from MH Abram's *Glossary*]

Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. Jung's mature version of depth psychology is very different from that of his predecessor, and what we call **Jungian criticism** of literature departs

radically from psychoanalytic criticism. Jung's emphasis is not on the individual unconscious, but on what he calls the "collective unconscious," shared by all individuals in all cultures, which he regards as the repository of "racial memories" and of primordial images and patterns of experience that he calls *archetypes.*

Like Freud, Jung does not view literature as a disguised form of libidinal wish-fulfilment that largely parallels the fantasies of a neurotic personality. Instead, Jung regards great literature as, like the myths whose patterns recur in diverse cultures, an expression of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. A great author possesses, and provides for readers, access to the archetypal images buried in the racial memory, and so succeeds in revitalizing aspects of the psyche, which are essential both to individual self-integration and to the mental and emotional well-being of the human race. Jung's theory of literature has been a cardinal formative influence on *archetypal criticism* and *myth criticism.* In his view, the creative artists have depicted the collective unconscious and archetypal patterns through their use of the mythological subject matter. It is important to mention that novelists like D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and James Joyce have used mythology, the archetypal patterns, and the collective unconsciousness in their novels.

From your reading of the above-mentioned thinkers, it may be assumed that the "Stream of Consciousness" technique in fiction carries the imprints of normal and abnormal psychology. William James' theory of consciousness, Bergson's theory of psychological time, and the researches into the unconscious undertaken by Freud, Adler and Jung into the Unconscious rendered significant influences towards the development of the Stream of Consciousness technique in the field of fiction. For example, Freud's interpretations of dreams, his ideas of Oedipus complex, incest etc. have greatly affected the works of James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. In similar way, Adler's ideas of self-assertion and inferiority complex and Carl Jung's notion

of collective unconscious, his use of mythology and psychological types–all these have been beautifully presented in the novels of James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Aldous Huxley.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did William James take the idea of consciousness?

Q 2: What is Henry Bergson's contribution to the researches on psychology? Explain.

Q 3: How is the Freudian model of the mind?

Q 4: State Adler's contributions to the field of psychology. What did he state about memory?

Q 5: How does Jung differ from his predecessors like Freud while formulating his ideas on the unconscious?

6.4 IMPORTANT NOVELISTS OF STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The rise of the Stream of Consciousness technique marks the beginning of a new phase in English fiction just before the outbreak of World War I. The writings of William James and Henri Bergson, and the researches undertaken by Freud, Adler and Jung, the scientific theses of Einstein, the post impressionistic paintings, cubists and surrealist thoughts—all directly or indirectly influenced the Stream of Consciousness technique. You will note that this technique has been beautifully used by some of the early 20th century writers, as mentioned in the following.

6.4.1 Dorothy Miller Richardson (1873–1957)

Dorothy Richardson was a British author and journalist. Author of *Pilgrimage*, a sequence of 13 semi-autobiographical novels–though Richardson saw them as chapters of one work–she was one of the earliest modernist novelists to use stream of consciousness as a narrative technique. Richardson also emphasizes in *Pilgrimage* the importance and distinct nature of

female experiences. Critics say that *Pilgrimage* alludes not only to the journey of the artist...to self-realization but, more practically, to the discovery of a unique creative form and expression on the part of the artist.

Richardson was one of a select group of writers who changed the rules of prose fiction at the beginning of the 20th century. With James Joyce in Ireland, Marcel Proust in France, William Faulkner in the United States and, Virginia Woolf in England, Richardson invented a new form of writing. With Proust and Joyce, she has been at the forefront of a revolution in literature. The first "chapter" of her long work *Pilgrimage* was begun in 1913 and published in 1915, two years after the publication of the first volume of A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu, a year after the first appearance of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and seven years before Woolf's first experimental novel *Jacob's Room*.

The first 10 "chapters" of Pilgrimage were published by Duckworth at lengthening intervals between 1915 and 1931: Pointed Roofs (1915), Backwater (1916), Honeycomb (1917), The Tunnel (1919), Interim (1919), Deadlock (1921), Revolving Lights (1923), The Trap (1925), Oberland (1927), and Dawn's Left Hand (1931). Extracts from Interim were published in Little Review 1919–20. The eleventh chapter, Clear Horizon, was published by Dent in 1935. In 1979, *Pilgrimage* was recognized as a feminist classic. Although a number of critical terms have been used to describe *Pilgrimage*, Richardson was not happy with May Sinclair's description of her work as "stream of consciousness." In fact, she denied that she was writing a novel at all. Novels, in Richardson's opinion, always suffered from being "conducted tours." *Pilgrimage* in contrast gradually develops its own aesthetic, always deferring either an ending or narrative resolution.



LET US KNOW

You will note that London finds a prominent place in the early 20th century fiction be it Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* or Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage.* This novel is marked by her experience of working for £1 a week in London at the beginning of the 20th century. Her literary aesthetic was always concerned with the relationship between women's work and art. *Pilgrimage*, which is a semi-autobiographical work, covers the life of its protagonist Miriam Henderson, from early childhood to the moment she becomes a writer. As the novel progresses, London is an "elastic" material space that facilitates Miriam's public life. London's streets, cafes, restaurants, and clubs figure largely in her explorations, which extend her knowledge of both the city and herself. Uncomfortable with, even hostile to, the 19th century conventions of femininity, Miriam seeks a third space between masculinity and femininity, developing a new and evolving form of gendered identity that is enabled by the possibilities the city offers.

She sustains a stream-of-consciousness mode of narrative, focused exclusively on the mind and perceptions of her heroine, throughout the twelve volumes of her novel *Pilgrimage* (1915-38). Her work was the subject of intense critical discussion in the 1920s, given its centrality to the emergence of modernist prose fiction. After a brief dip in the 1930s, there again emerged a renewed critical interest after World War II and her work started to receive due recognition with the critical revisions following second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. In subsequent years, Richardson has been fully restored to the modernist canon.

6.4.2 Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)

Woolf's experimental aesthetic, her founding of the Hogarth Press (along with her husband, Leonard Woolf), and her membership in the Bloomsbury Group, place her at the centre of British

modernism in the first 40 years of the 20th century. She was also a reviewer trying to understand the implicit contract between the writer and reader. Woolf's first two novels *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* are formally conventional, though their plots examine changing relationships between men and women, women's entry into the workforce and their demands for suffrage. However, it was her involvement with the Hogarth Press, which permitted Woolf to become an experimental novelist.

Her novel *Jacob's Room* evinces several preoccupations that would mark, to a certain degree, all of Woolf's subsequent work. The first preoccupation is her sense that both the World Wars altered the human condition and experience in some profound and inescapable way. Therefore, even autobiographical novels such as both *Jacob's Room* and *To the Lighthouse* would have their timeframes altered to include the War. Scenes from her most popular novel, *The Years* (1937), would be set in basements during air raids. Her final novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), takes into account how we understand and how we create history on the eve of World War II. Her concern with the war's effect is closely related to her careful historicizing of all her characters' lives.

Her second preoccupation is her concern for a more aesthetic and meaningful relationship between her ideas and the forms of her novels, one less preoccupied with plot–which she suggested in her modernist manifesto, "Modern Fiction," doesn't reflect the lives we live: "The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old …life is not a set of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." This view was to play a significant role in her emerging as a famous Stream of Consciousness novelist.

The form of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Woolf's second experimental novel, makes use of focalization that is handed off like a baton in a relay between characters who hear the same sounds or view the same sights over a single day in London (a strategy she will use again in *To the Lighthouse*). In this way, the novel formally echoes the thematic balance between the intimacy of love and friendship that connects individuals with both the necessity and the ache of isolation. The main narrative arc follows Clarissa Dalloway, who is to give a party in the evening, a party she views as a creative offering to her community of friends; at the same time, however, Clarissa contemplates her isolation from her husband, from her daughter, from her one-time suitor, Peter Walsh. The second narrative arc follows Septimus Warren Smith, a young man suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder after serving in World War I, who is misunderstood and thus isolated by a medical establishment that advises him to get out of his "funk" by taking an interest in cricket. The arcs of the novel are connected when Smith's suicide is revealed at Clarissa's party and Clarissa intuits both his isolation and his attempts to communicate.

Virginia Woolf's novels have depicted the psychological and internal time, involuntary memory, instincts and intuitions while dealing with the Stream of Consciousness technique. In the following units, you will read about Virginia Woolf and her novel *To The Lighthouse* in sufficient detail.

6.4.3 James Joyce (1882-1941)

James Joyce's works reflected his life, his times, and his varied cultures both in their themes and in their aesthetic aims and development. Joyce adopted a mode of writing in clean, dry, hard prose that exemplified the modernists' repudiation of the opulent emotional language they attributed to romanticism. The long chapter 42 of Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady,* for example, is entirely given over to the narrator's description of the process of Isabel's memories, thoughts, and feelings. As early as 1888 a minor French writer,

Edouard Dujardin, wrote a short novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés* ("The Laurels Have Been Cut") which is a rather crude but sustained attempt to represent the scenes and events of the story solely as they impinge upon the consciousness of the central character. James Joyce developed a variety of devices for stream-of-consciousness narrative in *Ulysses* (1922). Here is a passage of interior monologue from the "Lestrygonian" episode, in which Leopold Bloom saunters through Dublin, observing and musing:

Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butter scotch. A sugar-sticky girl shovelling scoopfuls of creams for a Christian brother. Some school treat. Bad for their tummies. Lozenge and comfit manufacturer to His Majesty the King. God. Save. Our. Sitting on his throne, sucking red jujubes white.



LET US KNOW

Joycean:

Characteristic of the style, tone and peculiarities of the writings of James Joyce with particular reference to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Principally, this style of writing refers to a high degree of stylistic and technical inventiveness and originality in the use of the pun, the portmanteau word, symbolism and the stream of consciousness technique. It may also allude to his inclination towards scatology, his habit of joining up numerous words and using little or no punctuation for many pages on end. In addition, his creation of what is virtually a 'private language', especially in *Finnegans Wake* is important to note.

6.4.4 D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930)

D. H. Lawrence is known for his challenging, and controversial fiction of the modernist period. His fiction maintains his position at the heart of twentieth-century British literature with its combination of social and domestic realism and poetic intensity in works that bear witness to a deeply felt belief that the conditions and repercussions of political modernity required a new kind of writing, a new relation to language. The early novels deconstruct

romantic and sexual love. The reception *Sons and Lovers*, was almost wholly positive. It was taken to epitomize a Freudian and confessional mode – a critical response that vexed Lawrence and which he repudiated. While he shared with Freud an interest in the instinctive life (he wrote two books on the unconscious), Lawrence nevertheless rejected what he knew of Freudian psychology, which he viewed as symptomatic of a modernity that pathologized sex. Thematically, the mature novels constitute a sustained critique of cultural and individual violence and advocate, albeit indirectly, an end of the degraded institutions and relations of modernity, and a new, untested notion of selfhood.

Lawrence's principal characters frequently undergo metaphysical journeys in which the birth of the self is the unforeseen and unexamined goal. However, in the later novels the impersonal aesthetic of the mature writing tends to give way to an over conscious messianic version of individualism before resorting to the solutions of a highly personal primitivist vision. An earlier sensitivity to community similarly tends toward a more brutal sense of race and nation in the later novels, although Lawrence returns to the theme of England and what he idiosyncratically calls "passional" awareness in his final novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1993 [1928], 101).

Each of the 10 novels published in Lawrence's lifetime challenges orthodoxies, particularly conventional social and sexual mores. Specific dualities identify the contours of Lawrence's thought as he returns to the challenges they pose: male/female; speech/ silence; primitive/modern; self/other. More than that, the novels at their best examine the future of the novel form, and provide fascinating insights into the ambition and scale of Lawrence's artistic vision. They explore the relation of individual to community, race, nation, and place, and do so in ways that maintain a creative pressure on the capacity of the English language to be modelled into new expressive and poetic forms.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: For which work is Dorothy Richardson most famous?

Q 7: How did Virginia Woolf view the idea of a novel?

Q 8: Comment on the literary style of James Joyce.

Q 9: Identify the basic point of D. H. Lawrence's portrayal of the characters in his novels.

6.5 THE USE OF INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

It refers to a technique of recording the continuum of impressions, thoughts and impulses either prompted by conscious experience or arising from the well of the subconscious. The phrase originates in an essay on James Joyce by Valry Larbaud and is often regarded as synonymous with "stream of consciousness." There is, however, some dispute as to which of the two is the larger term. Some critics argue that stream of consciousness includes limitations of interiority; according to this view, the interior monologue is one method among many. To other critics, interior monologue is the larger category and stands for all methods of self-revelation, including for instance some kinds of dramatic monologue; according to this view, stream of consciousness refers to an uninterrupted flow, in which logic, conventional syntax and even at times punctuation are abandoned. The origins of this kind of fictional representation is to be found in poetry and specifically in the kind of 19th century poetry that is broadly dramatic in method. The English dramatic monologue, as popularised by Browning and Tennyson, purports to be spoken, but it is often the case that speech dissolves into reverie. This seems to have been taken up by the French Symbolist poets and their associates. Projections of interior musings, often deeply ambiguous, are to be found in the poems of Tristan Corbiere, Jules Laforgue, Stephane Mallarme, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Valery. They in turn influenced the fiction of Edouard Dujardin, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, as well as the verse monologues of T. S. Eliot ("Gerontion").

As mentioned above, some critics use "stream of consciousness" interchangeably with the term **Interior Monologue.** It is useful, however, to follow the usage of critics who use the former as a more inclusive term, denoting all the diverse means employed by authors to communicate the inclusive state and process of consciousness in a character. "Interior monologue" is thus reserved for that species of stream of consciousness, which undertakes to present to the reader the course and rhythm of consciousness precisely as it occurs in a character's mind. In "interior monologue", the author does not intervene, or at any rate intervenes minimally, as somebody who describes, guides, or comments, and does not tidy the vagaries of the mental process into grammatical sentences or into a logical or coherent order. The "interior monologue", in its radical form, is sometimes described as the exact presentation of the process of consciousness; but because sense perceptions, mental images, feelings, and some aspects of thought itself are nonverbal, it is clear that the author can present these elements only by converting them into some kind of verbal equivalent.

In 1901, the German playwright and novelist Arthur Schnitzler published a Novella called *Lieutenant Gastl*, a satire on the official code of military honour. In this the interior monologue technique is highly developed. However, it seems that it was a minor French novelist, Edouard Dujardin, who first used the technique (in a way which was to prove immensely influential) in. *Les Lauriers sont coupes* (1888). James Joyce, who is believed to have known this work, exploited the possibilities and took the technique almost to a point ne plus ultra in *Ulysses* (1922), which Purports to be an account of the experiences (the actions, thoughts, feelings) of two men, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus, during the twenty-four hours of 6th June 1904, in Dublin. The following lines provide some ideas of the method:

Yes. Thought so. Sloping into the Empire. Gone. Plain soda would do him good. Where Pat Kinsella had his Harp theatre before Whitbread ran the Queen's. Broth of a boy. Dion Boucicault business with his harvestmoon face in a poky bonnet. Three Purty Maids from School. How time flies eh? Showing long red pantaloons under his skirts. Drinkers,

drinking, laughed spluttering, their drink against their breath. More power, Pat. Coarse red: fun for drunkards: guffaw and smoke. Take off that white hat. His parboiled eyes. Where is he now? Beggar somewhere. The harp that once did starve us all.

The climax to this extraordinary work is the forty-odd page interior monologue of Molly Bloom, a passage which has only one punctuation mark. The beginning of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) is an early indication of his interest in this technique.

Meantime, Dorothy Richardson had begun to compile her twelve volumes *Pilgrimage* (1915-6) and Marcel Proust was at work on the equally ambitious A la recherche du temps perda (1913-27). Henry James and Dostoyevsky had already indicated, through long passages of introspective writing, that they were aware of something like the stream of consciousness technique. Therefore, it seems that several original minds had been working, independently, towards the development of interior monologue as a new method of fiction writing.



6.6 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that Stream of Consciousness is a technique, which seeks to record the flow of impressions passing through a character's mind. It is the name applied specifically to a mode of narration that undertakes to reproduce, without a narrator's intervention, the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, expectations, feelings, and random associations. The best-known English exponents of the Stream of Consciousness are Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Later novelists have often employed the technique, though rarely with such thoroughness as its early proponents. For them, it was a fresh weapon in the struggle against intrusive narration. By recording the actual flow of thought with its paradoxes and irrelevancies, they sought to avoid the over-insistent authorial rhetoric of Edwardian novels. They felt that the traditional techniques could not meet the social pressures

of the new age. Hence, they tried to justify his use of new experiments while writing fiction.



6.7 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (2003). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Singapore: Thomson Asia Pte Ltd.
2) Cuddon, J. A. (1977). *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory.* Penguin Books.
3) Daiches, David. (2001). *A Critical History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.
4) Edel, Leon. (1955). *The Modern Psychological Novel.*
5) Friedman, Melvin. (1955). *Stream of Consciousness: A Study Literary Method.*
6) Humphrey, Robert. (1954). *Stream of Consciousness the Modem Novel.*
7) John Peck and Martin Coyle. (2002). *Literary Terms and Criticism*. (3rd edition). Palgrave Study Guide.
8) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.

Websites and Electronic Resources:

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



6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: James believed that consciousness runs in a stream and flows like a river… …the outside object of the world may appear to be broken or discontinuous… …but their thought in the brain is not to be taken as broken and discontinuous… …this shifting of thought in the

consciousness from one object to the other does not mean any break in thought… …it can sometimes be compared to the life of a bird, which consists of 'alteration of flights and perchings.'

Ans to Q 2: Bergson is known for his arguments that processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality… …broke with the traditional philosophers and denounced that only intellect does not help a person to grasp the reality… …the breaking of reality into parts may serve the cause of the language and society… …but it will never help us to comprehend the reality… …Reality is an 'immediate experience' and is in a constant state of flux.

Ans to Q 3: Freud's model of the mind has three functional aspects: the **id** (which incorporates libidinal and other desires), the superego (the internalization of standards of morality and propriety), and the **ego** (which tries as best it can to negotiate the conflicts between the insatiable demands of the id, the impossibly stringent requirements of the **superego**, and the limited possibilities of gratification offered by the world of "reality").

Ans to Q 4: Adler emphasised the importance of feelings of inferiority… … emphasised the importance of the social element in the re-adjustment process of the individual… …Adler was a co-founder of the psychoanalytic movement and the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society… …he was the first to form an independent school of psychotherapy… …Memories are the reminders she carries about with her of her limitations and of the meanings of events.

Ans to Q 5: Jung departs radically from psychoanalytic criticism… …his emphasis is not on the individual unconscious, but on what he calls the "collective unconscious" shared by all individuals in all cultures… …"racial memories" and of primordial images and patterns of experience are called *archetypes* by him.

Ans to Q 6: She is most famous for *Pilgrimage*, a sequence of 13 semi-autobiographical novels… …here she used stream of consciousness as a narrative technique… …she also emphasized the

importance and distinct nature of female experiences in *Pilgrimage*… …the novel alludes to the journey of the artist towards self-realisation as an artist.

Ans to Q 7: She displayed a more aesthetic and meaningful relationship between her ideas and the forms of her novels… …she was less preoccupied with plot… …the myriad impressions coming from all sides shape themselves into the life… …life is not a set of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.

Ans to Q 8: It refers to a high degree of stylistic and technical inventiveness and originality in the use of the pun, the portmanteau word, symbolism and the stream of consciousness technique. It may also allude to his inclination towards scatology, his habit of joining up numerous words and using little or no punctuation for many pages on end.

Ans to Q 9: His characters frequently undergo metaphysical journeys in which the birth of the self is the unforeseen and unexamined goal… …in the later novels, the impersonal aesthetic of the mature writing tends to give way to an over conscious messianic version of individualism.



6.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How did the influence of Psychology help in the emergence of Stream of Consciousness Novels? Provide a detailed discussion.

Q 2: In what way, did Stream of Consciousness evolve as a technique of writing fiction in the early part of the 20th century?

Q 3: Who are the main practitioners of the Stream of Consciousness technique in fiction? Discuss with reference to their works.

Q 4: What is meant by Interior Monologue? Write a note on the use of Interior Monologue in fiction with specific examples.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 7 : JAMES JOYCE: *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 James Joyce: Life and Works

7.4 Story of the Novel *A Portrait of the Artist*

7.5 Critical Reception of Joyce

7.6 Let Us Sum Up

7.7 Further Reading

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.9 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

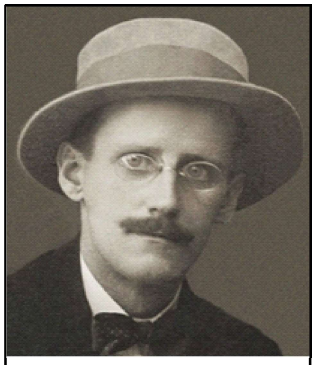
- discuss the life and works of James Joyce
- form an idea of James Joyce as a major English novelist with reference to his idea of the 'modern' in his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- grasp the story of the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- make an assessment of the critical reception of Joyce as a modernist writer.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with the Irish writer James Joyce who is one of the important representatives of the idea of the 'modern' in the novel. He is considered the most prominent English speaking literary figure of the first half of the 20th century. His short-story collection and three novels redefined the idea and form of modern fiction, and have inspired countless writers. Joyce eccentrically claimed that in many respects the tasks of literature had been completed by his time. As stated by Margot Norris in *Blackwell*

Encyclopaedia, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* resorts to another tenet of modernism–classicism–to frame its Kunstlersroman, its semiautobiographical account of a sensitive boy growing up in Dublin with aesthetic aspirations. By naming its protagonist Stephen Dedalus, the novel evokes the myth of Icarus, the son of the artist Dedalus whose winged escape from ancient Crete was aborted by flying too close to the sun, melting the wax that held his wings together. The classical superstructure endows the story of young Dedalus's struggles to free himself from the squalor of poverty, and from the oppressive constraints of the Catholic Church, with universal significance. *A Portrait* also offers moments of enlightenment and self-recognition, termed "epiphany" by Joyce, as antidotes to the paralysis of Dublin life. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will be able to discuss the life and works of James Joyce and appreciate the significance of his extraordinary novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

7.3 JAMES JOYCE: LIFE AND WORKS



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce, better known as James Joyce, was an Irish novelist and poet. Considered one of the most influential modernist writers, Joyce is best known for *Ulysses* (1922). The eldest of ten children, he was born on 2nd February 1882 to John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar. In 1887, when his father was appointed the collector of local property taxes by Dublin Corporation, the family moved to the fashionable adjacent small town of Bray 19 km away from Dublin. Subsequently, he excelled as a student at the Jesuit schools Clongowes and Belvedere, then at University College Dublin. In his early twenties, he immigrated permanently to continental Europe, living in Trieste, Paris and Zurich. Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, Joyce's fictional universe does not extend far beyond Dublin, and it is populated largely by characters who closely resemble family members, enemies and friends from his time

there. In his own words: “For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal.”

Therefore, ideally James Joyce grew up on the artistic ideas available in literary Dublin. He was concerned with the newest spirit in the arts and responded to the two main international literary movements that had developed since 1890s: **Naturalism** and **Symbolism**. **Naturalism** at once reminds us of Henric Ibsen. The stories of his *Dubliners* share the naturalistic feelings that we live in a determined and conditioned world, which art must treat with meticulousness and radical frankness. This is prevalent in the detailed record of the Dublin life in the *Dubliners*. The same meticulous detailing is also the essential stuff of his most famous *Ulysses*. As Joyce said, the book was written in such a way that even if Dublin were to be destroyed it could be reconstructed from the novel. The other movement that excited Joyce was **French Symbolism** powerfully supported in Britain by none other than W. B. Yeats and Arthur Symons. Joyce conceived art not as a plain report on the world but as an active work of creation and moving consciousness, an essential story of the artist. His version of Symbolism makes its presence felt in various arguments that Stephen advances in both *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist* about the transcendent beauty of art. And above all, there is the famous idea of **‘Epiphany’**—the transcendental revelation which Joyce took from religion and applied to art.

‘The Revolt Into Art’ as described by Joyce in the book took shape in 1902 when Joyce himself departed to Paris to study medicine and become a writer. Then in 1903, he had been called back to Dublin because of his mother’s illness. The return brought back again the whole question of artistic duties and responsibilities and prepared him for larger literary accomplishments. In 1904, he produced a collection of verse called *Chamber Music*, finally published in 1907. Then he started his work on some linked short stories about the paralysed city of Dublin that would eventually make up the volume called *Dubliners* in 1914. Meanwhile, he also began his first draft of autobiographical tale of Stephen Dedalus, an early version of his

posthumously published novel *Stephen Hero* (1944). *A Portrait of the Artist* is a revised, distilled and a mature version of this, but he completes the 'sequel' in the form of *Ulysses*.

Joyce suffered from a life-long eye complaint provoked by an attack of rheumatic fever during his twenties and complicated by Glucoma in 1917. Although he was operated on several times, his sight steadily grew worse. Then in 1932, his daughter Lucia was diagnosed as schizophrenic and his general health began to degrade. With the outbreak of the World War II, the family escaped to Switzerland where Joyce died in 1941.



LET US KNOW

James Joyce's works reflect his life, his times, and his varied cultural belongingness. The late Victorian century Ireland placed him in a country whose quasi-colonial status gave it representation in the British parliament but little control over its own affairs. Consequently, Ireland suffered economic stagnation, rural and urban poverty, and a sense of oppression that led to a Home Rule movement ultimately frustrated by the Catholic Church's role in the downfall of Charles Stewart Parnell, the country's best hope for independence through parliamentary negotiation.

Joyce's stories in the collection *Dubliners* reflect the national despondency following this failure as a condition of paralysis that called less for political agitation against England than an unflinching self-examination. In this respect, Joyce departed from the aims of Irish cultural nationalism–the movement known as the Celtic Revival—whose recovery of the Gaelic language and of Irish myth and folklore he regarded as parochial and backward looking. Inspired by the realism of Ibsen's drama, *Dubliners* offers stories of schoolboy yearning, of entrapment by duty and responsibility, oppressive working conditions, the degradation of patriotism, the ravage of families by alcoholism. The last story in the collection, "The Dead," thematizes the ambiguous clash between Irish revival insularity and the protagonist's look toward the Continent for cultural sustenance.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How would you assess the influence of Naturalism and Symbolism in James Joyce's fiction?

Q 2: State the significance of Joyce's *Dubliners* stories.



Entwicklungsroman: ("development novel") is a story of general growth rather than self-cultivation. **Erziehungsroman:** ("education novel") focuses on training and formal schooling.

His Works:

Joyce's first published work was an essay on Ibsen written as an under graduate and published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900. By that time, he was gradually becoming a part of the group shared by Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory and George Russell—writers famous for fostering Irish Cultural Renaissance. However, in 1902, he suddenly got dissatisfied with the narrowness of Irish life and spent a year in Paris. During that time, he read voraciously. Dujardin's experimental novel *Les Lauriers Sont Coupes* (1888) influenced him to model his own "Stream of Consciousness Technique" in the later days to come.

You are already told that Joyce returned to Dublin in 1903 following the illness of his mother. In the same year, he began working on a long autobiographical novel *Stephen Hero* that took the form of *A Portrait* in 1916. Joyce also published a number of books of poetry. His first mature published work was the satirical broadside *The Holy Office* 1904, in which he proclaimed himself to be the superior of many prominent members of the Celtic revival. In 1907, a volume of 36 short lyrics entitled *Chamber Music* was published in London. Here, he explained the sound of urine hitting the side of a chamber pot. This publication led to his inclusion in the *Imagist Anthology* edited by Ezra Pound, who was a great supporter of Joyce's works. This was followed by *Dubliners* (1914) which is a collection of technically conventional but strikingly innovative stories based on his experiences of his native city Dublin. However, after a dispute with the Irish publishers over certain references made to the British Royal family, Joyce withdrew the book and subsequently published it in London. *A Portrait of the Artist* appeared in the famous *The Egoist,* of which Ezra Pound was the

reviewer then, in 25 instalments from February 1914 to September 1915. The complete book appeared in 1916. A Künstlerroman, this book is an autobiographical depiction of the childhood and adolescence of a protagonist named Stephen Dedalus and his gradual growth into artistic self-consciousness. Ideas of Stream of Consciousness, Interior Monologue, "Psychic Reality" are some of the terms used while describing this novel.



LET US KNOW

Bildungsroman: The term was coined in 1819 by philologist Karl Morgenstern in his university lectures, and later famously reprised by Wilhelm Dilthey, who legitimized it in 1870 and popularized it in 1905. The genre is further characterized by a number of formal, topical, and thematic features. *Bildungsroman* tells about the growing up or coming of age of a sensitive person who is looking for answers and experience.

During the World War I, Joyce moved to Zurich from Trieste. He received a grant from the Royal Literary Fund and a Civil List Grant in 1916 with the help of Yeats and Pound. Then, he started his *Ulysses*, which was first published in serial form in *The Little Review*, New York, appearing between 1918 and 1920. However, this periodical was prosecuted for publishing obscene matter. Then in 1918, he published a three act play *Exiles*. It is a study of a husband and wife relationship and it looks back to the final story "The Dead" of *Dubliners* and forward to *Ulysses*, which Joyce began around the time of the play's composition. In 1922, *Ulysses* was finally published in Paris where Joyce, his wife Nora, and their two children had finally settled in 1920. At its simplest, *Ulysses* is the story of two men whose lives meet in Dublin on 16th June 1904. According to Stephen Spender *Ulysses* is one extraordinary example of the 'decreative' novel. It is a work that moves our attention from its realistic subject into its language and its form. It makes an epic approach, calls up Homer in its title and its structure, but also functions as anti-epic. This novel shares many things in common with most of the major works of modernism. It is very much the story of its own act of creation. This novel was conceived in Dublin filled

with the spirit of Irish Literary Revival active since 1890s.

In 1923, Joyce began the composition of *Finnegans Wake* initially published as a *Work in Progress* in 12 parts between 1928 and 1937. It is a work of comic fiction significant for its experimental style. *Finnegans Wake* is also the author's final work. The entire book is written in a largely idiosyncratic language, multilingual puns and portmanteau words, which according to many critics, was conceived as an attempt to recreate the experience of sleep and dreams. Owing to the work's expansive linguistic experiments, stream of consciousness writing style, literary allusions, free dream associations, and its abandonment of the conventions of plot and character construction *Finnegans Wake* still remains a difficult text for the general reading public.



LET US KNOW

Ulysses and *Finnegans Wake* are seen as modern masterpieces by many writers and critics. You should note that Joyce's influence on the development of modernism is undisputed. Arnold Kettle in his essay "The Consistency of James Joyce" writes that there is a remarkable consistency about his life and development as a writer, a coherence and a completeness which has a sort of aesthetic richness. From the writing of his first stories in *Dubliners* (1914) to *Finnegans Wake* (1939), he seemed to have precisely known what he was doing. This is what is so unique about James Joyce as a modern writer.

A Portrait of the Artist, the novel prescribed for your study, is an account of a sensitive boy growing up in Dublin with aesthetic aspirations. By naming its protagonist Stephen Dedalus, the novel evokes the myth of Icarus, the son of the artist Dedalus whose winged escape from ancient Crete was aborted by flying too close to the sun, melting the wax that held his wings together. The classical superstructure endows the story of young Dedalus's struggles to free himself from the squalor of poverty, and from the oppressive constraints of the Catholic Church, with universal significance.

A Portrait also offers moments of enlightenment and self-recognition, termed "epiphany" by Joyce, as antidotes to the paralysis of Dublin life. Stylistically, *A Portrait* exhibits an imitative form of writing that expresses the stages of Stephen Dedalus's artistic development in a changing play of language reflective of his evolving consciousness. Childhood is narrated in simple prose, the romantic longings of early adolescence in lyrical language, the rigorous scholasticism of the university phase in erudite expression. A final series of diary entries ending the novel make it clear that the shifting narrative styles represented aesthetic simulations rather than actual representations of Stephen's consciousness. *A Portrait* ends with Stephen Dedalus, like Icarus, attempting to escape his island home for the Continent.

Joyce's next novel, *Ulysses*, begins with Stephen Dedalus returned to Dublin, living in desolate aimlessness following the death of his mother. In *Ulysses* both the thematic enactment of classical mythology and the experiments with stylistic imitation undergo a dramatic enlargement and expansion. Set in 1904 Dublin, Ulysses is structured in correspondence with Homer's classic epic, the Odyssey, although the precise relation of each chapter to an Odyssean adventure became apparent only thanks to a schema Joyce sent to his

Italian translator, Carlo Linati. The story of Homer's voyager, who must overcome tremendous obstacles with wit and courage, is invested in the unlikely figure of a 38-year-old Jewish advertising canvasser named Leopold Bloom. Joyce's early love of drama recrudesces in the novel's classical unity of time, place, and action.

Set on a single specific day, June 16, 1904 in Dublin, the action consists of the movements and interactions not only of the protagonists–Bloom, his wife Marion (Molly), and Stephen Dedalus–but also of a considerable portion of the city's colourful population. The variations from the Odyssey are as intriguing as the correspondences. Bloom's obstacles and crises are as much psychological as they are social. He must come to terms with grief over the loss of his infant son, the suicide of his father, and the infidelity of his wife who, unlike the faithful Penelope of the classic, initiates an adulterous affair with her impresario on this day. Bloom also

encounters prejudice and anti-Semitism, while Stephen Dedalus, still trying to realize a vocation as an artist, finds himself excluded from the Irish literary and intellectual milieu. The city of Dublin is represented with what has been called "documentary" realism not only for its historically verifiable addresses, buildings, and institutions, but also for the historical personages mixed in with its fictional figures. This creates an effect of tremendous vitality, as its citizens, on the move, visit shops, school, post office, public bath, church, cemetery, newspaper office, library, museum, pubs and eateries, beach, hospital, and house of prostitution.

Ulysses owed its notoriety not only to features of its content but also to the conspicuous experiments in style that produced a dizzying variety of narrative voices. The style of narration, changing virtually chapter by chapter, confronts the reader with considerable difficulty. The early episodes are told by an impersonal voice that nonetheless moves in and out of the minds of protagonists whose thoughts are reported in the process of shaping and expressing. In addition to this "stream of consciousness," Joyce also produces a variant of the imitative style introduced in *A Portrait* by having the narration reflect themes, settings, and Homeric correspondences. The episode reporting Bloom's visit to the newspaper office is divided into sections introduced by captions or "headlines," for example, as well as windy rhetoric befitting Aeolus, the keeper of the winds. The episode corresponding to the lure of the siren song tempting Odysseus and his men highlights the musical qualities of the narrative prose, beginning with an "overture" that gives each character a musical leitmotif. The episode set in the Holles Street Maternity Hospital recapitulates the evolving styles of English literary history in mimicry of the embryonic development of a foetus. The final episode is produced by the irrepressible and lively thoughts of Molly Bloom in bed, as she revisits her day and her past. The novel ends with her memory of the moment of love on Howth Hill when she offered an affirmative "yes I said yes I will Yes" to her husband's proposal and to life itself.

The difficulty of reading *Ulysses* is eclipsed by the challenges posed by *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's last work. Its title, inspired by an Irish ballad of a dead hod carrier who is revived by a splash of whiskey during his wake,

points to death and resurrection as overall themes of the work. However, the phantasmagoric character of the writing–reminiscent of the hallucinatory brothel episode in *Ulysses*—departs dramatically from the realism of Joyce's earlier texts. The book is without stable characters, setting, or actions. Everything is so fluid and multiple that everything is indeterminate. Although there appears to be a family at the heart of the work–possibly named Earwicker and consisting of mother, father, twin sons, and daughter– nothing is certain about them including their names, numbers, or species. The mother – Anna Livia Plurabelle, as she is designated–may be old or young, or a hen, or the river Liffey. Her husband may be a pub-keeper, or a mythic giant, or the landscape of Dublin itself. The children, twin sons who are enemies and a daughter who is also sometimes doubled, variously take form as tree, stone, cloud, or rainbow. There are transgressions and sins at issue, including aggression and possible incest, but trials and inquests fail to clarify them.

Like *Ulysses*, the work has mythic resonances although these too are multiple. Genesis, the Stations of the Cross, the Oedipus myth, Irish mythology, all play structural roles. Joyce talked of the Wake as a "night" work, and the analogue of dream–particularly Freudian dream–offers arguably the best analytical tool for making sense of its seeming nonsense. This nonsense also permeates the language, whose words are multiple, interlaced with other words and meanings reminiscent of the "portmanteau words" in Lewis Carroll's Alice books. The Wake's language layers its English with words from many other languages, creating a universalizing effect.



LET US KNOW

Contemporaries vs Moderns?

Stephen Spender in his book *The Struggle of the Modern* presents a fascinating distinction between two distinctive lines running through twentieth century writings- the line of the **'Contemporaries'** and the line of the **'Moderns'**. The 'Contemporaries' include names of writers like H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, C. P. Snow and many more who seem to have accepted

the processes of the modern world and its various forces, and whose work have maintained an attitude of realism, rationality and positivism. While the idea of the 'Moderns' includes writers like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf who have taken a different view of their age and often seem to have distrusted its historical direction, doubted its progress, felt dislocated from its past and are conscious of the anarchy present in the modern times. Subsequently, the 'Modern' writers seem to have constructed radical orders of their own. Thus, their writings tend to be fragmentary and disjunctive. Joyce is one of those 'Modern' writers according to Spender.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Mention the significance of Dublin in James Joyce's writings.

Q 4: How do you think James Joyce is connected to Naturalism and Symbolism?

Q 5: What, according to you, is the literary significance of Joyce's *Ulysses*?

Q 6: What kind of a novel is *Ulysses*?

Q 7: Why is *Finnegans Wake* considered a difficult novel?

Q 8: What function does the allusion to Icarus play in the novel *A Portrait*?

7.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST*

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is an autobiographical novel by James Joyce. It tells the story of Stephen Dedalus, a boy growing up in Ireland at the end of the 19th century. He is intelligent but frail and struggles towards maturity in Ireland at the turn of the century. This novel thus traces his intellectual, moral, and artistic development from boyhood to the completion of his education at University College, Dublin. As Stephen

gradually grows, he decides to escape from all his social, familial, and religious responsibilities and live a life devoted completely to the art of writing. As a young boy, Stephen's individuality is challenged by different conventions, dictated mainly by his family, Catholic faith and Irish nationalism. He attends a strict religious boarding school called Clongowes Wood College. At first, he is lonely and homesick at the school, but as time passes, he finds his place among the other boys. As a child, he witnesses a political dispute between supporters of Parnell and anti-Parnellites and suffers unjust punishments at the hands of a stupid and brutal priest, Father Dolan.

Stephen's father, Simon, becomes a spendthrift and the family sinks into debt. After spending some time in the company of his Uncle Charles, Stephen learns that the family cannot afford to send him back to Clongowes. Instead, he moves to Dublin and starts attending a prestigious day school called Belvedere, where he grows to excel as a writer and as an actor in the student theatre. His first sexual experience, with a young Dublin prostitute, unleashes a storm of guilt and shame in Stephen. For a while, he ignores all his religiosity throwing himself into a variety of 'sins' like masturbation, gluttony, and more visits to prostitutes, among others. Adolescent sexual experience thus causes in his mind intense moral torment to be pacified by Father Arnall's famous 'hellfire sermon. Afraid and deeply shaken, Stephen decides to resort to a life of Christian piety. He begins attending Mass every day. Rejecting the call of priesthood, Stephen begins to exert his own individual identity. Soon he realizes that the austerity of the priestly life is utterly incompatible with his love for sensual beauty. Anxiously waiting for his acceptance to the university, Stephen goes for a walk on the beach, where he observes a young girl loitering. He is struck by her beauty, and realizes, in a moment of epiphany, that the love and desire of beauty should not be a source of shame. Stephen resolves to live his life to the fullest, and vows not to be constrained by the boundaries of his family, his nation, and his religion.

Stephen moves on to the university, where he develops a number of strong friendships, and is especially close with a young man named Cranly. There he embraces the wider and more rewarding world of literature,

philosophy and aesthetics. In a series of conversations with his friends, Stephen formulates his own theories about art. By the end of the novel, he becomes more and more determined to free himself from the claims of family, church and state. Like his namesake, the mythical Daedalus, Stephen hopes to build himself wings on which he can fly above all obstacles and achieve a life as an artist. Finally, he resolves to leave Ireland for Paris, encounters the 'reality of experience', and learns to forge 'the uncreated conscience' of his race.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What is the subject matter of the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*?

Q 10: Name some of the works that might have influenced the writing of the novel *A Portrait of the Artist.* What is common in all of them?

7.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF JOYCE

There is no doubt about the fact that James Joyce is a major figure of the modernist period in literary history. Richard Ellmann summarizes the author's impact on 20th century letters like this, "We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries, to understand our interpreter." Critics are unanimous in their praise for Joyce's artistry while acknowledging the difficulty of his works. Eloise Knowlton comments about *Dubliners*, "The stories…take a coldly objective, scrupulously true view of their objects, accomplish a vivid and swift capturing of a single, seemingly accidental moment, and lack an explanatory authorial voice (a caption) that might pin down a specific meaning: a lack that perpetually frustrates students who expect a definite, readable meaning to a tale." Similarly, Keith Cushman writes about *Ulysses*, "It is odd that a novel with such a reputation for consummate artistic design should also be universally recognized to be formally problematic. Every serious reader of *Ulysses* must grapple with the apparent divergence of matter and manner, of surface and symbol… Our image of Joyce almost requires that we equip *Ulysses* with a grand

design, but any such design is apt to leave out the sheer exuberant messiness of the novel."

Responses to the novel *Ulysses* have been as varied as the different facets of the novel itself, although the antihero figure of Leopold Bloom is so loved that a day named for him (June 16) is celebrated by Joyce enthusiasts around the world (and especially in Dublin, Ireland, where the novel takes place): Bloomsday. Attempting to trace Joyce's effects on the development of a "world modernism," literary critic Ce´sar Augusto Salgado notes several "central Joycean themes—the interplay between the Homeric and the Orphic, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, death and resurrection." Salgado also describes *Ulysses* as "an anarchical avant-garde work" driven by a "realist imperative to represent a plurality of characters with technical conciseness by filtering their representation and characterization through their own language."

David Daiches argues that in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* "Joyce…has given us one of the few examples in English literature of autobiography successfully employed as a mode of fiction. As autobiography, the work has an almost terrifying honesty; as fiction, it has unity, consistency, probability, and all the other aesthetic qualities we look for in a work of art…*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is perhaps the most flawless of all Joyce's work. The welding of form and content, the choice of detail that seems inevitable once it has been made, the brilliant yet unobtrusive style, these and other qualities give the work a wholeness, a unity, and a completeness possessed by hardly a handful of works in our literature."

Joyce's influence on later 20th century literature and culture has been enormous, as has been his appeal to common readers. He has had an impact not only on such Irish writers as Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien, but also on a much wider international field. Vladimir Nabokov and Umberto Eco reflect Joyce's influence in their word play, puns and puzzles, and historical and arcane trivia. The Latin American writers strongly influenced by Joyce include Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, Pablo Neruda of Chile, and Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz of Mexico. Anthony Burgess, Salman Rushdie, and J. M. Coetzee gloss Joyce significantly in their work. The

British playwright Tom Stoppard's 1974 play Travesties features Joyce's conflict with an English consular official during a staging of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest in Zurich.

Joyce's writing also provided instructive study for such influential late twentieth-century critical theorists as Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. In 1979, the American composer John Cage produced an avant-garde piece of music titled Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on "Finnegans Wake." Film adaptations of Joyce's work include an early cinematic version of Finnegans Wake by the film animator Mary Ellen Bute, as well as ambitious adaptations of Ulysses by Joseph Strick (1967) and Sean Walsh (2003). The Strick film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1967. The famous American director John Huston filmed the Dubliners story "The Dead" in 1987. A film titled Nora, produced by Pat Murphy in 2000, is based on the biography of Joyce's wife by Brenda Maddox. The International James Joyce Foundation, established in 1967, sponsors an international symposium on Joyce's work every two years, generally in a European city.



LET US KNOW

Joyce's influence on later 20th century literature and culture is immense. He influenced the Irish writers as Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien. Vladimir Nabokov and Umberto Eco reflect Joyce's influence in their word play, puns and puzzles, and historical and arcane trivia. The Latin American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, Pablo Neruda of Chile, and Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz of Mexico were strongly influenced by Joyce. Anthony Burgess, Salman Rushdie, and J. M. Coetzee gloss Joyce significantly in their work. The British playwright Tom Stoppard's 1974 play *Travesties* features Joyce's conflict with an English consular official during a staging of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest in Zurich.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: How does David Daiches celebrate the novel *A Portrait*?

Q 12: Who are the important writers influenced by James Joyce?



7.6 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the Irish writer James Joyce is one of the most important representatives of the idea of the 'modern' in the 20th century novels. Besides, getting to know about the life and various aspects of Joyce's works, you have also learnt that the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a semiautobiographical account of a sensitive boy growing up in Dublin with aesthetic aspirations. By naming its protagonist Stephen Dedalus, the novel evokes the myth of Icarus, the son of the artist Dedalus whose winged escape from ancient Crete was aborted by flying too close to the sun, melting the wax that held his wings together. As you read the text of *A Portrait*, you will learn that Stephen's own task like that of Dedalus, is to migrate into the unknown arts, and the novel ends with his making the narrator's own flight, to Europe and art. This novel is an early example of some of Joyce's modernist techniques that are developed in later novels like *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake. A Portrait* also offers moments of enlightenment and self-recognition, termed "epiphany" by Joyce, as antidotes to the paralysis of modern Dublin life. It is assumed that your reading about the life and works of James Joyce will be of help while reading the *A Portrait.*



7.7 FURTHER READING

1) Attridge, Derek. (Ed). (2004). *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. (2nd edn), Cambridge UP.

2) Bloom, Harold. (Ed.). (1988). *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Chelsea House.

3) Bradbury, Malcolm. (1989). *The Modern World.* New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.

4) Deane, Seamus. (Ed). (1992). *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Penguin Books.

5) Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (Eds). (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol II.

6) Joyce, James. (1992). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Penguin Books.

7) Kettle, Arnold. "The Consistency of James Joyce" in Boris Ford (ed.) (1961). *The Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Vol. 7. Penguin Books.

8) Levenson, Michael. (Ed). (1999). *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism.* Cambridge University Press.

9) Ousby, Ian. (1994). *Companion to Literature in English*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

10) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol. 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The stories of *Dubliners* share the naturalistic feelings that we live in a determined and conditioned world… …Joyce also conceived art not as a plain report on the world but as an active work of creation and moving consciousness, an essential story of the artist.

Ans to Q 2: Joyce here departed from the aims of Irish cultural nationalism or the Celtic Revival… …Joyce regarded the recovery of the Gaelic language and of Irish myth and folklore regarded as parochial and backward looking… …*Dubliners* offers stories of schoolboy yearning, of entrapment by duty and responsibility, oppressive working

conditions, the degradation of patriotism, the ravage of families by alcoholism.

Ans to Q 3: Joyce makes Dublin his fictional universe… …Joyce's Dublin is populated largely by characters who closely resemble family members, enemies and friends from his time… …"For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal."—so claims James Joyce… …Joyce also said even if Dublin were to be destroyed it could be reconstructed from the novel *Ulysses*.

Ans to Q 4: Naturalism taught Joyce that we live in a determined and conditioned world, which art must treat with meticulousness and radical frankness…. …while Symbolism helped him to conceive art not as a plain report on the world but as an active work of creation and moving consciousness, an essential story of the artist.

Ans to Q 5: *Ulysses* is an example of the 'decreative' novel… …as a literary work it moves our attention from its realistic subject into its language and its form… …it calls up Homer in its title and its structure, but also functions as anti-epic…. …this novel was conceived in Dublin filled with the spirit of Irish Literary Revival active since 1890s.

Ans to Q 6: *Ulysses* is the story of two men who meet in Dublin on 16th June 1904… … *Ulysses* is one extraordinary example of the 'decreative' novel… …it moves our attention from its realistic subject into its language and its form… …also functions as anti-epic.

Ans to Q 7: Because, the novel is written in a largely idiosyncratic language, multilingual puns and portmanteau words… …uses expansive linguistic experiments, stream of consciousness technique, literary allusions, free dream associations… ….abandons the conventions of plot and character construction.

Ans to Q 8: The novel evokes the myth of Icarus, the son of the artist Dedalus whose winged escape from ancient Crete was aborted by flying too close to the sun, melting the wax that held his wings together… …young Dedalus's also struggles to free himself from the

squalor of poverty… …*A Portrait* ends with Stephen Dedalus, like Icarus, attempting to escape his island home for the Continent.

Ans to Q 9: *A Portrait of The Artist* deals with various contemporary issues such as the quest for autonomy and the role of the Catholic Church… …allusion to a particular Irish politician Charles Stewart Parnell, bear tremendous significance… …the myth of Daedalus and Icarus features prominently in the novel.

Ans to Q 10: Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* that describes a young artist's revolt against the repressive norms of society… … St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Goethe's *Werther and Wilhelm Meister*… …Cardinal Newman's *Aologia Pro Vita Sua*… …the common element in all these works is the description of how a sensitive youth is first shaped by his environment but soon becomes conscious of its different pressures and revolts against it.

Ans to Q 11: In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* "Joyce…has given us one of the few examples in English literature of autobiography successfully employed as a mode of fiction. As autobiography, the work has an almost terrifying honesty; as fiction, it has unity, consistency, probability, and all the other aesthetic qualities we look for in a work of art…*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is perhaps the most flawless of all Joyce's work.

Ans to Q 12: Samuel Beckett… …Flann O'Brien… …Vladimir Nabokov… …Umberto Eco… ...Latin American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz… …Anthony Burgess, Salman Rushdie, J. M. Coetzee… …Tom Stoppard.



7.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Joyce wrote about Ireland and the Irish, although he lived abroad for almost all his adult life. Discuss.

Q 2: What stylistic features of James Joyce do you think can be attributed to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man?*

Q 3: Discuss James Joyce's contribution to modernist novels in the 20th century? How did he deviate from the traditional novelists in representing reality in fiction?

Q 4: Write a note on the novels of James Joyce to explain the role of Psychology in his fiction.

Q 5: What makes *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* an important manifesto of modernism in literature? Give your views.

Q 6: Describe how this novel *A Portrait* fits the meaning of the term Bildungsroman. Have you read any other novels that can be classified similarly? If so, compare this novel with a similar novel.

Q 7: What makes James Joyce a 'modern novelist'? Illustrate with examples drawn from his technique of writing.

Q 8: Write a note on Joyce's experiments with the use of the Stream of Consciousness technique and Interior Monologue in his fictional works.

Q 9: Comment on the different influences on James Joyce which finally helped him to emerge as a great modern novelist.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 8 : JAMES JOYCE: *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Reading the Novel

- 8.3.1 Major Themes
- 8.3.2 Joyce's Art of Characterisation
- 8.3.3 Joyce's Narrative Style

8.4 Let Us Sum Up

8.5 Further Reading

8.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

8.7 Possible Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the different important aspects of James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- discuss the various themes in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- explain Joyce's processes of characterisation
- identify the different aspects of Joyce's narrative style
- make an assessment of the reception of the novel over the period of time since its publication.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall help you to discuss the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in terms of its various important aspects. You are informed in the previous unit that this first novel by the Irish writer James Joyce is a Künstlerroman in a modernist style. It traces the religious and intellectual awakening of young Stephen Dedalus, a fictional alter ego of Joyce and an

allusion to Dedalus—the consummate craftsman of Greek mythology. In writing this novel, Joyce might have been influenced by Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh,* which is based on the growth of a young artist and his revolt against the repressive norms of society to which he belonged. Perhaps, Joyce was also influenced by some autobiographical works like St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Goethe's *Werther and Wilhelm Meister*, and Cardinal Newman's *Aologia Pro Vita Sua* while preparing for *A Portrait*. The subject of these works is how a sensitive youth is first shaped by his environment, but soon becomes conscious of its different pressures and revolts against it. Let us now have a discussion on the various important aspects of the novel.

8.3 READING THE NOVEL

The title of the novels may have been adapted and parodied by many writers including Dylan Thomas in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, Ogden Nash in his poem *Portrait of the Artist as a Prematurely Old Man*, Joseph Heller in *Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man*, A.M. Klein in his poem *Portrait of the Poet as Landscape*, Andrew Barlow and Kent Roberts' *A Portrait of Yo Mama as a Young Man*, Grayson Perry's biography *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*. Joyce's centrality in the fictional world of the early 20th century is best perceived among his contemporary writers. His *Ulysses that appeared in 1922* provided much of the stimulus for much of the experimentalism that followed through the rest of the twenties. Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* would not have taken its shape without the pressures and premises of Joyce's novels. The same can be said of John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* and *USA*, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. By the end of the 1930s, Joyce turned out to be the grand old man of European literature. The following is a discussion on the different aspects of the novel.

8.3.1 Major Themes

Naturalism, Symbolism and Modernism [Adapted from *Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, p, 75-76]

The dialectic between Naturalism and Symbolism is nowhere more apparent than in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which Eliot regarded as Joyce's farewell to the novel. Stephen Dedalus devises symbolist poems and symbolist theories, which have often been taken out of context as modernist doctrine. Having rejected the Church's sacred ritual, he makes a sacred ritual out of art. According to him, beauty precludes emotions such as desire and loathing, which are kinetic rather than static, and directed towards a physical rather than a spiritual end. Yet his exposition of this theory, which takes the form of a dialogue with his friend Lynch, as they walk through the Dublin streets, is itself both kinetic and physical.

One of his speeches is interrupted by a "harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal," when a dray laden with old iron turns the corner. Stephen's response to interruptions is to evolve a literary style capable of abstract order. He derives less pleasure from the reflection of external reality in language than from "the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose" (181). When, a few minutes later, he dedicates himself to the creation of beauty, he dedicates himself to a style, a theory, rather than to a subject matter, in a periodic prose which mirrors the emotion, and which we can sense him admiring. Joyce just as evidently does not endorse this rampant will-to literature, since he punctuates the reverie with the sound of young men bathing: "O, cripes, I'm drownded" (183). Stephen's devotion is rewarded, towards the end of chapter 4, by the sight of a young woman gazing out to sea: a figure his lucid supple periodic prose immediately converts into a symbol. Chapter 5 opens with Stephen's breakfast. "The yellow dripping had been scooped out like a bog hole and the pool under it brought back to his memory the dark turf-coloured water of the bath in Clongowes" (188). The sentences, which describe this scene, are notably plain and notably faithful to appearance. Here, in the sad decline of the Dedalus family into squalor is a story Zola might have written. In an early essay, Joyce

had praised Henrik Ibsen for portraying "average lives in their uncompromising truth." The Naturalism of *A Portrait,* its attention to the uncompromising truth of the lives, which surround Stephen,'s, establishes a powerful resistance to literature. All five chapters conclude with a moment of self-transcendence; four times, the next chapter opens with a harsh reversion to squalor and to a plain style. The fifth and final chapter peters out in Stephen's inconsequential diary. Although the diary's conclusion invokes the promise of achievement encrypted in his surname, it can hardly be said to resolve the dialectic between Naturalism and Symbolism. *A Portrait* is Modernism in a state of suspended animation.

Individuation and the sense of a Community:

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man explores what it means to be an individual. Stephen's decision at the end of the novel—to leave his family and friends behind and go into exile in order to become an artist—suggests that Joyce sees the artist as a necessarily isolated figure. In his decision, however, Stephen turns his back on his community, refusing to accept the constraints of political involvement, religious devotion, and family commitment that the community places on its members. However, though the artist is an isolated figure, Stephen's ultimate goal is to give a voice to the community that he is leaving. In the last few pages of the last chapter, Stephen expresses his desire to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." (P, 275) He recognizes that his community will always be a part of him, as it has created and shaped his identity. He recognizes himself as a part of the community and it is in relation to the collective, the race, that he formulates his individual aspirations. Similarly, it is in relation to his community that Stephen learns the processes of individuation. Even as Stephen turns his back on the traditional forms of participation and membership in a community, he envisions his writing as a service to the community.

Ireland, Public History and Private History

More than anything else, the novel *A Portrait of the Artist* is among the most important of the Irish novels as we can assume that it is the first to examine the distorted relationship between the Irish community and oppression. It is more than a mere coincidence that the novel appeared in the year of the Easter Rising in Dublin. The political rebellion and even the cultural resurgence led by W. B. Yeats seemed insufficient to James Joyce. In James Joyce, we often witness a reaction to the squalor, paralysis and servility of an Irish life. Joyce perhaps could well understand the fact that the morbidity of his community's condition was not the consequence of a lost wholeness or of a traditional culture. Instead, it was the adherence to the deforming systems of belief and modes of behaviour that kept the Irish people in bondage. However, the fear of freedom, of the complexity of experience was more pronounced because the conventional systems by which the Irish lived their lives were borrowed, from both London and Rome. Therefore, degeneracy that could be identified with the Irish condition was the product of a tradition not the consequences of its loss.

Dublin in Joyce's writings is not a place in the sense London is in Dickens. The streets, shops, pubs, churches and civic buildings of Dublin are names and located in relation to one another as if a generic map of the city of Dublin could be drawn from such particularities. It is therefore important to note that from the very beginning James Joyce's Dublin is not only a place, but also a sight of linguistic self-consciousness that also projects our desire to give our knowledge a shape that is foreign to it. Throughout the book 'walking' in Dublin remains important because the walk itself is one of the most significant rhetorical devices used in this novel. Geography implies history. As far as it is public referring to public building and monument, the history that accompanies it is the 'official' national history. . In so far as it is private – hoardings, provision shops, diary with a clock, it is 'personal', the history of Stephen, his

friendships, his readings and thoughts. The distinction between the two however is not so secure. As Stephen is constantly reading the history of the city's monuments in the light of his own preoccupations. Thus, Ireland has a story and Stephen too has a story—where they meet is history. History in this sense is Stephen's interpretation of certain aspects of Ireland's past and of his own present

Ideas of Epiphany:

An **epiphany** is an experience of sudden and striking realization. Generally, the term is used to describe breakthrough scientific, religious or philosophical discoveries, but it can apply in any situation in which an enlightening realization allows a problem or situation to be understood from a new and deeper perspective. Often they are triggered by a new and key piece of information. Famous epiphanies include Archimedes's discovery of a method to determine the density of an object and Isaac Newton's realization that a falling apple and the orbiting moon are both pulled by the same force. James Joyce gave this word a particular literary connotation in his novel *Stephen Hero*, part of the first draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. We are told in Joyce's *Stephen Hero*: "By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phrase of the mind itself. He believed it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments." In *A Portrait* however, the notion is somewhat changed and Stephen endeavours to become 'a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of evolving life.' His role is to create art out of life and while doing so an artist must rival the God of creation Himself. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. A little further on he says: "Imagine my glimpses of that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanized." Joyce

elaborates this theme at considerable length in different occasions. The epiphany is a symbol of a spiritual state of the individual. This aspect of aesthetic theory is left out in *A Portrait*, but acknowledging it is essential for an understanding of Joyce the artist of *A Portrait of the Artist*.

Bildungsroman and the Question of an Artist

You are already told in this unit that this novel is an example of a *Bildungsroman* or Coming-of-age story which is also a literary genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. Therefore, in a Bildungsroman the change of a character is extremely important. The various stages of Stephen's development and change that are vividly portrayed in this novel can be traced like the following:

1. The imaginative and un-athletic young boy suffering under narrow orthodoxies and the brutalities of a Jesuit boarding school
2. His growing realisation of his families drifts into squalor
3. The overwhelming sense of a 'sin' through an occasion of untimely sexual orientation
4. The phase of sudden and anxious religious observance
5. The journey towards understanding the realm of art and his supposed place in it
6. The crisis of his break with the Church and the exalting moment of revelation.

Thus, one of the main themes of the novel is the development of the artist during the period extending from his early childhood to the days of his young manhood. An artist is essentially an individual who can flourish only by becoming free of all collective entanglements and commitments in the external world. A true artist simply lays down the minimum condition for the survival of the will to create art. As we find in the case of Stephen, he is determined to escape from his nationality, language, religion etc. which he regards as obstructing the flight of the soul of the artist. Thus, the mission in his life turns out to be the expression of himself in some mode of life or art as

freely and as wholly as he can using for his defence only such weapons like silence and exile.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State some of the major themes of the novel *A Portrait*.

Q 2: How are the theme of Individuation and the sense of a Community explored in this novel?

Q 3: What do you mean by the term epiphany? How is James Joyce connected to the ideas of epiphany?

Q 4: What are the different stages of Stephen's development in *A Portrait?*

Q 5: What are some of the sources of Joyce's novel *A Portrait?*

8.3.2 Joyce's Art of Characterisation

You should note that in the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce attempts to weave much of his real life into fiction. Most of the characters in the novel are based on people who actually existed during Joyce's lifetime. Joyce portrayed them as fictional representations of religious, social, and cultural elements of Ireland as they influenced Stephen Dedalus, the young sensitive and maturing artist. The following are the major characters whose reference is almost mandatory while discussing the text of the novel.

Stephen Dadalus

Stephen Dadalus is the most important character of the novel. The most striking quality of Stephen's character is his introverted nature. This brings us back to his childhood. As a child, as an adolescent boy and as a young man, Stephen leads a life of isolation. He is seduced time and again by parental, political, religious, sexual and literary voices but ultimately concedes only to his own voice that he assigns to his own soul. The spiritual voicing, although it is the product of a closely exercised discipline of isolation, is not the

voicing of a private and personal condition only. It is also the voicing of hitherto unrealised and unexamined condition of the Irish people. The novel being a Bildungsroman, Stephen undergoes several crucial transformations over the course of the novel. His introverted attitude finally provides the basis of his aesthetic self as we are told: "Was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language many coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?" Important to note that his introversion as an adult also becomes the basis of his defensiveness which uses a highly developed form of the same weapon he had used as a child: "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether I call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning". This is the pattern through which Stephen seeks and finally succeeds in finding his own identity by resisting all collective relationship.

Simon Dedalus

Simon is Stephen's ineffectual father, good-natured but undependable. He prefers to live in the self-deluded reveries of his past rather than fulfil the role of a responsible father. An overly sentimental Irish Nationalist he is never a role model for his son. Seemingly, Simon's only bit of advice for Stephen is to choose his friends well and never to "peach" on them. In Chapter V Stephen describes Simon as less a father than "a medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor . . . a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller . . . and . . . a praiser of his own past." Simon Dedalus spends a great deal of his time reliving past experiences. Simon is a dominant father figure: he has a deep pride in tradition, but is unable to keep his own affairs in proper order. To Stephen, his father Simon represents that part of family, nation, and tradition, which he

feels he must rebel against.

Emma Clery

Emma is Stephen's "beloved", the young girl to whom he is intensely attracted over the course of many years. We are told nothing of her appearance and we can never have any clear idea of her as an individual. Stephens's flirtation with her becomes a bitter recollection in Stephen's mind, which is associated with his dislike for the Church. Stephen does not know Emma particularly well, and is generally too embarrassed or afraid to talk to her, but feels a powerful response stirring within him whenever he sees her. Stephen's first poem, "To E— C—," is written to Emma. Stephen only perceives women in terms of certain extremes. For him, women are either pure, distant, and unapproachable, like Emma, or impure, sexual, and common, like the prostitutes he visits during his time at Belvedere. Thus, the character of Emma remains important so far as her shadowy presence affects the development of Stephen's self.

Charles Stewart Parnell

Parnell is not fictional, and does not actually appear as a character in the novel. However, as an Irish political leader, he is a dominating figure whose death influences many characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* During the late nineteenth century, Parnell had been the powerful leader of the Irish National Party, and his influence seemed to promise Irish independence from England. When Parnell's affair with a married woman was exposed, however, he was condemned by the Catholic Church and he fell from grace. Many people in Ireland, such as John Casey in the novel, considered Parnell a hero and blamed the church for his death. Many others like Dante thought the church had done the right thing to condemn Parnell. These disputes over Parnell's character are at the root of the bitter and abusive argument that erupts during the Dedalus family's Christmas dinner when Stephen is still a young boy. In this sense, Parnell represents the burden of Irish nationality that Stephen comes to believe is preventing him from realizing

himself as an artist. However, Parnell also denotes parnellism—that is a set of rhetorical procedures for the reading of the Irish past that Joyce and W B Yeats, along with many others, perfected in the period between 1890 and 1940.

Cranly

Stephen's best friend at the university, Cranly also acts as a kind of nonreligious confessor for Stephen. In the late-night talks, Stephen tells Cranly everything, just as he used to tell the priests everything during his days of religious fervor. While Cranly is a good friend to Stephen, he does not really understand Stephen's need for absolute freedom. He firmly believes that leaving behind all the trappings of society would be to become terribly isolated. Cranly fears the sense of loneliness that Stephen seems to accept as an essential part of an artist's life, and he warns Stephen about the dangers of alienation and faithlessness, urging him to reconsider his decision to leave Ireland.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: How is Stephen's introverted nature gets reflected in this novel?

Q 7: Who is Parnell? What role does he play in the context of the novel?

8.3.3 Joyce's Narrative Style

A novel written in Joyce's characteristic free indirect speech style, *A Portrait* is a major example of the Künstlerroman (an artist's Bildungsroman) in English literature. Joyce's novel traces the intellectual and religio-philosophical awakening of young Stephen Dedalus as he begins to question and rebel against the Catholic and Irish conventions with which he has been raised. He finally goes abroad to pursue his ambitions as an artist. The opening lines exhibit a new fictional skill: "Once upon a time and a very good time it

was…baby tuckoo…" In addition, our knowledge about Stephen was to be attained through his own developing consciousness and this is what is so significant as a narrative style.

However, the most famous aspect of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is Joyce's innovative use of the **Stream of Consciousness** technique. With the help of this technique, Joyce directly transcribes the thoughts and sensations in a character's mind, rather than simply describing them with the help of an observer. Joyce's unique use of Stream of Consciousness in this novel makes the novel a story of the development of Stephen's mind. In the first chapter, child Stephen is only capable of describing his world in simple words and phrases. The sensations that he experiences are all jumbled together with a child's lack of attention to cause and effect. Later, when Stephen is a teenager obsessed with religion, he is able to think in a clearer, more adult manner. However, by the end of the novel, Joyce renders a portrait of a mind that has achieved emotional, intellectual, and artistic adulthood.

However, Joyce has used multiple narrative styles in this novel. Stylistically, the novel is written as a third-person narrative with minimal dialogue, though towards the end of the book dialogue-intensive scenes involving Dedalus and some of his friends, in which Dedalus posits his complex, Thomist aesthetic theory, and finally journal entries by Stephen, are introduced. Since the work describes Stephen's life from the time, he was a child to his increasing independence and ultimate abandonment of Ireland as a young man, the style of the work progresses through each of its five chapters, with the complexity of language gradually increasing. This is an important aspect of Joyce's style in this novel. Throughout the whole novel, prosaic language is used to describe the state of mind of the protagonist. But the inflections of the narrative voice that Joyce made more supple and subtle with his free indirect style, his interior monologue (this technique helps in recording the continuum of impressions, thoughts and impulses either prompted by conscious

experience or arising from the well of the subconscious), and his shading of the third person narrative towards a first person account, can actually bring the whole question of reported speech under scrutiny. The story is constantly being ascribed to Stephen, and by Stephen to someone else. This makes the readers ask about the 'actual identity of the narrator. Is the narrator the same as the author? Alternatively, is it the narrator's voice as borrowed? Even the term impressionism has also been used to describe Joyce's technique of concentrating on the inner life of the main character. Abundant examples of this technique are to be found in the work of Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf. Joyce may have learnt a great deal from his predecessors, but none of them had brought the question of the 'authority' of the author to focus as he did. For him it was a question fundamental to his culture.

James Joyce avoided all established notions of cultural nationalism. However, there was a connection between his own project and that of Yeats. Both sought to find for Ireland a language and a literary form that would consort with the Irish experience, including the traumatic experience of having lost a language. Although their ways of doing so were different, they both seemed to have agreed that Ireland must find its own language or get doomed to quote itself in a language that belonged to others. One of the ways of triumphing over the inherited language was to quote them, for in quotation, they lose their own context and gets replaced by the context of the writer who quotes. This notion is unique to James Joyce and it often gets reflected in his narrative style. While examining Joyce's narrative technique, one cannot help referring to the irony inherent in the title of the novel itself. It establishes the difference between what Joycean representation involves and the earlier works, both in painting and in literature having almost no difficulty with the idea of portraiture itself.



LET US KNOW

Early reviewers of the *Portrait* found faults with what they would tend to call 'a brilliant and nasty variety of pseudo-realism'. But, it is almost difficult to categorise this work as being realist, or an impressionist, or a symbolist and so on. Joyce uses a variety of techniques each playing its role in the context of the novel. Most of the major modern and postmodern writings that have followed since his death have flowed in one way or the other from him.

Although, following World War II, the idea of writing a novel took a new turn, Joyce's presence was still felt. Samuel Beckett, once Joyce's translator and friend in Paris, developed his ideas absurdist and minimalist form of post-war fictions directly from his master. Malcolm Lowry, the writer of *Under the Volcano* (1947) seemed to have seen himself as "Joyced with his own petard". Anthony Burgess, however, pronounced that Joyce's *Ulysses* is the greatest single work of English literature of the 20th century. Much modern criticism depends heavily on his view of the task of modern writing and the crisis of the modern word. When he was asked what *Ulysses* was all about, Joyce explained: "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy from centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of ensuring one's immortality."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How is the Stream of Consciousness technique used in this novel?



8.4 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have learnt that *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is essentially the story of Joyce's own break with his family and the Catholic Church and the discovery of his true vocation in life. The aesthetic available in a novel like this is worth reading in conjunction with Virginia Woolf's well-known essays on Modern Fiction. The importance of this novel as a great work of art and its wide influence have generally been recognized. Among many critics, it has inspired numerous commentaries yet it has been quite allusive a novel to comprehend. In naming its hero, however, Joyce also refers to the story of the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen whose reference occurs when the hero is crossing St. Stephen's Green. But, the Christian story does not play any significant role in the book as the Pagan myth of Dedalus. This novel is written in Joyce's characteristic free indirect speech style and it is a major example of the Künstlerroman (an artist's Bildungsroman) in English literature. The work is an early example of some of Joyce's modernist techniques that would later be represented in a more developed manner by *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake.* The novel, which has had a "huge influence on novelists across the world", was ranked by Modern Library as the third greatest English-language novel of the 20th century.



8.5 FURTHER READING

1) Attridge, Derek. (Ed). (2004). *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. (2nd edn), Cambridge UP.

2) Bloom, Harold. (Ed.) (1988). *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Chelsea House.

3) Bradbury, Malcolm. (1989). *The Modern World.* New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.

4) Deane, Seamus. (Ed). (1992). *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Penguin Books.

5) Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (Eds). (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol.1

6) Joyce, James. (1992). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Penguin Books.

7) Kettle, Arnold. "The Consistency of James Joyce" in Boris Ford (ed.) (1961). *The Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Vol. 7. Penguin Books.

8) Levenson, Michael. (Ed). (1999). *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism.* Cambridge University Press.

9) Ousby, Ian. (1994). *Companion to Literature in English*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

10) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.

8.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Naturalism, Symbolism and Modernism… …Individuation and the sense of a Community… …Ireland, Public History and Private History… …Bildungsroman and the Question of an Artist and so on.

Ans to Q 2: *A Portrait* explores what it means to be an individual… …Stephen's decision to leave his family and friends and go into exile in order to become an artist suggests that the artist is necessarily an isolated figure… …however, Stephen's ultimate goal is to give voice to the very community that he is leaving.

Ans to Q 3: An epiphany is an experience of sudden and striking realization… …one famous example is Archimedes's discovery of a method to determine the density of an object… …James Joyce gave this word a particular literary connotation in his novel *Stephen Hero* in which he states: "By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation…"… …in *A Portrait* however, the notion is somewhat changed.

Ans to Q 4: An imaginative child suffering under narrow orthodoxies and

the brutalities of a Jesuit boarding school… …his growing realisation of his families drifts into squalor… …the overwhelming sense of a 'sin' through an occasion of untimely sexual orientation… …the phase of sudden and anxious religious observance… …the journey towards understanding the realm of art and his supposed place in it… …the crisis of his break with the Church and the exalting moment of revelation.

Ans to Q 5: Allusion to Dedalus—the consummate craftsman of Greek mythology… … Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh,* which is based on the growth of a young artist… … St. Augustine's *Confessions*… …Goethe's *Werther and Wilhelm Meister… …*Cardinal Newman's *Aologia Pro Vita Sua.*

Ans to Q 6: The most striking quality of Stephen's character is his introverted nature… …as a child and an adolescent, Stephen leads a life of isolation… …he is seduced time and again by parental, political, religious, sexual and literary voices… …however, the novel being a Bildungsroman, his introverted attitude finally provides the basis of his aesthetic self.

Ans to Q 7: Parnell was an Irish political leader of the Irish Nationalist Party in the late 19th century… …although he is not present in the novel, the news of his death influences many characters in *A Portrait… …*when Parnell's affair with a married woman was exposed, he was condemned by the Catholic Church and he fell from grace…. …Parnell in the novel represents the burden of Irish nationality that Stephen comes to believe is preventing him from realizing himself as an artist.

Ans to Q 8: With the help of this technique Joyce directly transcribes the thoughts and sensations in a character's mind, rather than simply describing them with the help of an observer…. …this technique makes the novel a story of the development of Stephen's mind.



8.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How is Stephen Dedalus influenced by his Irish nationality? Discuss

with reference to his *A Portrait.*

Q 2: Discuss Joyce's use of religious imagery and language. Why are Father Arnall's three sermons so successful in overcoming Stephen's religious doubt?

Q 3: What role does Stephen's burgeoning sexuality play in his development as a character? How does his Catholic morality complicate his experience of sexuality?

Q 4: Compare and contrast Stephen's perception of art with his perception of religion, family, school, or country. What makes art such an appealing escape for Stephen?

Q 5: Why does Stephen turn down the offer to become a Jesuit?

Q 6: How do Stephen's parents affect his development throughout the novel? How does he react to his father's patriotic nostalgia? To his mother's solemn Catholicism? At the end of the novel, why does Stephen feel he needs to escape from his family?

Q 7: Compare and contrast Stephen with some of the other boys and young men with whom he associates. How is he different from them? How does he feel about being different?

Q 8: How does the setting of the novel affect the characters and the plot?

Q 9: Discuss Stephen's changing views of the clergy as he matures. Give supporting examples and cite specific scenes in the novel.

Q 10: Trace the origin and development of Stephen's own *non serviam* credo. Using specific incidents in the novel, discuss the evolution of Stephen's non-conformist attitudes.

Q 11: In Chapter IV, Stephen experiences an epiphany. What does he learn about his feelings toward women and about art? Do you think he really understands, or is he still as confused as ever? Give your views.

Q 12: Examine Stephen's personal relationships with the women, both real and imagined, in his life. Show what effect they have upon his emotional development.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 9: VIRGINIA WOOLF: *TO THE LIGHT HOUSE (PART I)*

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Virginia Woolf: Life and Works

9.4 Story of the Novel *To the Lighthouse*

9.5 Critical Reception of Woolf

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Further Reading

9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.9 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of Virginia Woolf
- explain the story line of the novel *To The Lighthouse* and find its difference from traditional stories
- discuss Virginia Woolf as one of the greatest modernist writers
- provide an analysis of the critical reception of Woolf as a leading writer of the Stream of Consciousness technique.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Virginia Woolf, who is yet another important exponent of the Stream of Consciousness technique in novel in the early part of the 20th century. One of the most prominent literary figures of the 20th century, Virginia Woolf is chiefly renowned as an innovative novelist. She also wrote book reviews, biographical and autobiographical sketches, social and literary criticism, personal essays, and commemorative articles treating a wide range of topics. Concerned primarily with depicting the life of the mind, Woolf revolted against traditional narrative structures

and developed her own highly individualized style of writing. The stream-of-consciousness technique is found in much of Woolf's fiction. As you are already aware, this technique reflects the way in which a character's thoughts flow freely, often without formal sentence structure or punctuation. Writing for "the Common Reader" Woolf also wrote book reviews, biographical and autobiographical sketches, social and literary criticism, personal essays, and commemorative articles treating a wide range of topics. Her essays are commended for their perceptive observations on nearly the entire range of English literature, as well as many social and political concerns of the early twentieth century. She maintained that the purpose of writing an essay was to give pleasure to the reader, and she endeavoured to do this with witty, supple prose, apt literary and cultural references, and a wide range of subjects. Aiming to identify closely with her audience, she adopted a persona she termed "the common reader"—an intelligent, educated person with the will and inclination to be challenged by what he or she reads. As you finish reading this unit, you will be able to discuss the life and works of Woolf with particular reference to her novel *To The Lighthouse.*

9.3 VIRGINIA WOOLF: LIFE AND WORKS

The following subsections will help you to consider the life and works of Virginia Woolf one of the greatest writers of the 20th century.

Her Life:

Virginia Stephen was born in London in 1882. Her father, Leslie Stephen, who had been a well-known mountaineer in his youth later, became an eminent man of letters. He was an essayist, biographer, editor and a historian of ideas. He edited the sixty-five volume *Dictionary of National Biography* for many years. Her mother, Julia, besides being a competent housewife, was also a dedicated social worker. Her first husband, whom she had loved deeply, died young leaving her with three children. Her marriage with Leslie Stephen was a happy one but she



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

never recovered from her early tragedy and bore its stamp throughout her life. The Stephens family was a large one consisting of Virginia and her three siblings as well as the children from Leslie and Julia's previous marriages. Finances were a constant source of worry for the man, while his wife wore herself out running the household, taking care of eight children and carrying out her charitable work. It is possible that her sudden death in 1895 was the outcome of exhaustion. He was emotionally indulgent and bullying especially towards Venessa who took over the management of the house. Virginia came to see him as an unhappy man who wanted to be thought of as a genius but was actually tormented by the knowledge that he was a failure. This realisation about her father came when she became an adult because, as children, she and her brothers had an uneasy relationship with him. Virginia's mother died when she was only thirteen years old, yet in her own words "Until I was in the forties…the presence of my mother obsessed me…" *To The Lighthouse* attempts to give a sense of their presence and celebrate them in the light of a daughter's changing perception about her parents.

Virginia was born when her father was fifty years old and he died in 1904. After his death, she and Venessa moved out of their home in Kensington, an area where they found the atmosphere too patronising and prudish. They took a house in the **Bloomsbury locality** where they made friends with a group of cultured young men with similar outlook and interests. All of them were intellectuals of the highest order with a socially and sexually liberated attitude to life. They included Lytton Strachey, the celebrated biographer, Roger Fry, an art critic, John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist and John Strachey who translated the works of Sigmund Freud. Their association flourished and together they came to be known as the Bloomsbury Group. E. M. Forster and T. S. Eliot were also loosely associated with this group. Venessa became a well-known painter and married Clive Bell, a famous writer.

In 1913, Virginia married Leonard Woolf who was her brother's friend and a Cambridge University alumnus. He went on to become a renowned writer and editor as well as a Labour Party activist. He was involved with the

campaigns for the formation of the League of Nations and later for Indian independence. Leonard and Virginia founded a successful publishing house, the **Hogarth Press**. Perhaps inspired by her father, Virginia decided early on that she wanted to be a writer. In this respect, she identified with him and he encouraged her to read and write. Yet in the Victorian milieu, she, as a girl, had to stay at home while her brothers were sent to expensive public schools. She resented the discrimination and the seeds of her feminist outlook were thus sown at a young age.

Virginia Woolf was definitely a product of the Bloomsbury Group. These modern creative writers and thinkers had left the Victorian taboos behind and adopted certain relaxed and unorthodox social norms. Their intellectual and cultural leanings were reflected in her thinking and reading. Proust was a major influence and so were James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. Her early novels written in the traditional style were moderately successful but *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway* established her as a leading modern novelist. *To The Lighthouse,* published in 1927, gained her a wider readership and catapulted her to fame. This was the happiest period of her life when she became a glamorous social figure and was featured in the *Vogue* magazine. In addition to her novels and short stories, Virginia Woolf also wrote a series of autobiographical papers, memoirs and a Diary. These give us a detailed and intimate account of her life and we get an inkling of how she conceived of and came to write *To The Lighthouse*.

After her mother's demise, Virginia's stepsister Stella also died in 1897. Her father succumbed to a long illness in 1904 and her elder brother Toby died of a fever in 1906. Virginia was shattered by the series of calamities and never really recovered from the trauma. In spite of a successful career as a writer, Virginia Woolf was prone to severe depression. Her mental instability was compounded by several traumatic events and ultimately led to her committing suicide in 1941.



LET US KNOW

Woolf grew up in an environment rich in Victorian literary influences. Although she lacked the formal

education afforded to men of her day, Woolf acquired extensive knowledge of the classics and English literature in the family's enormous home library. In addition, many influential literary figures visited her childhood house, including George Eliot, Henry James, George Lewes, Julia Cameron, and James Lowell, who was named Woolf's godfather. Proximity to influential writers of her day continued into her adulthood with the formation of the Bloomsbury group and creation of the Hogarth Press. With the freedom to create and publish her own work, Woolf largely avoided traditional narrative structures or plots. Her novels are noted for their subjective exploration of character and theme and their poetic prose. Woolf is mostly known as an innovative novelist and in particular for her contribution to the development of the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique.

Her Works:

Virginia Woolf was far removed from Victorian sensibilities and inhibitions. Her fiction and autobiographical writing give ample evidence of her liberated outlook on life and the arts. Her technique as a novelist also breaks away from the prevalent tradition and establishes the modernistic style. Yet, she resembled her famous predecessors like Dickens, Hardy and George Eliot in so far as she too has left behind a large output of writing.

The Bloomsbury Group, which took upon itself the role of a progressive cultural entity, introduced changes in social and artistic norms. Being a member of the group, Virginia's role as a woman and a writer was shaped by these novel attitudes. Her feminism and modern technique of writing are, to a great extent, the outcome of this association. In addition, she was deeply influenced by Proust and stimulated by James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1919). We also see in her fiction the impact of the "Stream of Consciousness" method used by Dorothy Richardson in her novel *Pilgrimage*. Her first two novels *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919) were written in the traditional style. However, in *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), she began to experiment with the new narrative technique and develop her style of lyrical fiction, which established her as

the diva of modernist prose. The idea of writing *To The Lighthouse* came to her when she had not yet finished *Mrs. Dalloway*. As she wrote in her Diary in May 1925, she longed to put aside the more laborious work and start giving shape to the new inspiration. The novel was published in 1927 and gained her a wider readership as also greater fame. *Orlando*, written in 1928 was a light-hearted and popular work. Then came *The Wave*s (1931) considered the most unusual and 'difficult' of her novels. After several years of struggle and uncertainty, she fell back on the more traditional style to write *The Years*, which was published in 1937. Her last novel *Between the Acts* was published after her death in 1941.

Like many of her celebrated Victorian predecessors, Virginia Woolf was also a prolific writer. In addition to her novels and the large number of short stories, she has to her credit several books of essays on literature, a biography of art critic Roger Fry and two books on women's position in society. The first of these, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) outlines the key factors leading to woman's autonomy like economic independence and education. She also explores here the reasons why women face difficulty in becoming writers. She lists some of the reasons as the lack of education, the demands made on them by marriage and the raising of a family and the mindset that women must live for others. The arguments are extremely relevant to the themes of *To The Lighthouse* and very close to Virginia Woolf's heart. Her second book on women *Three Guineas* is explicitly feminist stating that professional women should remain outside the mainstream (male) culture, which she sees as dominating and militaristic.

Virginia Woolf has also left behind a series of autobiographical papers and memoirs, which have been published posthumously as *Moments of Being*. An essay in this collection named 'A Sketch of the Past' is pertinent to the novel under discussion. In addition, we have her Diary published in five volumes and six volumes of her letters, which give us, detailed and intimate information of her life. We get a fair idea of why and how she came to write *To The Lighthouse* from her memoirs and her Diary. In these works, she has revealed the complex emotional connection that defined her relationship with her parents and went on to admit that the novel was an

exploration of that relationship. She was compelled to delve into and resolve her ambivalent feelings for her father and the strange influence of her mother. *To The Lighthouse* was the outcome of that compulsion. It is not really a story about her parents but is more of a tribute to them. Hence, it made the author wonder whether she should call it a novel or an elegy. The book builds on an important creative theory of Virginia Woolf. She believed that a writer must bring into focus and expand the rare moments of vision when we experience a deep sense of reality that our mechanical everyday existence has made us immune to. Such a moment was a powerful memory of a holiday she had spent in Cornwall as a child. This becomes the island of Hebrides where the Ramsays go to spend their holidays. *To The Lighthouse* builds on this theory of intense *moments of being* and is autobiographical in this sense.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In what ways can the novel *To The Lighthouse* be seen as autobiographical?

Q 2: Write briefly about the famous "Bloomsbury Group".

Q 3: What is the theory that is brought to light in the novel *To The Lighthouse*?

Q 4: What are the different kinds of works produced by Virginia Woolf?

Q 5: How does Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* state certain important aspects of womanhood?

9.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

When Virginia Woolf wrote the novel, she challenged the concept of time traditionally adopted in fiction. *To The Lighthouse* rejects the notion of beginnings and endings and a linear sequence. It contains three parts but the development of the storyline is not dependent on the passage of time. It does not progress on the 'what- happens-next' basis but moves forward on the arrangement of scenes. Events unfold as they occur in the

characters' consciousness and have no temporal dimension. Instead of a string of dramatic events, the form of the novel is a series of impressions inside the minds of human beings. So, let us have a quick look at the three parts of the novel.

Part I "The Window"

It is September, sometime before the First World War. The Ramsays with their guests are having gone to the Isle of Skye for a holiday. There is a lighthouse across the bay from their house to which Mrs Ramsay has promised her son James a trip the next day if the weather is conducive. However, Mr. Ramsay the ever-practical man asserts that the weather will not be fine and this angers his son. The conversation is interspersed with the narration of the thoughts and feelings, memories and perceptions of the characters. Thereby the reader gets to form an idea about the *dramatis personae* and the relationships they share. A significant aspect of this part is that the action takes place in the span of one day. Mr Ramsay talks to his young colleague Charles Tansley and worries about being a failure. There is Lily Briscoe who paints a picture and walks and talks with a guest William Bankes. Another guest Augustus Carmichael dozes on the lawn. Two more guests Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle will have their engagement on the beach and a group of Ramsay children with their friends go down there. In the evening Mrs Ramsay hosts a dinner party. This part focuses on the relationship between her and her husband and ends with their sitting together and reading.

PART II "Time Passes"

Ten years have gone by and the Ramsays have not visited the island in that time. Their house has fallen into disrepair and it becomes a symbol of the remorseless cycle of nature, which continues unmindful of the fate of human beings. The focus in this part is on the passage of time and the indifferent forces of nature. The tragic happenings in the Ramsays' life are reported in parentheses as if these are of little importance. Mrs Ramsay died suddenly one night and her daughter Prue died at childbirth. Andrew Ramsay is killed in the war. The family is to visit their holiday home and Mrs McNab the cleaner gets a message to this effect. The witless and toothless

woman arrives along with Mrs Bast and her son to clean and restore the place. This part ends with the guests descending on the house.

Part III "The Lighthouse"

This Part encompasses a day ten years after Part I. Cam and James Ramsay are now teenagers and their father has decided that he will take them to the lighthouse on a boat. The children have not yet got over their mother's death and their antipathy towards their father. Lily spends the day painting on the beach while Carmichael again dozes on the lawn. She dwells on her memories of Mrs Ramsay as she paints her picture and is overwhelmed with grief. During the day, several things happen. The three Ramsays make the trip to the lighthouse and James rows the boat well. His father praises him and James is happy. He begins to see the redeeming qualities of his father and Cam feels safe with him. They reach the lighthouse and Mr Ramsay bids a private farewell to his wife. On the island, Lily finishes her painting to her satisfaction. She and the children find that they have finally come to terms with Mrs Ramsay's death. They have also resolved to an extent the troubled relationship they had with one another.



LET US KNOW

According to Leonard Woolf *To the Lighthouse* was Virginia's best work. Certainly, it established Virginia Woolf as an important modern writer and earned her wider readership. The sale of her books also went up after its publication. Over the next ten years, she came to be regarded as a serious writer and her novels were translated into other languages. However, by 1941, she was considered outdated, associated with the aesthetic experimentation of the Bloomsbury Group, but not in sync with the times, the late thirties. Her novels did not deal with the major issues like—the rise of Fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the Depression and its effects. When she died, the Second World War was raging and the decadent culture of the twenties seemed to be of another age. Virginia Woolf, with her focus on subjectivity and the inner world was no longer placed on the top rungs of the literary ladder.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is so striking about the storyline of the novel *To The Lighthouse*?

Q 7: In what way, is the novel *To The Lighthouse* an important novel by Virginia Woolf?

9.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF WOOLF

When *Mrs. Dalloway* was first published in 1925, Woolf received the immediate critical attention unlike in case of her earlier fiction. In a review for the New York Times, John W. Crawford wrote that, despite the inventiveness of other contemporary authors, "Virginia Woolf is almost alone…in the intricate yet clear art of her composition." Edwin Muir, in *Transition: Essays on Contemporary Literature*, compares the novel favourably to her earlier *Night and Day*, stating, "[I]t is infinitely more subtle in its means, and it has on all its pages, as Night and Day had not, the glow of an indisputable artistic triumph."

E. M. Forster in his essay 'English Prose between 1918 and 1939' welcomed Virginia Woolf's works as part of a rich collection of new fiction, which was inspired by 'the new psychological movement'. She belonged to the elite group of writers comprising Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and Elizabeth Bowen. Other contemporary critics like Q.D. Leavis in essays like 'Fiction and the Reading Public' (1932) also maintained the same line of thinking. She wrote that the elite group had opened up a chasm between the vast majority of readers and a small group with cultivated taste in reading. This gap did not exist in the Dickens era or earlier in the 18th century. Hence, we find that during her lifetime, Virginia Woolf was deemed by many as not a pleasure to read because of her experiment with the traditional novel form, her complicated narrative techniques and the unfamiliar idiom. In fact, some were of the opinion that her skills were not meant for the novel and would be better suited for some other genre.

By 1965, when 'Fiction and the Reading Public' was republished,

the sale of *To the Lighthouse* had gone up dramatically both in the UK and in USA. The renewed interest in Virginia Woolf started after the War because of several reasons. There was a dramatic change in sensibilities leading to a marked transformation in European culture in the fields of music and the arts to science and literature. In this scenario, Virginia Woolf came to be regarded as one of the leading figures of the modernist novel. Her work was widely discussed and debated upon in academic forums and *To The Lighthouse* was generally accepted as a great work of literature. Jean Guiguet's 'Virginia Woolf and her Works' containing a review of academic criticism up to 1962 was a standard book for many years. Guiguet points out that many critics had assessed Virginia Woolf's novels according to the guidelines set by an earlier tradition of novel writing and were unfamiliar with the modernist perceptions. They were thus unable to appreciate the innovations she made in the format of the novel, which had existed since its inception. Erich Auerbach in his 'The Brown Stocking' was the first to make an in-depth analysis of Virginia Woolf's narrative technique and the way her fiction differed from 19th century novels. He brought out the significance of her narrator who marked a departure from the distinct and omniscient 'Voice' of the Traditional Novel. The importance of multiple-viewpoint device and the 'tunnelling' into the past of the characters were highlighted. Auerbach's observation that *To the Lighthouse* was a representative of the modern period was, perhaps, the finest critical appreciation of the novel.

In the second half of the 20th century, a large number of books were written about Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group. From the mid-seventies, her papers, essays and autobiographical writings were edited and published. In 1972, a biography written by her nephew Quentin Bell was published. All this generated a great deal of interest on Virginia Woolf's work, and her memoirs in particular greatly affected academic discussions on *To The Lighthouse.* The critical success Woolf achieved with *Mrs. Dalloway* raised expectations for the 1927 release of her next novel, *To the Lighthouse*. Critical opinion of the book was mixed, with many noting the author's obvious skill at turning a phrase and offering credit for the stylistic and structural difficulties she tackled with the work. Edwin Muir, in a review

for Nation and Atheneum, states that the book is “difficult to judge” because of this, and he credits Woolf as “a writer of profound imagination.” Muir concedes, “Yet as a whole, though showing an advance on many sides, it produces a less congruous and powerful effect than Mrs. Dalloway.” In his review for the New York Times, Louis Kronenberger agrees: “It is inferior to Mrs. Dalloway in the degree to which its aims are achieved; it is superior in the magnitude of the aims themselves.” Orlo Williams, in a review for the *Monthly Criterion*, offers praise wrapped in criticism: “Her mastery increases with each book, but, I fear, it will always fall short of her vision.” Despite these reviews, modern scholars have devoted much attention to the novel as one of Woolf’s most complex and masterful works.

The feminist movement in recent times has given a new impetus to Virginia Woolf studies. Her novels dealt with issues central to the female psyche like the question of identity and woman as a social construct. Hence, at a time when women’s issues are coming to the fore, Virginia Woolf’s fiction and other women-oriented works strike a chord with the majority of the reading public. An interesting development in recent times has been the shift in focus from the poetic depiction of subjectivity and the experiment in narrative technique in Virginia Woolf’s novels. Readers and critics now emphasise more on the social significance of her theme, namely the problems of power. They see, for example, in *To the Lighthouse*, the struggle for power of men over women, of parents over children. Thus, the novel is regarded as being not so much about Virginia Woolf’s parents or about Victorian marriage but about more general and complex issues. Today we see in the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay questions, which are valid for us—about emotionally crippled men and their aggressions, about repressions and frustrations of women and the pattern of behaviour produced through such relationships. The creativity of women embodied in Lily Briscoe and the obstacles she faces as discussed in ‘A Room of One’s Own’ are of immense interest too. Perhaps, for these reasons, *To the Lighthouse* is more popular today than it ever was before.

Because of her importance as an innovator in the modern novel form, and as a commentator on nearly the entire range of English literature

and European literature, Woolf's life and works have been the focus of extensive research. In addition to occupying the attention of scholars, Woolf has inspired experimental works in a variety of artistic genres including author Michael Cunningham's Pulitzer Prize–winning novel *The Hours* (1998), in which Woolf appears as a character, and playwright Edward Albee's work *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) among others.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Would you like to say that Virginia Woolf's novels were liked by all?

Q 9: What is the significance of Erich Auerbach in the study of Virginia Woolf?

Q 10: In what way, the feminist movement has given a new impetus to the studies on Virginia Woolf?



9.6 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of this unit, you must have realised that Virginia Woolf exemplifies a tendency among the modernist writers to develop from a metonymic (realistic) to a metaphoric (symbolist) representation of reality. She reinvented the novel form in its totality experimenting with the traditional characteristics of plot, theme, setting and character. The old complicity of assumption between author and reader was rejected as was the role of the clearly discernible omniscient narrator. The process of challenging the traditional ways of negotiating proportion, light, time and character in fiction which Virginia Woolf began in *Jacob's Room* (1922) and continued through *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To The Lighthouse* (1927), culminated in *The Waves* (1931). In these experimental novels, she developed her individual style of lyrical, poetic fiction. Her innovations with narrative technique, idiom and imagery, enabled her to focus on different kinds of subjective experience and explore several layers of the characters' minds. *To the Lighthouse* represents, perhaps, the best execution of these innovations and critics

like Erich Auerbach establishes Virginia Woolf as one of the major writers of the modernist novel. This novel is a fruitful experience for readers and students learning about literary forms. They can trace the evolution from the Victorian to the modernist sensibility in the storyline, characterisation and the experimental multiple point of view technique. It is Virginia Woolf's remarkable contribution to the development of the novel, and hence earns for itself an unassailable and enduring place in literature.



9.7 FURTHER READING

1) Beja, M. (1970). *Virginia Woolf To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Casebook Series, Macmillan Education Ltd.
2) Daugherty, B.R. & M. B. Pringle.(2001). *Approaches to Teaching Woolf's To the Lighthouse*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
3) Davies, S. (1989). *Virginia Woolf: To The Lighthouse.* (Penguin Critical Studies) London: Penguin Books.
4) Leaska, M.A. (1970). *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method*. New York: Columbia University Press.
5) Reid, S. (Ed). (1993). *Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
6) Sellers, S. (Ed). (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (2nd Edn). Cambridge University Press.
7) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol. 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.



9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: *To The Lighthouse* provides her own changing perception about her parents… …Virginia'a father was a man who failed in life

and had unhappy relationship with his children… …the presence of Virginia's mother who died when she was only thirteen years old often obsessed her… …thus there can be seen many autobiographical elements in this novel.

Ans to Q 2: The "Bloomsbury Group" was constituted by friends having a cultured mind set… …all the members had a socially and sexually liberated attitude to life… …the group comprised Lytton Strachey, the eminent biographer, Roger Fry, the art critic, John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist, and John Strachey who translated the works of Sigmund Freud… …E. M. Forster and T. S. Eliot too were also loosely associated with this group.

Ans to Q 3: The book is built on the theory that a writer must bring into focus and expand the rare moments of vision when we experience a deep sense of reality that our mechanical everyday existence has made us immune to.

Ans to Q 4: Novels like *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *Orlando* (1928), *The Wave*s (1931) etc. … …a large number of short stories… …several books of essays on literature… …a biography of art critic Roger Fry… …two books on women's position in society namely *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas… …*a series of autobiographical papers and memoirs which have been published posthumously as *Moments of Being*.

Ans to Q 5: *A Room of One's Own* outlines the key factors leading to woman's autonomy like economic independence and education… …why women face difficulty in becoming writers… …causes are lack of education, the demands by the institution of marriage.

Ans to Q 6: *To The Lighthouse* rejects the notion of beginnings and endings and a linear sequence… …It contains three parts but the development of the storyline is not dependent on the passage of time… …events unfold as they occur in the characters' consciousness and have no temporal dimension.

Ans to Q 7: *To The Lighthouse* rejects the notion of beginnings and endings

and a linear sequence… …development of the storyline is not dependent on the passage of time… …not based on 'what- happens-next' but moves forward on the arrangement of scenes… …events unfold as they occur in the characters' consciousness… …the form of the novel is a series of impressions inside the minds of human beings.

Ans to Q 8: No… …she was deemed by many as not a pleasure to read because of her experiment with the traditional novel form, her complicated narrative techniques and the unfamiliar idiom… …some even opined that her skills were not meant for the genre of the novel.

Ans to Q 9: In his essay 'The Brown Stocking' Erich Auerbach made an in-depth analysis of Virginia Woolf's narrative technique for the first time… …he brought out the significance of her narrator who marked a departure from the distinct and omniscient 'Voice' of the Traditional Novel… …the importance of multiple-viewpoint device and the 'tunnelling' into the past of the characters made the novel a representative of the modern period.

Ans to Q 10: Her novels dealt with issues central to the female psyche like identity and woman as a social construct… …hence, at a time when women's issues are coming to the fore, Virginia Woolf's fiction and other women-oriented works strike a chord with the majority of the reading public.



9.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Virginia Woolf said that she was interested in writing about the dark places of psychology. Discuss with reference to her experimental novels.

Q 2: Because Woolf and her husband operated a press, she was free to write without worrying about rejection by a publisher. Do you think that because of this advantage, she could carry on with her experiments?

Q 3: Woolf famously argued in her long essay "A Room of One's Own" that in order for women to succeed as writers of fiction, they needed to have a reliable means of income and a private space in which to work. Do you think that having "a room of one's own" would be important for women writers of the early twentieth century?

Q 4: Woolf employed the Stream-of-consciousness narrative style to explore the inner lives of her characters. Discuss with reference to her novel *To The Lighthouse.*

Q 5: Write a note on the critical reception of Virginia Woolf and her works.

Q 6: *To The Lighthouse* attempts to give a sense of their presence and celebrate them in the light of a daughter's changing perception about her parents. Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 10: VIRGINIA WOOLF: *TO THE LIGHT HOUSE (PART II)*

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Reading the Novel

10.3.1 Major Themes

10.3.2 Woolf's Art of Characterisation

10.3.3 Woolf's Narrative Style

10.4 Let us Sum up

10.5 Further Reading

10.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

10.7 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the novel *To The Lighthouse* from different perspectives
- analyse the important themes implicit in the novel
- explain the motive of the characters and trace their development
- appreciate the novelty and significance of Virginia Woolf's narrative style
- gain a fresh insight into the concept of psychological realism in literature.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit takes you to the discussion of the novel *To The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). The novel was written in the experimental narrative technique earlier used in the many-volumed novel *Pilgrimage* by Dorothy Richardson. Virginia also wrote two books on the role of women in society, a subject very closely related to the themes of several of her novels, especially *To The Lighthouse.* In addition to her novels, short stories and

several books of essays, we have a series of autobiographical papers and memoirs, a long diary and six volumes of letters from her repertoire. These give us a full and intimate account of her life. This unit will help you to discuss that *To The Lighthouse* is autobiographical in more than one sense. Apart from the characters, setting and actions, which bear resemblance to her own family life, it also builds on her theory that a writer must attempt to expand the 'moments of vision' and fill them out in words.

10.3 READING THE NOVEL

You must note that the novel *To The Lighthouse* is one of the most significant novels of the 20th century. In the following subsections, we shall discuss the various important aspects of the novel. When we set out to analyse *To The Lighthouse* thematically, we find that the novel operates on a different level altogether. The major political and social issues of the time do not touch the characters in any significant manner and thereby do not impact the story directly. For example, Part II of the novel covers the time when the World War I is going on. Andrew, the Ramsay's son, is killed in the War. Yet the event is not narrated at length or made to give any dramatic turn to the action. The social and political issues, which are central to the fiction of Dickens and George Eliot, do not occupy any space in *To the Lighthouse*.

Virginia Woolf seems to have deliberately kept the focus on the elements, which were regarded as trivial and uninteresting by her male contemporaries. These were the intricate workings of the mind during the characters' everyday interactions with one another. The novel builds on those emotions and complexes, which are normally not visible in public. The novel progresses with the narration of these hidden undercurrents, which are nevertheless very powerful in defining the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children and among guests present in the house. These subtle and usually unarticulated thoughts and feelings have great significance in developing identities as well as relationships. Yet they happen rapidly and often at a subconscious level and become difficult for us to pinpoint. Virginia Woolf's modernist fiction is a successful attempt at

finding ways of articulating these complex nuances of human emotions. Her success as a modernist also means that in these novels she has done away with the artificial distinction between form and content. In *To the Lighthouse*, for example, even those who have resolved their crises of identity to an extent remain open to doubts and insecurities till the very end.

Any examination of the themes of this novel will mean delving into certain psychological issues rather than finding socially relevant subjects. The novel operates on the level of poetry where language heightened by various poetic devices like simile and metaphor becomes a major instrument of conveying the work's intensity and authority. We find images gradually acquiring symbolic dimension and are often able to trace the novel's narrative progress in terms of the symbol's extension and expansion. The most suggestive symbol is the lighthouse and it can mean different things to different readers. In its most general terms, it is a structure representing the concept of a goal: a fulfilment of some sort, a quest involving an elaborate pattern of relations. On the novel's poetic plane, it is a source of light, which does not become a source of illumination until after Mrs Ramsay's death.

10.3.1 Major Themes

The following discussion can be made on the possible themes of the novel *To The Lighthouse*

Identity

A major theme in *To the Lighthouse* is the issue of identity. Development of the sense of self is a crucial process in the storyline. Self-doubt, instability and indecision are seen to plague some characters who thereby face a crisis of identity. As the novel progresses, some of them like James Ramsay and Lily Briscoe resolve this crisis to some extent. James, as a child, is deeply attached to his mother but is resentful towards his father. In Part III he has reached a stage when he is ready to take on the mantle of adulthood but is prevented by the adverse opinion he has of his father. He does not want to inherit the violent rages, the insensitivity and the self-indulgent emotionality of the elder Ramsay. As he sits

on the boat with the tiller in his hands, he is flooded with memories of childhood. He remembers an occasion when he felt helpless as his father raged at his mother. At last, his perceptions clear and he sees his father, as he is now, a sad old man. He also sees the positive qualities of the man — an ability to face reality, even the harshness of it like loneliness and death. He has already internalised his father's heroic self-image, he has begun to identify with his redeeming traits.

The crisis of identity is especially applicable to the women because of the social construct. In the Victorian ethos, they were endowed with certain attributes, which determined their position in and out of home. Mrs Ramsay could not achieve her goal of fighting for sanitation and medical facilities for the poor because her family duties came first. The compulsion to thwart her reformatory zeal had a negative effect on her personality. She was plagued by self-doubt and hence became vulnerable to a crisis of identity. Lily Briscoe too is haunted by doubts and indecision. She is open to comparison with Mrs. Ramsay, who is the epitome of Victorian womanhood. Lily cannot conform to this ideal yet she idolises Mrs. Ramsay. She is torn by indecision and doubts about her femininity. In Part III she too moves towards a strong sense of self as some of her doubts are resolved and, like James, she too begins to see Mrs. Ramsay as a woman rather than a figure on a pedestal. The theme of identity leads to another important issue, a profound concern with gender and a problematic exploration of the differences between man and woman.

Issue of Gender

The contrast between the genders exemplified most notably though Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay largely revolves around two themes: male egotism and inconsiderateness is pitted against feminine sensitivity and attentiveness towards the needs of others. Secondly, there is a series of narrations on the theme of masculine intelligence versus feminine imagination. On the surface, the distinction between

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay based on their thought process polarises gender in their traditional way. However, Virginia Woolf manages, through the action, to reverse the conventional values society ascribes to the sexes. This is set out most powerfully in Section 7 of Part I in which Mr. Ramsay demands sympathy from his wife. Mr. Ramsay's assault on Mrs. Ramsay's sympathies is mental and verbal but is presented through symbolism, which interprets it as a version of rape. In Part III, Lily is faced with the same assault and is assailed by doubts regarding her femininity when she cannot respond to Mr. Ramsay's demands. The male egotism with which conventional female behaviour is contrasted is most explicit in the character of Charles Tansley. As he walks to town with Mrs. Ramsay, he talks endlessly of himself, while she had asked him to accompany her solely out of the kindness of her heart. At dinner that evening, Lily is repelled by his egotism and Mrs. Ramsay sees through his desire to impress.

Bereavement

Another important theme in the novel is bereavement. Death here is presented as a collision of the framework of human-time with some alien non-human framework. There is no consoling or uplifting significance of death. It is an intrusion of an unintelligible destructive force into the relatively ordered and apprehensible world of the living. Thus, death is the harbinger of grief without there being any scope for spiritual solace. Virginia Woolf does not portray the shattering intensity of grief but paints a more complicated and subtle picture with the use of images like the rope, which immobilises James, the mutilated mackerel and so on. She shows the characters one day many years after Mrs. Ramsay's death as if she wants to depict the long-term effect rather than the immediate shock of Mrs. Ramsay's death. On this day, each one of them performs a private ceremony of farewell to her. Mr. Ramsay looks back at the island staring "at the frail blue shape which seemed like the vapour of something that had burned itself away". The metaphor here is that

of distance. One needs to get the proper perspective of the beloved to be able to bid farewell to them, and distance rather than nearness can achieve this. For both James and Lily, Mrs. Ramsay was a mother figure with magical qualities. They have to see her as a mere woman with her share of limitations and contradictions in order to accept her death as a fact. The passage of time puts a distance between the living and the dead and makes both of them realise that their parent or idealised figure had no protective power for them. They are released from the thrall Mrs. Ramsay had held them in while alive. With this release, grief, which in Lily's case was like a dammed up volcano, loosens its grip over her.

Creativity

Many of the characters in the novel are creative people. They are philosophers, a painter, a scientist and a poet with worries whether their objects of creation will survive the onslaught of time. Yet, central to the novel are not these high forms of creative function but other efforts at work. These creative efforts run counter to the destruction by the passage of time. The nurturing of children, traditionally a woman's function, cannot withstand the ravages of time, as Mrs. Ramsay realises. Rose creates a beautiful arrangement with fruits, which someone destroys. Mrs. Ramsay immediately looks at Prue whose fragile beauty it reminds her of. (Prue is to die young in the novel.) Mildred, the cook spends three days making her *boeuf en daube* for dinner. The dish, which makes the reader think of a work of art, is, of course, to be consumed soon. *To the Lighthouse* has many examples of women creating vital and beautiful things, which do not last long. Mrs. McNab with her friend and her son clean and restore the house after it had remained vacant for years. It begins to get dirty again when the cleaning and repairing stops. Mrs. Ramsay creates a dinner party to bring together elements, which have a tendency to stay apart and even harbour hostile feelings. This creation resembles a work of art because Mrs. Ramsay wants to make diverse, resisting people foster positive relations with

one another and smoothly function together. The easy sociable mood created with much effort begins to dissipate as soon as the guests get up to leave. Mrs. Ramsay's struggle against the forces of resistance and apathy while creating the dinner is narrated in terms very similar to those involved in the narration of the story of Lily's struggles with her painting. As she goes upstairs when the dinner is over, Mrs. Ramsay thinks that she has created something that will survive in people's memory and "They would, she thought…however long they lived, come back to this night…" What Mrs. Ramsay succeeded in creating was what Virginia Woolf called a "moment of being" or "moment of vision". Lily's art too draws its inspiration from her memory of special moments. Mrs. Ramsay tried to create moments that would make life stand still that would make something permanent, 'as in another sphere, Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent'. The creative process involved in Lily's painting is beautifully described in *To The Lighthouse*. It is a process whereby materials are derived from the unconscious and inspired by memories of special moments but primarily it is a matter of creating form. Significant experiences articulated or not are verbalised to create a tightly organised unit and it provides great satisfaction like the Shakespeare sonnet does to Mrs. Ramsay.

The Sea

The sea is an important theme. According to critics, the sea objectifies the modernist expansion of individual consciousness. The sea's significance expands to the entire island- setting which affirms freedom from tradition and social restriction. The seascape constitutes a shifting, ambivalent setting. Thematically, in Woolf's novels, individual consciousness is always countered by conventions of society. This reminds us of how the modernist freedom of the individual was always countered by the Victorian attachment to external social conventions. *To the Lighthouse* emphasises that thematic opposition. The island world alters sharply between day and night. During the day, the Ramsays and their guests walk in the

garden alone with their thoughts and look at the freedom and openness of the sea. That is individual consciousness takes precedence. However, at night the sea invokes fear of death and oblivion. The characters gather inside the house, doors and windows closed and candles lit. Their fulfilment comes not from escape into their own inner selves but from the social unity of Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In what ways, can the novel be read as a 'modern' novel?

Q 2: How does the theme of identity or the crisis of identity get reflected in the novel?

Q 3: Do you consider creativity to be an important aspect of this novel?

Q 4: What does the sea signify?

Q 5: How is the theme of gender dealt with in the novel *To The Lighthouse*?

10.3.2 Woolf's Art of Characterisation

In an essay, Virginia Woolf writes in an essay that characters in fiction are not simply realistic portrayal of people but are fictional constructs. According to her, certain conventions, the historical period and the literary genre determine their creation. As mentioned earlier, Virginia Woolf's fiction represented the subtle workings of the subjective life of her characters, the hidden side of their innermost experiences. She discarded the conventions according to which characters were constructed in most of the 19th century novels. As she believed in the utmost importance of certain moments in people's lives, a writer, she said, must fill out in words these 'moments of vision'. Hence, she gave less importance to complicated plots, external action, and social context and to the moral life of her

characters. Instead she emphasised the verbalisation of their unarticulated worlds and 'tunnelling' to garner knowledge about their past. She used images and anecdotes rather than judgemental descriptions to portray the characters and employed the multiple point of view technique. These innovative ways of rendering characters were later taken up by other writers.

In *To The Lighthouse*, she adopts a tone of affectionate mockery towards almost all the major characters and shows no partiality to either gender. At the same time, the transition from Victorian to modern sensibilities is reflected in the major characters of the novel. The many-sided Mr. Ramsay exemplifying the patriarchal ethos of the Victorian era brings to light the power struggle between man and woman, between parents and children, which in itself is a glimpse of modern sensibility. Mrs. Ramsay embodies tradition as much as rebellion. She is no amorphous shadow but a complex, flawed and human creation. Her culminating moment is her dinner party, a transforming moment of social community. Lily questions the role of social tradition like marriage because she fears the loss of individuality and honesty that social roles demand. Yet, at times, she longs to be in love. She recapitulates her vacillation between two worlds in her art: she must paint the tension between two kinds of reality "the colour burning on a framework of steel".

Mr. Ramsay:

Mr. Ramsay a philosopher in his sixties is respected for his work. He is driven by facts but is unsure of his worth and is prone to fantasising about his legendary heroes with whom he identifies. He feels that he is a failure in his work but keeps his frustration to himself and his wife. Though he craves recognition, in public he feigns indifference to praise and fame. He thinks of himself as a sage-like Thomas Carlyle and thus believes he has power over people. He exercises this power mainly over his wife and children by throwing fits of temper and also by being rude to guests. He also makes himself comical by dramatising himself. In his worst, he is an egotist

and a hypocrite. Yet, Virginia Woolf displays her affectionate tone by endowing him with certain redeeming features. People have to admire and respect Mr. Ramsay in spite of all his negative traits. Lily admires his honesty and intellectual rectitude. His wife, Bankes, and Tansley respect him for the persistence and courage with which he confronts the human condition and the questions of life and death, He is a devoted husband and in his own way loves his children. Cam feels safe with him and James longs for his approval. He can be a tyrant with his family but has a friendly manner towards the local fishermen. In keeping with Virginia Woolf's concept, Mr. Ramsay is a multi-dimensional figure who is eminently unlikeable but compels respect from people. To James he is a black-winged bird of prey with a brass beak. To Bankes, he is like a mother hen surrounded by her chicks. To his own mind, he is like a hawk, fierce and unafraid.

Mrs. Ramsay:

To all intents and purpose, Mrs. Ramsay is a model of Victorian womanhood. She is a devoted wife and mother, constantly thinking of others and denying herself. She firmly holds on to the stereotype that a man worships a woman and she 'reverences' him. Hence, she believes that marriage is the ultimate fulfilment for a woman and tries to persuade others like Lily to enter into wedlock. Though she does not like male egotism, she has an inflated sense of men's superiority. As a result, she submits to her husband's tyranny without a murmur. She is given to flights of imagination and fantasy and is an avid storyteller. Yet she has no illusions about life and is often morbid, dwelling on suffering and death. There is a sad streak in her the cause of which could be found in her past. Virginia Woolf's delineation of Mrs. Ramsey makes the reader wonder if there is no more to her than the Victorian role model. Some, including her children consider her views outdated. She is the competent and uncomplaining homemaker, yet she is weighed down with annoyance and weariness at times. In spite of her reverence for her husband, she is angered by his insensitivity. She can be high-handed in her

efforts to arrange other people's affairs and hates to be disliked. To this end, she makes special efforts to win the admiration of Tansley and Carmichael. Mrs. Ramsey too comes across as a complex multi-dimensional believable character. There is also a side to her, which gives a lie to the concept of Victorian womanhood. Her work for charity is not merely the dispensation of angelic mercy but a step towards an organised campaign for better facilities. True to Virginia Woolf's emphasis on the innermost precincts of the mind, Mrs. Ramsay has a private inner world into which nobody—least of all her husband—has access. She enters into the deep recess of this world when the ties that bind her to others are detached for the time being. When she sinks into its depths, intense feelings overwhelm her, feelings, which take her away from her everyday mundane life.

James and Cam:

Though the Ramsays have eight children, these are the two who have significance in the storyline. Both, especially James, are delineated in connection with their parents. Their attachment or otherwise with the father and the mother and their subsequent change of feelings determine the way their identities are formed. When the novel opens, James is six and Cam is seven. Although both are passionately attached to their mother and are somewhat afraid and even antagonised by their father, their natures propel them to different behaviour patterns. James is quietly persistent where Cam is wilder and is prone to distractions. He is described as 'severe' like his parents while she is moved by visions and fantasies. She cannot bear to see the boar's skull, which her mother has to cover with a shawl, but James, like his father, is not afraid to face facts and wants to be left as it is.

In Part III we notice some changes as ten years have passed and the children are older. James still hates his father but a part of him wants to break free of this animosity, which makes him unhappy and immobile. Cam, we find is more flexible in her attitude towards her father. Though she agrees with James not to give in to his

tyrannical ways, she does not share her brother's complete resistance. Cam is susceptible to his affection and interest and feels protected by him while James cannot free himself from the grip of hatred. Only when he is able to pinpoint the source of his detestation in a childhood incident does he reach a turning point. He comes to recognise his father's redeeming qualities with which he can begin to identify. On the boat to the lighthouse, he earns his father's approval and also starts the process of discovery and maturity.

Lily Briscoe:

When we encounter her in the beginning of the novel, Lily Briscoe is thirty and unmarried. Encouraged by Mrs. Ramsay, she toys with the idea of marriage and at times yearns to be in love. Yet she recognises the destructive aspect of love and, hence, fears it. Although she presents to the world a sensible and uncomplicated demeanour, she is actually torn by doubts on many issues. Her identity is at stake because she is unsure about her femininity. She almost thinks that marriage would fulfil her as a woman but she also fears intimacy. She would love to have a family like the Ramsays but is not sure if marriage would be congenial for her art. She idolises Mrs. Ramsay but, sometimes, finds her overbearing. Hence, we find in Lily a confused personality who is vulnerable to a crisis of identity. In Part III her crisis is resolved to an extent. She has seen married couples fall apart and no longer regrets her own unmarried status. Yet she is prone to undermining herself as a dried up 'spinster' especially when she cannot meet Mr. Ramsay's demands for sympathy. She also underestimates her talent as an artist, not expecting any recognition for her work. We find that she does not like to project herself in any way and is ashamed to express her feelings. Lily Briscoe seems to echo Virginia Woolf's own sense of inadequacy as a woman.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: How is Virginia Woolf's art of characterisation connected with her idea of fiction? Explain.

Q 7: How is the character of Mrs Ramsay presented by Virginia Woolf in this novel?

10.3.3 Woolf's Narrative Style

In Virginia Woolf's fiction, the breaking down of the traditional literary structure in the light of the twentieth century querying of perception, reality and linguistic meaning results in a total re-working of the novel-form. The experimental fiction which began in the short story, 'Kew Gardens' (1917) develops through *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and culminates in *The Waves* (1931). Abolishing chapter and verse, Virginia Woolf creates a rhythmic, wave-like form, continuous in flow like a piece of music. The narration is a seamless discourse rather than a series of stops and starts. Relinquishing the privilege of addressing the reader directly, she chose to present her story through various angles of perspective. Thus, she re-invented the novel by effectively using the subjective, multiple-point-of-view technique.

The "Stream of Consciousness" and "Interior Monologue" techniques are interspersed with *Free Indirect Speech*. Most of the narration follows the character's consciousness through time capturing the thoughts, perceptions, feelings and memories in the order they occur. The "Stream of Consciousness" is sometimes interrupted to follow other occurrences in earlier events a technique Virginia Woolf called 'Tunnelling'. This is done not in the interest of realism but to familiarise the readers with some hidden experience of the character thereby enabling them to divine the significance of present experience or thought. There are some passages in *To the Lighthouse* where the characters express their feelings in their own

words, as if speaking to themselves. This Interior Monologue is, however, not continued for long and is interrupted by different kinds of narration like the direct speech of the character. Then there might be the unuttered feelings of a character expressed through the words of a narrator, sometimes in the former's own idiom. This technique called *Free Indirect Speech* is extensively used in the novel allowing for a seamless discourse, which can move smoothly and subtly from thoughts to actions and other external events. It produces a fluent, continuous and grammatically elegant effect, which is unlike the fragmented half-articulated thoughts represented by the *Stream of Consciousness* method.

A very important narrative technique in *To the Lighthouse* is designed to create an ambiguity between the characters' and narrator's voices. The effect is such that the reader is not sure whose voice is expressing the thoughts of the characters. The technique also leads to equivocation between outer and inner events. The reader is insecure as to whether an external conversation has actually taken place or simply a passage of thought. In traditional novels, no such ambiguity exists but here the wandering prose makes it difficult to determine what is happening and whose mind one is exploring. The significance of this ambiguity is that it allows the narration to perform a variety of functions simultaneously. There is a smooth and subtle movement as the narration shifts between different kinds of subjective experience and between different layers of the mind. Her narrative technique is designed to dramatise the pressure on our experience from the large but often unarticulated world, which remains hidden from the human consciousness. It also makes possible the gradual accumulation of poetic meaning as the images are repeated and varied and woven into a complex texture, which contains each of the characters within one fabric of prose.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: In what way is *To The Lighthouse* an experimental novel?

Q 9: Discuss the narrative techniques used by Woolf in the novel *To The Lighthouse.*



10.4 LET US SUM UP

As a representative of the Stream of Consciousness novels, Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* is an example of the modernist fiction in English. The narrative technique used in the novel is in keeping with the subject matter, which in *To The Lighthouse* is the inner life of the characters. The very personal and subjective experiences delineated by the novelist deals with intricate shifts and turns of thoughts. Virginia Woolf's narrative technique took into account these subtle nuances as she adopted several methods of narration in the novel. Stream of Consciousness, Interior Monologue, Free Indirect Speech are some of the techniques used by Woolf in this novel. The narration follows the character's consciousness through time capturing the thoughts, perceptions, feelings and memories in the order they occur.



10.5 FURTHER READING

1) Beja, M. (1970). *Virginia Woolf To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Casebook Series, Macmillan Education Ltd.

2) Daugherty, B.R. & M. B. Pringle. (2001). *Approaches to Teaching Woolf's To the Lighthouse*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

3) Davies, S.(1989). *Virginia Woolf: To The Lighthouse.* (Penguin Critical Studies) London: Penguin Books.

4) Leaska, M.A. (1970). *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method*. New York: Columbia University Press.

5) Reid, S. (Ed). (1993). *Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

6) Sellers, S. (Ed). (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (2nd Edn). Cambridge University Press.

7) Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol. 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.

10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: In this novel the distinction between form and content is dismantled… … Woolf deliberately keeps the focus on the elements regarded as trivial and uninteresting by her male contemporaries… …the novel builds on those emotions and complexes which are normally not visible in public… …it is a successful attempt at finding ways of articulating these complex nuances of human emotions… …the execution of the themes happens at a psychological level.

Ans to Q 2: Self-doubt, instability and indecision are seen to plague some characters like James Ramsay and Lily Briscoe who thereby face a crisis of identity… …but as the novel progresses some of them resolve this crisis to some extent… …the crisis of identity is especially applicable to the women because of the social construct because the Victorian ethos endowed them with certain attributes which determined their position in and out of home… …the theme of identity leads to another important issue, a profound concern with gender and a problematic exploration of the differences between man and woman.

Ans to Q 3: yes… …the characters in the novel are creative people… …the creative efforts of these people run counter to the destruction by the passage of time… …the nurturing of children, traditionally a

woman's function, cannot withstand the ravages of time, … …*To the Lighthouse* has many examples of women creating vital and beautiful things which do not last long…. …Mrs. Ramsay tried to create moments that would make life stand still… …the creative process involved in Lily's painting is a process whereby materials are derived from the unconscious and inspired by memories of special moments.

Ans to Q 4: The sea objectifies the modernist expansion of individual consciousness and affirms freedom from tradition and social restriction… …The island world alters sharply between day and night… … During the day, the Ramsays and their guests walk in the garden with the freedom and openness of the sea…. …But at night the sea invokes fear of death and oblivion.

Ans to Q 5: Male egotism and inconsiderateness vs feminine sensitivity and attentiveness… …series of narrations on the theme of masculine intelligence versus feminine imagination… …Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay distinguished based on their thought process… … in the novel Woolf manages to reverse the conventional values society ascribes to the sexes.

Ans to Q 6: According to Virginia Woolf characters are not simply realistic portrayal of people but are fictional constructs… …certain conventions, the historical period and the literary genre determine their creation…. …as part of her fiction she discarded the conventions according to which characters were constructed in most of the 19th century novels… …as a writer she believed in the utmost importance of certain moments in people's lives so that their unarticulated worlds could be made explicit.

Ans to Q 7: Mrs. Ramsay is presented as a model of Victorian womanhood… … She is a devoted wife and mother and believes that marriage is the ultimate fulfilment for a woman … … she has an inflated sense of men's superiority and submits to her husband's tyranny without a voice… …She is given to flights of imagination and fantasy and is an avid story-teller… …she has a private inner world into which nobody has access.

Ans to Q 8: In this novel Woolf breaks down of the traditional literary structure by infusing into it an interrogation of perception, reality and linguistic meaning… …by abolishing chapters and verse, she creates a rhythmic, wave-like form… …in one sense she re-invented the novel form by effectively using the subjective, multiple-point-of-view technique.

Ans to Q 9: Stream of Consciousness and Interior Monologue techniques are interspersed with *Free Indirect Speech*… …narration follows the character's consciousness through time capturing the thoughts, perceptions, feelings and memories… …the 'Tunnelling' process… …familiarises the readers with some hidden experience of the character thereby enabling them to divine the significance of present experience or thought.



10.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What does it mean to say that in *To The Lighthouse* characters are constructed from multiple points of view? Discuss.

Q 2: Discuss Woolf's the portrayal of the relationships between parents and children in *To The Lighthouse.*

Q 3: Do we learn anything in general about marriage from *To The Lighthouse* or only about the Ramsays' particular relationship?

Q 4: In what way, does memory enter into the lives of the characters in *To The Lighthouse*?

Q 5: What do you find particularly interesting about the portrayal of artistic creation in *To The Lighthouse*?

Q 6: Elaborate on the important themes of the novel *To The Lighthouse.*

Q 7: Critically comment on Woolf's narrative technique in the novel *To The Lighthouse*.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 11: INTRODUCING METAFICTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Idea of Metafiction

11.4 Idea of Historiographic Metafiction

11.5 Reception of Metafiction and Historiographic Metafiction

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.9 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- define the term metafiction in the context of experimental postmodern fiction
- identify the very characteristics of a metafiction with reference to certain Metafictional works
- discuss the idea of historiographic metafiction
- comment on the reception of metafiction as a way of writing fiction

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 3, and this unit introduces you to Metafiction and its different practitioners. The term Metafiction originated in an essay by the American critic and novelist William H. Gass. Usually, a writer exploring a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction or constructing fiction is referred to as 'Metafictional'. According to Patricia Waugh, the term Metafiction is given to "fictional writing" which "pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" in a self-consciously and systematic way. She also states that Metafiction draws "on the traditional metaphor of the world as book, but often recasting it in the

terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory." Due to the increased plurality of socio-cultural self-consciousness, the postmodern novelists have continuously explored several 'meta' levels of discourses. Waugh further writes that Metafiction sets contradictory worlds against each other and places are swapped when an author enters into the texts and "characters appear to step into the 'real' worlds of their authors." Metafictional writing gave way to fantastic and fabulatory extravaganzas, magic realism in the works of Italo Calvino, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Clive Sinclair, Graham Swift, D. M. Thomas and John Irving. In this unit, discussion on metafiction and historiographic metafiction shall be made from Patricia Waugh's book *Metafiction*: *The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction,* Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction,* and *Blackwell Encyclopaedia*.

11.3 IDEA OF METAFICTION

Over the last decades of the 20th century, novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions. Consequently, their novels came to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty. What connects the readers to a Metafiction is that they all explore a *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction. According to Patricia Waugh *Metafiction* is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. Metafiction pursues such questions how human beings reflect, construct, and mediate their experience of the world, through its formal self-exploration, drawing on the traditional metaphor of the world as book, but often recasting it in the terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory. If, as individuals, we now occupy 'roles' rather than 'selves', then the study of characters in novels may provide a useful model for understanding the construction of subjectivity in the world outside novels. If

our knowledge of this world is now seen to be mediated through language, then literary fiction a useful model for learning about the construction of 'reality' itself.

The awareness of 'meta' levels of discourse and experience is partly a consequence of an increased social and cultural self-consciousness. However, it also reflects a greater awareness within contemporary culture of the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday 'reality'. The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world is no longer tenable. Language is an independent, self-contained system, which generates its own 'meanings'. Its relationship to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention. 'Meta' terms, therefore, are required in order to explore the relationship between this arbitrary linguistic system and the world to which it apparently refers. In fiction, they are required in order to explore the relationship between the world *of* the fiction and the world *outside* the fiction.

It needs to be mentioned that metafictional practice has become particularly prominent in the fiction of the later part of the 20th century. However, although the *term* 'metafiction' might be new, the *practice* is as old as the novel itself. This form of fiction is worth studying not only because of its contemporary emergence but also because of the insights it offers into both the representational nature of all fiction and the literary history of the novel as genre. By studying metafiction, one studies what gives the novel its identity. Patricia Waugh states that metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension, which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'.

Although this oppositional process is to some extent present in all fiction, its prominence in the contemporary novel is unique. The modern period we are living through has been singularly uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic. Contemporary fiction clearly reflects this dissatisfaction with, and breakdown of, traditional values. Previously, as in the case of 19th century realism, the forms of fiction derived from a firm belief in a commonly experienced, objectively existing world of history. Modernist fiction, written in the earlier part of this century, responded to the initial loss of belief in such a world. Novels like Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) or James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) signalled the first widespread, overt emergence in the novel of a sense of fictitiousness: 'a sense that any attempt to represent reality could only produce selective perspectives, fictions, that is, in an epistemological, not merely in the conventional literary, sense.'

Waugh also refers to some authors who intended to write metafiction through their fictional works. Some of them are as the following and they help us to have some ideas of how a metafiction is written.

a. B. S. Johnson starts *Albert Angelo* (1964) with the words, which preface this chapter, 'Fuck all this lying'. His comment serves in the novel as much to voice a paranoid fear that his audience will misinterpret his fiction by reading it according to expectations based on the tradition of the realistic novel, as to demonstrate the artificiality of fictional form through a controlled Metafictional discourse. At the end of the book, Johnson asserts: "…a page is an area on which I place my signs I consider to communicate most clearly what I have to convey… therefore I employ within the pocket of my publisher and the patience of my printer, typographical techniques beyond the arbitrary and constricting limits of the conventional novel. To dismiss such techniques as gimmicks or to refuse to take them seriously is crassly to miss the point."

b. Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) is written to express the sense of absurdity produced by its author's paradoxical realization that 'I have no culture', and that 'I can't live without a culture anymore'. Attempts at precise linguistic description continually break down. Crude

diagrams replace language in order to express the poverty of the 'culture' which is available through representations of 'assholes', 'underpants' and 'beef burgers'. The strategy of this novel is to invert the science-fiction convention whereby humans are depicted attempting to comprehend the processes of an alien world. Here, contemporary American society *is* the 'alien world'. Vonnegut defamiliarizes the world that his readers take for granted, through the technique of employing an ex-Earthling narrator who is now living on a different planet and has set out to 'explain' the Earth to his fellow inhabitants. The defamiliarisation has more than a satiric function, however. It reveals Vonnegut's own despairing recognition of the sheer impossibility of providing a critique of commonly accepted cultural forms of representation, from *within* those very modes of representation.

c. John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969) are Metafictional novels in that they employ parody self-consciously. Both take as their 'object' languages the structures of 19th century realism and of historical romance or of fairy-tales. The parody of these 'languages' functions to defamiliarize such structures by setting up various counter techniques to undermine the authority of the omniscient author, of the closure of the 'final' ending, of the definitive interpretation. Although the reader is thereby distanced from the language, the literary conventions and, ultimately, from conventional ideologies, the defamiliarization proceeds from an extremely familiar base. Such novels can thus initially be comprehended through the old structures, and can therefore be enjoyed and remain in the consciousness of a wide readership which is given a far more active role in the construction of the 'meaning' of the text than is provided either in contemporary realist novels or in novels which convert their readers into frenetic human word-processors, and which 'last' only as long as it takes to read them.



LET US KNOW

According to Patricia Waugh, metafiction is a mode of writing within a broader cultural movement called post-modernism which further exhibits a sense of crisis and loss of belief in an external authoritative system of order as that which prompted modernism. Both affirm the constructive powers of the mind in the face of apparent phenomenal chaos. Modernist self-consciousness, however, though it may draw attention to the aesthetic construction of the text, does *not* 'systematically flaunt its own condition of artifice' in the manner of contemporary metafiction. Modernism only occasionally displays features typical of postmodernism, which are as the following:

- The over-obtrusive, visibly inventing narrator (as in Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968), Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969));
- Ostentatious typographic experiment (B. S. Johnson's *Travelling People* (1963), Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1971));
- Explicit dramatisation of the reader (Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979));
- Chinese-box structures (Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), John Barth's *Chimera* (1972));
- Incantatory and absurd lists (Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* (1967), Gabriel Josipovici's *The Inventory* (1968));
- Over-systematised or overtly arbitrarily arranged structural devices (Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa* (1974));
- Total breakdown of temporal and spatial organization of narrative (B. S. Johnson's 'A Few Selected Sentences' (1973));
- Infinite regress (Beckett's *Watt* (1953));
- Dehumanisation of character, parodic doubles, obtrusive proper names (Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973));
- Self-reflexive images (Nabokov's mirrors, acrostics, mazes);

- Critical discussions of the story within the story (Fowles' 'The Enigma' (1974), Barth's *Sabbatical* (1982));
- Continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions (Muriel Spark's quasi-omniscient author, Fowles' very un-Victorian ending in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969));
- Use of popular genres (Richard Brautigan's A *Confederate General from Big Sur* (1964), Vonnegut's *Slaughter-house-Five* (1969)); and
- Explicit parody of previous texts whether literary or non-literary (Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* (1979), Alan Burns's *Babel* (1969)).

In these works, the writing of the text is the most fundamentally problematic aspect of that text. Although metafiction is just one form of Post-modernism, nearly all-contemporary experimental writing displays *some* explicitly metafictional strategies.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is a Metafiction? Or Why is a Metafiction so called?

Q 2: How does language function in a Metafiction?

Q 3: Give an idea of how a Metafiction works in terms of the examples provided by Patricia Waugh.

11.4 IDEA OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

The term "historiographic metafiction" was coined by Linda Hutcheon in her essay "Beginning to Theorize the Postmodern" in 1987, and then she further developed the concept in her seminal study *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) to describe "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages." According to Hutcheon, novels such as E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975) or William Kennedy's *Legs* (1975) display "a theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human

constructs (historiographic metafiction) [that] is made the grounds for [a] rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past." Historiographic metafiction thus constitutes a specific form of metafiction, which Patricia Waugh, also defined as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality." However, historiographic metafiction adds a further dimension to such reflections: texts that can be subsumed under the heading not only explore the workings of literature and lay bare its ontological status as fiction, they additionally engage and unveil the parallels between writing literature and historiography– the practice of writing history–suggesting that both are acts of construction that do not reflect or naively represent reality or the past, but (re)invent and shape them from necessarily subjective and ideologically laden perspectives.

Historiographic metafiction makes use of a broad variety of thematic and formal means. In such fictional works, plots usually revolve around characters openly concerned with making sense of the past—figures such as historians, detectives, or archivists who study documents, data, and tries to arrive at an understanding of what has happened. Therefore, the action of most historiographic metafictions takes place on two different levels; the texts are usually characterized by a dual time-frame, they are set in a fictional present where one or more characters–often, first-person narrators who address specific narratees–undertake explorations of the past and frequently reflect on their activities and the epistemological problems they face. Simultaneously, however, the novels are set in a fictional past where the events took place that these (amateur or professional) historians are interested in. Sometimes, the version of the past presented in the novel is quite obviously a (re)construction by one or several of the investigators in the fictional present, sometimes the novels incorporate various conflicting versions about what has happened that stem from one or more of these investigator figures, and sometimes the story of the investigator figure simply exists alongside the historical narrative with both being related by a more or less covert narrator. Invariably, however, such a juxtaposition of past and present "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge"

(Hutcheon 1988, 106). Accordingly, historiographic metafiction implies that the past remains ultimately inaccessible, that historical narration is necessarily an act of the imagination, and that historiography, therefore, is not a neutral account of what happened but rather a biased story determined by the needs and convictions of those who tell it.

The Metafictional nature of this kind of historical fiction is visible in its fascination with texts, documents, and narratives as fictional constructs. Historiographic metafiction therefore places a great emphasis on the discursive practices intrinsic to the writing of history, often at the expense of more conventionally teleological historical approaches (where the expected outcome influences and shapes the organization of the sequence of events leading up to that outcome). As a result, "history" is shown to be just as discursively constructed, or constructed through writing, as any other type of historical narrative, thus challenging once again the gap between history and historical fiction.

Indeed, both history and historiography (the study of the writing of history) have become sites of predilection for postmodern interrogation, while historiographic metafiction has greatly contributed to destabilizing received notions about both history and fiction, according to Hutcheon. This is visible in such texts as John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), a precursor of the genre in British literature, which evokes the historical and social mores of the 19th century in a self-conscious effort to highlight the narrative devices and authorial bias underpinning the writing of any story, and therefore the impossibility of ever achieving "historical authenticity."

Historiographic metafiction, like postmodernist fiction more generally, relies extensively on intertextuality and parody, following its fascination both with its own status as a piece of fiction, and also with other texts and discourses, particularly those of a historical nature. Parody and irony thus become powerful narrative devices that allow the text simultaneously to return to, and to distance itself from, those traditional historical narratives it attempts to question. The authority of the latter is therefore both acknowledged and subverted: irony enables historiographic metafiction to

appear to be endorsing the historical approaches promoted in those narratives, while at the same time undermining them. Furthermore, as this subversion takes place from within the parodied text/discourse, historiographic metafiction can address the latter effectively but without losing its distance from it. Parody and ironic intertextuality are also representative of the paradoxical nature of postmodern historical fiction, which draws from the very thing it seeks to contest, all the while refusing to adopt a clear discursive position. Here again John Fowles' novel is a good example of such parodic intertextuality in its reliance on, and critical attitude toward, the narrative conventions of 19th century realist fiction; Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) also uses intertextuality and metafiction in its return to World War II, and raises similar questions regarding the role of novelistic writing and subjective memory in the rendering of any historical event.

As is apparent from the examples drawn on so far, historiographic metafiction is a predominantly postmodern phenomenon. As a form of metafiction, it was a welcome venue for artists struggling at least during the 1960s and 1970s with what John Barth has famously called "the usedupness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities" after high modernism. In the field of history, the epistemological skepticism of the past decades has led various theorists to arrive at the same conclusions that historiographic metafiction reaches by fictional means. Thus, scholars like Hayden White (1973, 1978) and Dominick LaCapra (1985) have also pointed out that historians do not simply describe the past but also create stories about it. Furthermore, White, LaCapra, and others have emphasized the crucial role that ideology and the narrative templates available to the historian play in this process.



LET US KNOW

In historical studies, Hayden White (1978) has emphasised the need for historians to recognize the literariness of their work, its dependence on principles of narration and utterance, and therefore the ideological implications underpinning their representation of the past. In parallel to this,

historical fiction has attempted to deviate from its tacit requirement to respect "historical authenticity": instead of abiding by the known facts about key historical events or figures, recent historical fiction has shown a keener interest in probing the very concept of "historical truth" and its mechanics of representation. This has given birth to the kind of fiction popularly known as historigraphic metafiction.

In an essay entitled "Postmodern Afterthoughts," Linda Hutcheon (2002) has acknowledged that the fiction of today differs considerably from the texts she labelled historiographic metafiction during the 1980s. In this piece, Hutcheon treats postmodernism "as a thing of the past" and defines it as "a twentieth-century phenomenon." Yet, regardless of the question whether or not literary historians of the future will follow Hutcheon in this periodization, contemporary novels such as *Everything Is Illuminated* can only be understood as responses to historiographic metafiction. They may explore new ways of writing, but in doing so they remain intimately indebted to the insights of earlier postmodernist fiction. Therefore, the concept of historiographic metafiction remains an indispensable and powerful tool in any attempt to describe and analyse postmodernist fiction. It is best understood, however, as referring to a postmodernist subgenre of the historical novel that had its heyday during the 1970s and 1980s and that continues to influence novels of the early 21st century.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Define the term Historigraphic Metafiction.

Q 5: How is the 'past' viewed in Historigraphic Metafiction?

11.5 RECEPTION OF METAFICTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

Patricia Waugh has stated that Metafiction is a mode of writing within a broader cultural movement often referred to as post-modernism. The metafictional writer John Barth has expressed a common feeling about the

term 'post-modernism' as 'awkward and faintly epigonic, suggestive less of a vigorous or even interesting new direction in the old art of storytelling than of something anticlimactic, feebly following a very hard act to follow.' Post-modernism can be seen to exhibit the same sense of crisis and loss of belief in an external authoritative system of order as that which prompted modernism. Both affirm the constructive powers of the mind in the face of apparent phenomenal chaos. Modernist self-consciousness, however, though it may draw attention to the aesthetic construction of the text, does *not* 'systematically flaunt its own condition of artifice' in the manner of contemporary metafiction. (Waugh, 21).

In turning away from 'reality', however, and back to a re-examination of fictional form, novelists have discovered a surprising way out of their dilemmas and paranoia. Metafictional deconstruction has not only provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems. The paranoia that permeates the Metafictional writing of the sixties and seventies is therefore slowly giving way to celebration, to the discovery of new forms of the fantastic, fabulatory extravaganzas, magic realism (Salman Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez, Clive Sinclair, Graham Swift, D. M. Thomas, John Irving). Novelists and critics alike have come to realize that a moment of crisis can also be seen as a moment of recognition: recognition that, although the assumptions about the novel based on an extension of a 19th century realist view of the world may no longer be viable, the novel itself is positively flourishing.

Historiographic metafiction's concern with contesting accepted notions of "historical truth" and historical representation has also found a natural affinity with 20th century feminist, Marxist and Postcolonial literary theories. The rejection of definitions of absolute "truths," which is endemic to these theoretical approaches, is in keeping with the wish to challenge traditional narratives of the past and their patriarchal, capitalist, and Eurocentric constructions of history. Such fiction highlights the misogynistic, racist, and class bias within these historical discourses, and enables the

views and perspectives of previously unheard minorities to be taken into consideration. Good examples of such fiction include Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), which merges the personal with the political in its attempt to encompass India's 20th century history through the unlikely perspective of, among others, an illegitimate child born on the night of India's independence in 1947; and Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which returns to 17th century London to narrate the Civil War from the point of view of a fearsome, but ultimately forgotten, female character.



LET US KNOW

In the last decade of the 20th century, a new trend within historical fiction called 'neo Victorian' novels invited critical attention in connection with authors such as A. S. Byatt, Sarah Waters, Alasdair Gray, Peter Ackroyd, and Beryl Bainbridge. Typically, neo-Victorian fiction presents a fascination with reimagining the 19th century in its literary, artistic, socio-political, and historical contexts, often in a self-conscious attempt to play with the narrative conventions and social/cultural values prevalent at the time. Neo-Victorian novels that came to be perceived as particularly significant in the construction of the nation's sense of self and cultural identity, is exemplified by works like A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), which re-examines the politics of 19th century national cultural identity and canon formation.

Similarly, Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) reconsiders the significance of 19th century Darwinian Theory in an attempt to question its persisting cultural presence in the present. The Victorian ideological definitions of race, class, gender roles, etc. come under strict scrutiny in this work, and the same are opened to parody through ironic intertextuality, in neo-Victorian fiction. As with historiographic metafiction, therefore, the neo-Victorian novel returns to the past to adopt some familiar postmodern tropes, and is similarly informed by contemporary gender, queer, and postcolonial theoretical discourses. This is the case in Fred D'Aguiar's return to

the legacies of slavery and 19th century imperial discourses on race in his novel *The Longest Memory* (1994); and in Sarah Waters's novels *Affinity* (2000) and *Fingersmith* (2002), which attempt to re-inscribe the lesbian experience into the 19th century, and to redefine accepted notions of female sexual identity.

Most critical approaches to 20th century historical fiction therefore emphasize its formal links with postmodernism, and draw from recent literary theory in the examination of its content. Recently, however, the postmodern tradition has been criticized for failing to deliver the expected social and political change it had at first seemed to promise. Historiographic metafiction has come under similar criticism for lacking the subversive edge it had primarily claimed to possess, and for ultimately reinscribing, rather than challenging, the resistance of historical discourses to both re-readings and change.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: In what way, is Historiographic Metafiction critically important?

Q 7: How have the novelists been benefitted by metafictional deconstruction?



11.6 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have come to learn about Metafiction and Historiographic Metafiction. According to Patricia Waugh *Metafiction* is the term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. In total contrast to the historical fiction produced in the earlier part of the 20th century, historiographic

metafiction is a self-conscious, or self-reflexive, type of historical novel: the process of historical research and writing is often key to its concerns and centrally staged in the plot of the novel, but it rarely leads to any clear historical finding or conclusion. This is due in part to the nature of the historical documents under examination: typically, the novel reveals how some of these have been in some way "falsified" or tampered with, while others, often of a more personal nature (such as letters, diaries, testimonies), are visibly foregrounded as biased, and therefore unreliable sources of information.



11.7 FURTHER READING

1) Butter, Michael. "Historiographic Metafiction" & Rousselot, Elodie. "Historical Fiction" in Shaffer, Brian W. (2001). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

2) Hutcheon, Linda. (1988). "Historiographic metafiction: "the pastime of past time" in *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London Routledge.

3) Waugh, Patricia. (1984).*Metafiction:* The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. *Methuen & Co. Ltd.*



11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Metafiction is a kind of writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality… …it is so called because it provided a critique of their own methods of construction, examines the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, and also explores the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.

Ans to Q 2: Metafiction is concerned with the function of language in

constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday 'reality'… …language is an independent, self-contained system, which generates its own 'meanings'… …the relationship of language to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention… …therefore, 'Meta' terms are required in order to explore the relationship between this arbitrary linguistic system and the world to which it apparently refers.

Ans to Q 3: Reread Patricia Waugh's examples put in box in 11.3 Section.

Ans to Q 4: Linda Hutcheon defined historiographic metafiction as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages."

Ans to Q 5: The version of the past is quite obviously a (re)construction by one or several of the investigators in the fictional present… …the novels incorporate various conflicting versions about what has happened that stem from one or more of these investigator figures… …the story of the investigator figure simply exists alongside the historical narrative with both being related by a more or less covert narrator.

Ans to Q 6: Such fiction contest accepted notions of "historical truth" informed by 20th century feminist, Marxist and Postcolonial literary theories… …the rejection of absolute "truths" which is endemic to these theoretical approaches, is in keeping with the wish to challenge traditional narratives and their patriarchal, capitalist, and Eurocentric constructions of history… …such fiction highlights the misogynistic, racist, and class bias within these historical discourses, and enables the views and perspectives of previously unheard minorities to be taken into consideration.

Ans to Q 7: Metafictional deconstruction provided novelists and their readers with a better understanding of the fundamental structures of narrative… …contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems… …the paranoia that permeates the metafictional writing of the 60s and 70s slowly

gave way to celebration, to the discovery of new forms of the fantastic, fabulatory extravaganzas, magic realism.



11.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Define the term metafiction and discuss its characteristics with reference to some of the important metafictional works.

Q 2: Discuss the causes that led to the emergence of Post-modern Metafiction in the later part of the 20th century.

Q 3: What is understood by the term Historiographic Metafiction? Discuss with suitable examples how the idea of 'history' is represented in such fiction.

Q 4: *Metafiction* is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Discuss.

Q 5: Historigraphic Metafiction are "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages." Elaborate with examples.

Q 6: What are the causes of unprecedented popularity of Metafictional works in the context of the 20th century? Give a reasoned answer.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 12 : JOHN FOWLES: *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANTS' WOMAN* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 John Fowles: Life and Works

12.4 Summary of the Novel *The French Lieutenants' Woman*

12.5 Critical Reception of Fowles

12.6 Let Us Sum Up

12.7 Further Reading

12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.9 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of John Fowles
- identify the important characteristics of Fowles as a fiction writer of the 20th century
- narrate the story of the novel in your own words
- read and appreciate the period novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in its different contexts
- critically analyse the worth of John Fowles as a post-modernist writer.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

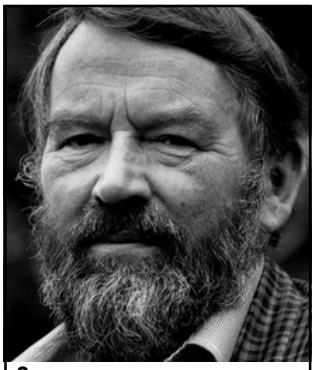
This unit introduces you to John Fowles and his highly acclaimed novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Renowned for his erudition, his experimentation with literary form, and his exceptional storytelling abilities, John Fowles was unique in his generation of English authors for achieving (and maintaining) both popular success and critical acclaim. Though his work peaked in critical reputation by the early 1990s, Fowles remains one of the most popular and important authors of Post war British fiction. You

should note that although Fowles secured his literary reputation as a novelist, he worked in a number of forms, and his non-fiction and occasional writings provide important insights into his popular and influential fiction. The most significant of these writings include *The Aristos* (1964), a philosophical treatise inspired by Heraclitus; *Wormholes* (1998), a collection of essays; *The Tree* (1979), a reflection on nature; and his critically acclaimed *Journals* (2003, 2006). He also published a number of shorter works, often accompanied by photography, and a collection of poetry. His voluminous papers are housed at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin. By the time you finish reading this unit, you will not only be able to discuss the life and works of Fowles, but you will also be able to address the experiments Fowles rendered into the making of his novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

12.3 JOHN FOWLES: LIFE AND WORKS

The following subsections are about the life and works of John Fowles the writer of the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

His Life:



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

John Fowles (31 March 1926- Nov 2005) was born in Leigh-on-Sea, a small town in Essex, located 40 miles from London, in a conventional family, to Gladys May Richards and Robert John Fowles. He was the only child until he was 16 years of age. His mother originally belonged to a family based in London that moved to Westcliff-on-sea, Essex in the year 1918, when Europe was affected with Spanish Flu and a place like Essex was believed to have a healthy climate. Robert Fowles' father belonged to a family of middle-class merchants in London and after having received his legal training, he was enlisted in the Honourable Artillery Company and spent three years in service, in the trenches of Flanders during World War I. Eventually, he fell under the obligatory duties, to take over his family trade of tobacco business in order to raise his extended

family. The war had left him in bad health and Richard married Gladys after a chance meeting at a tennis club in 1924 and John Fowles was born two years later.

John Fowles was close to his mother and his cousin Peggy Fowles who also acted as his nursemaid. The conformist culture of the 1930s in his childhood made him want to "escape ever since". Fowles first attended Alleyn Count Preparatory School. He was also a student of the Bedford School, a large boarding school that prepared boys for the University. From 1939 till 1944 his time there coincided with the Second World War. He enrolled in a naval short course at Edinburgh University and completed his training in 1945 after which he was assigned military service to Okehampton Camp in the countryside near Devon for two years. The World War II ended by the end of his training, due to which he didn't have to combat in the war. After the completion of his service in 1947, he declared that the military life was not for him and subsequently he entered New College, Oxford, where he studied French for his bachelor degree and also took interest in Greek. While at Oxford, his own thoughts and his reading of the French existentialists Sartre and Camus convinced him into thinking that the world was indeed absurd, he came to believe in the will of the individual and also it was a time when a lot of his political opinions had undergone change. After his time at Oxford, he spent his first year at the University of Poitiers and by the end of the year, received two offers at once. One of the offers came from the French department at Winchester to teach French and the other was from a dilapidated school in Greece. He chose the second offer which according to him, must have looked like the most unlikely thing to do.

But, Fowles was happy to be in Greece and the year 1951 was a turning point in his life. He became an English teacher in a school called Anargyrios and Korgalenios School of Spetses located on the Peloponnesian Island of Spetsai, where he met his fellow teacher, Roy Christy's wife, Elizabeth. There he became close to his fellow exiles and wrote poems which he published later on. In 1953, when he and his colleagues tried to lodge reforms in the school, they were dismissed, as a result of which he had to return to England. The return to their home and the closeness that

Elizabeth and Fowles shared in the island of Spetsai, culminated in their marriage in 1954. Fowles took up a teaching job St. Godric's College in Hampstead, London where he taught English as a foreign language to students from other countries for nearly ten years. He took into his fold Elizabeth's child Anna, from her first marriage with Roy Christy and settled down into his family life. Fowles was never swept away with the fame and recognition that he achieved and his inclination towards rural isolation strained the relation with Elizabeth. He was much a recluse and had no taste for an increasingly materialist society.And following his desire, Fowles began to live in a remote sea side home on the southern coast of England in the small harbor town of Lyme Regis, from 1968 and due to his interest in the town's local history he was appointed as the Curator of the Lyme Regis Museum from 1979 to 1989. Despite this involvement, he was generally considered reclusive. Fowles died 5 miles from Lyme Regis in Axminster Hospital on 5 November 2005.

His Works:

After, Fowles had earned a degree in French from New College, Oxford, he had begun seriously to consider being a writer and it was the unexpected success of his debut novel *The Collector* that secured his position into professionally being one. While on the island of Spetsai, he had started to pen down poetry and to overcome a long-time repression about writing. And although he wrote several novels between 1952 and 1960 he offered none to a publisher, feeling they were lengthy and incomplete to be published. After having drafted *The Magus,*on his return to England, he completed the first draft of ***The Collector*** in just four weeks, by late 1960, and continued to revise it until the summer of 1962. The book had an intriguing story in which the character Clegg kidnaps and keeps a girl named Miranda as his captive, like his butterfly collections, all in the hope that she would eventually fall for him but the story takes an unexpected turn. Fowles then submitted the manuscript to a publisher Michael S. Howard at Jonathan Cape. The book was published and circulated in the spring of 1963 and it turned out to be an immediate best-seller, and had brought a huge amount of money for a first novel. Having earned critical acclaim and popularity for

this book, Fowles started his writing career in right ernest.

The idea for his book ***The Collector*** (1963) comes from the thinking of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, according to whom mankind was, divided into two groups namely the "***aristoi***" or the good, represented by the moral and intellectual elite and the second was "***hoi polloi***" or the many, represented by the unthinking or confirming mass. It is in his ***The Aristos*** where he makes a point that the reader should try to understand that "the dividing line should run through each individual, not between individuals." In reference to the novel he stated "I tried to establish the virtual innocence of the many. Miranda, the girl he imprisoned, had very little more control than Clegg over what she was: she had well-to-do parents, a good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it - she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist slob, like so many university students. Yet if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately need." (quoted from: John Fowles's *The Aristos,* from "Preface" to the 1968 edn)

Against the advice of his publisher, Fowles had decided that ***The Aristos*** (1964) would be the second publication, which was a collection of philosophical reflections and thoughts on art, human nature and other subjects. In 1965, in what was set to be the most studied among his work was the publication of ***The Magus***, a story of a poet Nicholas Urfe, who takes the job of a teacher on a small Greek island and is carried away by the psychological illusions of a master trickster. Fowles had worked on the draft of this novel for over a decade and among the seven novels he wrote, ***The Magus*** had achieved the state of **a cult novel** in the United States. ***The Magus*** is a traditional quest story with a teasing storyline which Fowles compared to a detective story saying: "You mislead them ideally to lead them into a greater truth…it's a trap which I hope will hook the reader." Both ***The Collector*** and ***The Magus*** were made into films in 1965 and 1968 respectively.

In 1965, Fowles moved from London to a remote farm in Dorset but due to the monotony of the isolated farmhouse, moved to Lyme Regis in

Dorset with his wife, where he stayed at the Belmont House. It was here that he wrote his next novel ***The French Lieutenant's Woman*** (1969) which was very successful and well received. It was adapted into a film version in 1981 with the screenplay by Harold Pinter, a British playwright and was even nominated for Oscar. Fowles lived in Lyme Regis for the rest of his life and wrote several other works, during his time there. He also wrote a series of essays on nature as he found much solace in observing the flora and fauna of the surrounding countryside and published his book of poetry *Poems*in 1973.The books ***The Ebony Tower*** (1974), ***Daniel Martin*** (1977), ***Mantissa*** (1981), ***A Maggot*** (1985) were all written during the years at Belmont House in Lyme.

Also, he worked on translations of Marie de France's *Elidic* which inspired *The Ebony Tower*, a novella and four short stories, the protagonist of which is David Williams, an English art critic and painter. Fowles' next work *Daniel Martin*, is a lengthy bildungsroman and somewhat an autobiographical novel about a Hollywood screenwriter Danny Martin and his trysts with his love life, followed by *Mantissa*, a fable about an imaginary dialogue in the mind of an amnesiac writer Miles Green with his Muse Erato. Fowles' next work *A Maggot* can be classified as a historical fiction, mystery or as science fiction. He also wrote a range of essays, reviews and published several photographic compilations like ***Shipwreck*** (1975), ***Islands*** (1798) and ***The Tree*** (1979). His other works include ***The Enigma of Stonehenge*** (1980), ***A Short History of Lyme Regis*** (1982), ***Land*** (with Fay Godwin) (1985), ***Lyme Regis Camera*** (1990) ***Wormholes-Essays and Occasional Writings*** (1998), a collection of essays. The first biography on Fowles, ***John Fowles—A Life in Two Worlds***, and the **first volume of hisjournals** came out in 2004. Also, the **second volume of his journal** was published in 2006.For most of his life, Fowles kept a diary and today, his complete **unedited diaries** are kept at the **University Library at Exeter**.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How did French Existentialism influence John Fowles?

Q 2: Do you find any connection between Fowles's novel *The Collector* and the philosophy of Heraclitus?

Q 3: Why, according to you, is Fowles's novel *The Aristos* important?

12.4 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANTS' WOMAN*

The novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* which consists of 61 chapters has been divided into three sections covering twenty chapters each in order to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the content and the storyline. It is a must to read the text for better understanding, after going through the summaries provided, by also keeping in mind the important themes and aspects of the novel that are discussed in the unit.

Chapter 1-20

John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* opens with a quote from Thomas Hardy's poem "The Riddle" and with the description of a small English town, Lyme Regis "simply the most beautiful sea rampart on the south coast of England" Lyme Regis with its Cobb, which is a harbour quay by the seaside, forms the backdrop of the novel. Due to the healthy climate and several mineral springs, the region Lyme Regis by the sea was considered a health resort and an ideal place for vacations, the beauty of which remained unchanged for "seven hundred years of English history". Hardy's "The Riddle" is quoted in an apt way, to describe an enigmatic figure in black, who standing "solely out there, Did her gaze rest, Never elsewhere" looking intently at the sea waiting for her French lover.

The figure in black is first noticed from a distance by a curious Charles Smithson, an amateur paleontologist who happens to be in the company of his fiancée Ernestina Freeman, who brings him to the town to meet her aunt, Mrs. Tranter. On approaching closer to alarm the mysterious figure

into safety, at the dangerous edge of the Cobb, by the lashing sea, Charles finds himself locked in a moment of fascination, staring at the "unforgettable" and "tragic" face of the woman. He learns that her name is Sarah Woodruff later, from Ernestina who refers to her as "poor Tragedy", revealing to him that she reputed as the "French Lieutenant's…Woman" was considered some kind of an outcast in their society and was believed to be driven into a little madness, grief and suffering "grave attacks of melancholia" in waiting for her lover the French Lieutenant, who had jilted her in love.

This brings to light the stereotypical attitudes and prejudices in1867, which the voice of the narrator compares with the mindset of 1967. Interestingly, the narrator compares and contrasts both the Victorian and the Modern period in narrating the story, while also providing enough space to the characters to play themselves. The narrator also introduces some of the important characters like Sarah Woodruff, Ernestina, Charles Smithson, Mrs. Poulteney, Mrs. Tranter, Mrs. Fairley, Sam Weller among others in the subsequent chapters and contrasts the modern century's condition of "**destructive neurosis**" with that of the "**tranquil boredom**" of the Victorian century. Charles in certain idle hours reflects on his life and the times, being rather bored with the favoured position that he finds himself in and he even reflects on his first meeting with the mysterious Sarah, which turns gradually into some sort of fascination.

On the advice of the Vicar, Mr. Forsythe, Sarah who had to do "little needle work" and live on the savings from her previous employers is taken in by the widow Mrs. Poulteney into the "large Regency house", in an act of charity, to the poor but refined governess Sarah Woodruff. But, it is more out of Mrs Poulteney's concern to save her own soul, with an inconvenient good deed rather than her sense of charity. She suspects that Sarah accepts the offer to stay in that house because of the view it provided of Lyme Bay. The Vicar in an attempt to help save Mrs. Poulteney's soul suggests Sarah's name and discloses all that he knows of her, including her family, her education and how Sarah first met the shipwrecked Lieutenant, "the Frenchman who had managed to engage Miss Woodruff's affections" during the "dreadful gale" of the previous December, while she was a governess

of the Talbot's children.

A description of the "**servant class**" is provided by the narrator like the "**snob**" Sam, Charles' man-servant and the snobbish house keeper Mrs. Fairley, who acts as Mrs. Poulteney's spy and delights in reporting about Sarah's movements to her "**thwarted mistress**". But, somehow it is after meeting Sarah that for the first time Mrs. Poulteney" saw her servants with genuinely attentive "and "positively religious faces" It was at this Marlborough House ruled by Mrs. Poulteney where Sarah brought changes by her presence and in one instance even dared to take care of Millie, the rebuked servant girl who in her weak health had forgotten her duties to water Mrs. Poulteney's ferns.

Lyme situated in the "centre of one of the rare outcrops of a stone known as blue lias" and its highly "**fossiliferous nature**" proves to be the "**Mecca for the British paleontologist**" which is why Charles who calls "**himself a Darwinist**" finds himself well-equipped and over-dressed for his scientific sojourns at the Cobb. Along the wooded Undercliff**,** Charles looks for fossilsand by chance comes across a woman's figure lying deep asleep on "a broad sloping ledge of grass, some five feet beneath the level of the plateau" realizing that it is Sarah that he intrudes upon. And he offers a "**thousand apologies**" when she wakes up in "**shock**" and "**bewilderment**". On his return to Lyme, he inquires a taciturn dairyman outside his Dairy about her, who tells him that it is the "**French Loot'n'nts Hoer**" (the term which angers Charles) frequents that path. But following that "**woodland meeting**" Charles is courteous to her when she approaches the same way, taking his hat off and addressing her as "**Madam**" with a smile.

When a distressed Mrs. Poulteney receives information of Sarah's whereabouts during daytime, she confines her outdoor strolls to places **"where it is seemly"** as Ware Commons and those wooded parts were infamous as a "**de factoLover's Lane**". That night Sarah stands at her window of her unlit bedroom, with "silent tears" and contemplates "**jumping from it**" Interestingly, the narrator brings up two central questions to the text as to"**Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?**" as she

carries an aura of mystery in her persona.

The following chapters describe Charles visit to the Marlborough House accompanying the ladies, his conversation with his valet Sam and a concert at the Lyme Assembly rooms with Aunt Tranter and Ernestina. After the visit to the Marlborough House even as he knew that "**no gentleman who cares for his good name can be seen with the scarletwoman of Lyme**", Charles follows Sarah in his "**wretched grubbing among the stones**". So, in his second meeting in the Undercliff he makes conversation with her, he even suggests her to leave Lyme instead of suffering her tragedy in waiting for the French gentleman and is baffled when he finds that she knows that her love would never return, that she had even received a letter that he was already married. After the abrupt meeting, Charles introspects and realizes he has become "**a little obsessed with Sarah…or at any rate with the enigma she presented.**" Two days after when Ernestina suffers migraine, he enjoys a "**free afternoon**" with "**the old travel-lust**" of his and finds Sarah above him, where "**a tunnel of ivy ended**" in the Undercliff. It is in this meeting that she opens up and expresses her wish to share what had happened "**eighteen months**" before, asking him for just one more visit on any afternoon. And this is when he realizes that he is about to engage in the forbidden.

This is when Charles decides to visit Dr. Grogan, an Irish elderly bachelor to talk and seek advice. Both of them bond over discussions about Sarah, several types of melancholia, women psychology, sexuality and Darwin among other things. On the next meeting in Sarah's "**secluded place**" surrounded by dense thickets, she shares the truths of her relation with Varguennes, her French lover while he was recovering from his injuries at the Talbot's home, where Sarah was a governess, her French lover. As he had wished her to go with him to France, she had even secretly lodged in an inn at Weymouth to elope with him until she realized that he was "**insincere…a liar**" and how her life had "**steeped into loneliness**" when she realized that circumstances had caused her to be the victim of his amusements. Although, he did not "**violate her against her will**", she in her double dishonor of circumstances and choice, "**married shame**" and

committed a kind of personal "**suicide**" by giving herself to his "**transient gratification**". She takes it upon herself to be seen as the **French Lieutenant's Whore"** to be seen as an "**outcast**" for it set her apart from the society which was unjust in her eyes. But in his heart Charles forgave her "**unchastity**".

Chapter 21-40

The two young lovers Sam and Mary had come up seeking cover in the same thicket but luckily they didn't see Charles and Sarah there. And this is when Charles in his fear of being discovered tells her that they "**must nevermeet alone again**". On his return to Lyme, he finds an "**orange envelope**", a telegram from his uncle Robert at Winsyatt, who "**for most important reasons**" summoned him to the family estate. That following afternoon after the secret meeting, Sarah walked back through the woods and took the path where she was easily seen by the dairyman's wife and Mrs. Fairley.

It is at Aunt Tranter's rear parlour that Charles after his return discusses with Ernestina about Uncle Robert's sudden decision to marry a certain Mrs. Bella Tomkins, a young widow. This meant that his chances to inherit the estate would be spoilt because if the two had a son in future, he would then be the heir to the estate. And to add to his despair, Ernestina lets him know about Sarah's dismissal the previous evening from the services of Marlborough House, for having violated the previously issued warning of walking in the forbidden Undercliff. And finally comes the "third shock" of the day, when in his hotel room he finds a note sealed with black wax, addressed to him that read:

"I beg you to see me one last time. I will wait this afternoon and tomorrow morning. If you do not come, I shall never trouble you again."

When an ostler rushes to deliver another note in French from Sarah, in Charles' room in Sam's presence, he under his "**mask of manservitude**" finds out what his master is up to and this is when Charles asks Sam to keep the matter from Mrs. Tranter. Charles meets Dr. Grogan and lets him know that Sarah didn't want her "**whereabouts disclosed**" and requests him to call off the search for Sarah. Dr. Grogan discusses Charles' problem

making him realize that he is "**half inlove with her**". They discuss about psychology, Malthus among other things and he offers the young man a volume of medical evidence brought out by the defence about some cases of women. Charles later wonders "**why had he allowed Grogan to judge her for him**" and irresistibly takes it in his stride, to risk meeting Sarah again. Once again he finds himself entering "**the lane to the Undercliff**" and entering a barn in a little closed building to find "**hanging from a nail in an oldstall post: a black bonnet**", that indicated Sarah's presence.

And, when he comes across her in the barn, the "**tiger was in him, not in her**". Here, she confesses that she had purposely let Mrs. Fairley see her return from the Undercliff that day, knowing she would inform the same to Mrs. Poulteney. An irresistible passion takes over Charles and he takes Sarah into his embrace and kisses her in his bewilderment. To his shock and surprise, the lovers Sam and Mary discover him rush out of the barn door and in his embarrassment swears them into secrecy. He then returns to the barn and suggests her to leave for Exeter, gives her money for the same. He leaves telling her "**I shall never forget you**."

In his undecided state of mind about his marriage, he decides to go to London to see his solicitor Montague and also with the intention to inform Ernestina's father of what had transpired with his uncle. In the meantime, Sarah dismissed from the services to Mrs. Poulteney finds her modest lodgings at Exeter, where she purchases a few expensive amenities for herself in what felt like her "**first holiday of her adult life**." Charles in London has a second "**formal interview**" with Ernestina's father during which Mr. Freeman expresses his "**principal consideration**" as his "**daughter's happiness**" who in her letter to him writes:

"If you listen to Charles's nonsense for one moment, I shall make him elope with me."

And Mr. Freeman reminds him of the "**great commerce**" that Charles would "**inherit throughErnestina**" and so the marriage stands. Hence, Charles felt more trapped and discontent with "**this feeling that he was now the bought husband, his in-law's puppet**". In his dismay he visits a club and drinks champagne and punch with his acquaintances Sir Tom and

a bishop's son and later visits a brothel in a narrow alley, a little away from Haymarket with them. But repelled by the exhibition of naked white bodies and the lechery of the men present there, he leaves the place in a cab. And, then in a quieter street, he notices a solitary girl who was "**not really like Sarah**", but was a vulnerable Cockney streetwalker who's name was "**Sarah**" and he asks her, to take him to her place. There he discovers that she had an illegitimate baby, who's father was a soldier in India and it is the hock that he is served that deadens his senses and no sooner he takes her in his arms and learns her name that he vomits in a spasm.

Chapter 41-61

The woman nurses him with her kindness and he leaves her place to return to Kensington where he receives two letters, one of which is from Dr. Grogan and a note from Sarah. Sam who mentions to Charles his intention to marry Mary, talks about playing one's "**cards right**", meaning that Charles had to go through marriage with Ernestina because only from the dowry that would follow, "**could he hope for his two hundred and fifty pounds**".

Charles then arrives at Aunt Tranter's house, in Lyme and reunites with his Ernestina taking her into confidence and also confessing his incident with poor Tragedy. They marry, live together although not as happily, have seven children and Charles surviving Ernestina by a decade, mourns her into the twentieth century. And "**so ends the story**" in the form of a traditional ending by the narrator. But this is only one of the possible endings as the narrator offers two other endings to the novel in the chapters starting from **Chapter 45**.

In these subsequent chapters, the first ending has Charles recognize his freedom of choice and while on his way back from London decides to pass through the town of Exeter, the train station of which was nearest to Lyme Regis, where Sarah was lodging.

The proprietress Mrs. Endicott tells him on his enquiry about Sarah that she had slipped and injured her ankle in the stairs. Later when shown into her room, he finds Sarah again and his passion to possess her is reignited. It was his "**hunger of a long frustration-not merely sexual, for**

a whole ungovernable torrent of things banned, romance, adventure, sin, madness, animality, all these coursed wildly through him," and he takes her into his arms. Charles confesses his real love for her and his wish to marry her and not Ernestina. It is in these moments that he realizes that "**he had forced a virgin**" and that she had lied about having given of herself to Varguennes. This is when he realizes to his disbelief that all her conducts and motives at Lyme Regis were only a lie and some sort of blackmail. She confesses to him that when she had been to Weymouth to meet her lover, he had seen her with another woman, the kind that one couldn't mistake and after they had gone, she had walked away. The only thing that she hadn't deceived him was of her love for him, from the moment she saw him. And now she had asked him to leave.

Shaken by the entire experience, Charles in his despair finds himself alone in a Church. But in place "**of Christ's face, he saw only Sarah's**" and slowly begins to "**understand her deceit**", and writes an epistle to Sarah. He realizes that Sarah had used her "**stratagems to unblind him**" so that he would realize that he was free to make choices of his own, it had prompted him to search his conscience. In his letter he writes that his "**first necessity is therefore to terminate**" his engagement with Ernestina and that in looking forward to "**our future**", he would know "**no peace, no happiness**" till he held his "**sweet enigma**", Sarah in his arms again. But, Sam who is ordered to deliver the letter finds it addressed to '***Miss Woodruff at Endicott's family Hotel'***, and decides not to deliver the letter.

Charles arrives in Lyme and meets Ernestina, confessing his considerations of their ties and how unworthy he is of her. Ernestina is heartbroken at the change of his mind and more so when she finds out that it is due to another woman. Sam, who has his own marriage and future prospects to consider, quits his services to Charles, in the hope that he will be received by Aunt Tranter and Ernestina's father would help him. And indeed, Mrs. Tranter does consider the marriage of Sam and Mary. Charles writes to Ernestina's father and meets Dr. Grogan before he returns to Exeter, to find Sarah not expecting him but rather gone away to London. When he inquires with Mrs. Endicott he finds out that Sam had not delivered

the letter as was ordered to him and that in all probability he had opened the sealed letter to read its contents.

That was the night when after many years, he knelt in prayer to find Sarah again and the next morning takes the train in search of her. A bearded man who sits opposite him, who in all probability is hinted as the narrator himself, extracts a florin from his frock pocket and spins it in order to determine the probable ending for his story.

In London, Charles receives letters from Mr. Freeman's solicitors Aubrey and Baggott and attends the hearing at the Inns of Court, to answer for his "**abominable breach of engagement**" and reads a humiliating admission of guilt from the injured party. And Charles once again resumes his search for Sarah and searches agencies for governesses, patrols Haymarket area in fear that Sarah might have submitted to prostitution, he even checks the Register of Deaths fearing her death and then abruptly decides to visit the United States.

By this time, Sam and Mary were happily married and had a baby girl. Charles' uncle was married too and had a son, thereby sealing any chances of Charles's future prospects. It was after two years since his self-exile that Charles receives a cable in his Hotel in New Orleans from Montague, his solicitor which said: "**SHE IS FOUND. LONDON. MONTAGUE.**"

Immediately, in his emotional state of joy, he enquires for the next ship to Europe. It was not Montague who had found Sarah's whereabouts but he had received the same information through the post with a sheet of paper containing the name and address and so, he had informed Charles about it, who hoped that Sarah would answer the advertisement. Mary had seen Sarah entering a house in Chelsea and it was a guilt ridden Sam, who had earlier intercepted the letter at Lyme, who had responded to the advertisement. He arrives at the address to find it is indeed Sarah's who had now blossomed into the New Woman with an "**intellectual equality in her**" and when the two met, they are at an utter loss for words. She gradually reveals that she was an **Amanuensis** or assistant and lived in quite an unconventional company in the house of her employer Dante Gabriel

Rossetti and several other artists and models of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Charles finds out that inspite of her knowing about the notices and the monthly advertisements that he had published she had remained anonymous, and that she even changed her lodgings and her name to Mrs. Roughwood to avoid being discovered.

Despite all that had happened, "**behind all the rage stood the knowledge that he loved her still**" and Sarah decides not to let Charles leave without meeting her employer's sister Miss Christina Rossetti, who holds in her arms a small child, a baby girl with a Greek name Lalage, bestowed by Mr. Dante who acted as the Godfather to Sarah and Charles' very love child. As the lilting piano takes over this moment of reunion, Sarah is in Charles' embrace and receives the child, ending on a promising note of a future together.

Chapter 61

This chapter begins with the bearded narrator in front of Mr. Gabriel Dante's residence and the reader is given the impression that "**he can hardly contain his amusement**", he takes out a Breguet, his watch, which he sets back fifteen minutes and drives off in his coach. The narrative resumes with the same piece of 'dialogue' from Chapter 60, about Charles feeling as if Sarah had victimized him in her love and her delighting in not only planting but twisting a dagger in his heart. In this version of the conversation, Sarah tells an already sufficiently injured Charles that if he insists on marrying her, it would be in knowing that she can never love him as a wife or in other words a platonic love. Sarah confesses of not wanting anyone else but Charles if she had a choice but she also clearly expresses her choice, to never share her life with anyone. Thus on his way out, he leaves the hallway in his disbelief without realizing that the child he notices in the arms of the girl, who had shown him in, is his own child. The novel ends with Charles finding himself "**reborn**" in his self realizations and a "**celibacy of the heart as total as hers**" which indicated a return to America. How Sarah emotionally takes this parting of ways is not clearly stated by the narrator but ends on the note that "**Sarah may in some ways seem to fit the role of Sphinx**". The story ends with a mysterious note with the forked endings provided by the narrator in the novel.



ACTIVITY

Read the text of the novel. Besides using narrative shifts in many of his novels, such as in The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles offers multiple endings. Based on what you discovered about the roles of Victorian men and women, which ending would be most accepted by readers during Victorian times? Which ending do you think would be best received by audiences today? Can you think of an even more updated ending?



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Write briefly about the plot of the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

12.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF FOWLES

Patricia Waugh in her *Metafiction* wrote: "Novels like John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969)…are in the long run to be more successful." Both are works of metafiction that employ a self-conscious parody at various levels. You will note that among the authors of post war British fiction, the works of John Fowles' received critical acclaim and popular success by the 1990s. Because his works explored questions of human existence, existential awareness and complexities in relationships, inspired by the works of the French existentialists Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus and Swiss psychotherapist Carl Jung, he created characters who were placed in certain situations that would test their personal and cultural values. This can be noticed in his creation of the mysterious woman in characters like the kidnapped art student Miranda Grey in *The Collector* or the social outcast Sarah Woodruff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Though he cuts a much smaller figure on the international stage today, John Fowles was a much-celebrated novelist in the 1970s, and his 1969 novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* anticipates in many ways the

traits of the new historical fiction. Winning both the Silver Pen Award and the W. H. Smith Literary Award, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* appeared in a film adaptation in 1981 (screenplay by Harold Pinter), just in time to add a historiographical look at the Victorians to the mix of influences.



12.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about the life and works of John Fowles—an English novelist of international stature critically positioned between modernism and postmodernism. His works reflect the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, among others. Often called a historiographic metafiction, his novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), is a Victorian-era romance with a postmodern twist and is set in Lyme Regis, Dorset, where Fowles lived for much of his life. You have also learnt that the novel explores the fraught relationship of gentleman and amateur naturalist Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff, the former governess and independent woman with whom he falls in love. The novel builds on Fowles' authority in Victorian literature, both following and critiquing many of the conventions of period novels. Part of the novel's reputation is based on its expression of postmodern literary concerns through thematic focus on metafiction, historiography, metahistory, Marxist criticism and feminism. Stylistically and thematically, Linda Hutcheon describes the novel as an exemplar of a particular postmodern genre: historiographic metafiction. Because of the contrast between the independent Sarah Woodruff and the more stereotypical male characters, the novel often receives attention for its treatment of gender issues.



12.7 FURTHER READING

1) Fowles, John. (2009). *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Random House Group.

2) Hutcheon, Linda. (1988). "Historiographic Metafiction: "The pastime of past time" in *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London Routledge.

3) Shaffer, Brian W. (2001). *The Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

4) Waugh, Patricia.(1984).*Metafiction:* The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. *Methuen & Co. Ltd.*

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The French existentialists Sartre and Camus convinced him into thinking that the world was indeed absurd… …Fowles came to believe in the will of the individual… …

Ans to Q 2: The main idea for *The Collector* (1963) is borrowed from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus… …Heraclitus divided mankind into two groups namely the "*aristoi*" or the good, represented by the moral and intellectual elite and the second was "*hoi polloi*" or the many, represented by the unthinking or confirming mass… …

Ans to Q 3: In *The Aristos* Fowles makes a point that the reader should try to understand that "the dividing line should run through each individual, not between individuals."… …this novel is also a collection of philosophical reflections and thoughts on art, human nature and other subjects.

Ans to Q 4: The enigmatic Sarah is the central figure of the novel whom the young gentleman Charles is fascinated with… …but Charles is also engaged to be married to the rich Miss Ernestina Freeman… …thus arises the complexity and tension in their relation…. … Sarah who seemingly waits for her lover, the French Lieutenant already knows that he would never return and that he had well cheated her in love and was already married… …but what remains a speculation is her innocence about the way things take turn and the possibility of clever manipulation of the future events.



12.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What is Historigraphic Metafiction? In what way, can we call *The French Lieutenant's Woman* a historiographic metafiction? Discuss.

Q 2: Read the text of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. What are the gender role expectations for Victorian women? What are the gender role expectations for Victorian men?

Q 3: Do you consider *French Lieutenant's Woman* a Metafiction? What, according to you, is Fowles's opinion regarding the novel as an art form?

Q 4: Write a note on the works of John Fowles.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 13: JOHN FOWLES: *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANTS' WOMAN* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Reading the Novel *The French Lieutenants' Woman*

13.3.1 Major Themes

13.3.2 Fowles' Art of Characterisation

13.3.3 Fowles' Narrative Style

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

13.5 Further Reading

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.7 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- gain an insight into the enigmatic protagonist Sarah Woodruff, the "French Lieutenant's Woman" who is central to the entire plot of the story
- explain the themes related to the background and other significant aspects of the novel
- appreciate the novel as an excellent example of narrative, which remains mysterious to the reader with its unusual turn of events and endings
- analyse the novel as a post modern work.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to John Fowles' metafiction *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) which is considered a period novel. The main protagonist Sarah Woodruff who is also the "French Lieutenant's woman" in the novel, is likened to Thomas Hardy's protagonist Tess in ***Tess of***

D'Urbervilles (1891), in that both are seen as "fallen women", a notion that was prevalent in the Victorian society. In its structure and contents *The French Lieutenant's Woman* very much resembles a Victorian novel, but Fowles with his dexterity, breaks the traditional rules of narration and presents the work as an interesting post-modern narrative. The locales of the small harbour town of Lyme Regis located in the southern coast of England, forms the background of the novel. Also towards the end of the novel, a figure suggesting John Fowles himself playfully appears in the narration. And, finally you will find that the onus rests on the readers to ponder upon the possible future events with the novel's open-endedness, owing to its three probable endings.

13.3 READING THE NOVEL *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANTS' WOMAN*

The central figure of the novel is the enigmatic and alluring Miss Sarah Woodruff who is the French Lieutenant's Woman herself, whom the young gentleman Charles Smithson is fascinated with, from the time he first sees her alone by the sea, at the Cobb in Lyme. But, he is also engaged to be married to the rich Miss Ernestina Freeman who brings with her a good fortune and who loves him, wanting to settle down into domesticity with him. It is out of these compulsive ties that the complexity and tension in these relationships occur. Sarah who seemingly waits in vigilance for her lover, the French Lieutenant already knows that he is never going to return and that the man was already married, cheating her in love. It is this aura of mystery around Sarah that seduces Charles to deeply fall in love with her, only to be jolted out of his certain conventional existence and realize that she is more of the incomprehensible mirage who leads him into a self-awakening. But what remains a speculation is her innocence about the way things change and the possibility of her clever manipulation of the future events. The onus is on the reader to interpret the alternative endings, constructed by the narrator of the novel. You are advised to make a thorough reading of the following subsections to have a comprehensive idea of the text. However, just to make a reference to the intellectual contexts of the

novel you should also have a quick glance at the ideas of Modernism and Postmodernism which render direct influence on the writing of this novel.

Modernism and Postmodernism:

As you are already informed, the term modernism is referred to the new and distinct kind of literature and the arts of the twentieth century from that of the nineteenth century high Victorian high culture. The period after the World War I (1914-1918) saw a radical break from the traditional modes of thinking and ways of conceiving the 'self' or the 'individual'. The major changes were brought in by the easy access to communication and technology, materialism and luxury, scientific developments and contested faith, avant-garde movements and cross-fertilisation of ideas, nuclear families and the loner in the modern world. Hence, the modern individual was subject to luxury, boredom, loneliness, doubt, newer avenues of knowledge, quest and a turn of an inward eye into the self. The year 1922 came to be located as the period of high modernism by literary historians with exemplary modernist works like T.S Eliot's *The Wasteland*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. These works subverted the earlier practices in literature by introducing the literary techniques of the stream of consciousness, use of epiphany, departure from the earlier characterisation or creation of types, violation of the traditional syntax and fragmentation in the narration. The intellectual world was redefined by certain works that introduced new ideas like Einstein's 'Special Theory of Relativity', Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Edmund Husserl's introduction of 'Phenomenology' and William James' ideas of time in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). Some of the representatives among the European and the American writers are novelists like Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, William Faulkner, Thomas Mann; poets like T.S Eliot, W.B Yeats, Rainer Maria Rilke, Marianne Moore; and the dramatists Eugene O' Neill, Bertolt Brecht, Luigi Pirandello, August Strindberg. The cultural 'avant-garde' movements challenged and broke away from the traditions of the past, and asserted the phrase "make it new" coined by Ezra Pound, in constantly creating and reinventing newer forms of art and culture.

The term postmodernism is often applied to the literature and the arts and was first used by Arnold Toynbee in 1939 in his *A Study of History.* The 'deconstruction' theories of Jacques Derrida had a major influence in opening up the process of democratisation in the postmodern world of literature, art and culture. Thus the movement was influenced by the intellectual thinkers like Derrida and Michel Foucalt who questioned the foundations of traditional beliefs or Nietzsche who had famously talked about the impossibility of 'certainty' in the nineteenth century. In questioning the ideas of a structured reality, the postmodernists did away with the ideas of the 'grand narrative' and considered 'fragments' in its place, to be more important than the 'whole'. This led to the idea that 'reality' could be only provisional, that there could be multiple realities, thereby opening up a variety of perspectives in place of a dominant one or a privileged perspective. Derrida's theories explored the same aspects and talked about the impossibility of arriving at one singular meaning, due to the playful nature of language itself, which led to a plurality of meanings, instead of a structured one. The Postmodernist thought debunked the binaries of high and low culture and instead popularised contemporary 'mass culture' like television, films, cartoons, popular music among others, thereby opening up new avenues for cultural theory. Three basic features of the postmodern thought are thus that rational assumptions were not the only limited agency of knowledge, the loss of certainty and debunking cultural elitism in which only the elite in society dominated and determined the representations of culture itself. The strand of the 'absurd' in revealing the meaninglessness of existence influenced works of dramatists like Samuel Beckett and some of the names in the postmodern literature are Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nobokov, Thomas Pynchon, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida among others. Postmodern literature saw a resistance to traditional classification and blended a variety of literary genres, incorporating metafiction and the play of meaning.

13.3.1 Major Themes

The following are some of the important themes that you find while reading this novel.

Victorian Society and Ethos:

In his description of the period the narrator characterizes the Victorian as such: "This-the fact that every Victorian has two minds-is the one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century." The Victorian society was rather a conventional one with its own prejudices, strong sense of religion, class and social hierarchy. During this time, the 'Darwin debate' had shaken the Victorian world and even though they were not easily accepted, there were several takers of these scientific evolutionary theories of man, which clashed with the religious ideas of the Genesis. For example, in the novel Charles calls himself a Darwinist but the conventional Mr. Freeman "would not let his daughter marry a man who considered his grandfather to be an ape." Charles was influenced by Darwinism which explained the principle of genetic determinism and social influence as proposed by Darwin. Perhaps, this is why he didn't blame Sarah for who she reveals herself to be. He understands after all that it is the society and circumstances that had shaped her. Thus, the narrator describes the Lyme society as rather the "two faced citizens of Lyme", where "Lyme was a town of sharp eyes" and it was the "city of the blind."

There is also a mention in the text about the prevalent social hierarchies and social revolution in the "**snobs' struggle**", the Aristocrats who inherited titles like Charles' uncle, about the Nouveau Riche or the newly rich classes flaunting their recently acquired status, very often rising to fortune from being the children of servants climbing up the social ladder, like the valet Sam Weller who plays his cards right to attain the same to some degree. Those like him who aped their masters blindly were called 'snobs', by the upper class gentlemen brigade who were known as the 'swells'. The

narration talks of how London had seen the beginnings of a "**plutocratic stratification of society**", in which "**good money**" and "**good brains**" came to be socially accepted, even though "**good blood**" was privileged. To the privileged English gentleman, "dowry-hunting was as honourable a pursuit as fox-hunting or gaming" itself.

The Victorian ethos also gets reflected in the way the insulated Victorian society is shown to have its own moral and sexual prejudices which can be reflected in the instance where young gentlemen Charles Smithson in having caused himself a "**tarnished virginity**" with a Cockney girl in London is still perceived as a sought after bachelor in his society but Sarah Woodruff who seeks to marry her French lover, who jilts her is perceived as the French Lieutenant's Whore, although she is a virgin. Thus, this reflects how there was a bias in gender in the conventional Victorian world, where it was proper for a woman to be in her domesticity, the 'angel in the house' and the upper class dandy, a gentleman exploring the world outside the confines of the four walls, was much more privileged in the social and patriarchal hierarchy.

Condition of being a Victorian Woman:

During the Victorian period, which was symbolized by Queen Victoria's rule, the women of the time were denied the suffrage, the right to sue and the right to own property. It was only during the last years of the era, that women came to be educated and associated with feminist ideas to give momentum to the woman's suffrage and cause the repeal of the discriminatory laws. In the patriarchal families and common households where usually the husband was the head, the wife's place was secondary. Fowles' narrator in the novel says that '**duty**' was a "**key concept in our understanding of the Victorian age**". A woman was to be subservient or submissive to her husband and to be the '**angel in the house**'. Thus the "**rich husband-seekers in London society**" had such a "**market for brides**" and which had no place for a woman who was considered a "**social resentment**". If a woman was assumed to have morally or

sexually erred she was condemned as "**fallen**" and if the Victorian gentleman did the same he was perceived as notoriously masculine, as "**Casanova**".

Unlike a man if any woman flouted the Victorian conventions or fell short of the society's moral expectations, they were subjected to be ostracized as the '**fallen women**'. This was because a woman was expected to be modest and maintain propriety and also restrict her sexual experience absolutely to marriage, for her to be morally and socially accepted. Such were the double standards that subjugated the Victorian woman. If a woman broke conventions or the accepted social norms or standards, she would be condemned to 'spinsterhood' and lifelong social ostracism. Such examples were replete in Victorian art and literature. In 19th century Britain, the fallen woman was the one who had surrendered her chastity. Also, there were certain cultural taboos surrounding the female body as reflected in the novel where Ernestina evolves a "**private commandment**" to suppress her self-consciousness of her own body, even as she has an innocent longing in her for the same. This conditioning came from the moral authority in the traditional Victorian family and the society. Mrs. Poulteney is also described as one such "**inhabitant of the Victorian valley of dolls.**"

Those who flouted the Victorian conventions or were different from what was considered the norm were considered as outcasts in their society. The novel is repletewith such outcasts such as the sex-workers in the brothels of London's Haymarket, institutions like the private asylums, the encampments of the gipsies, set up homes for fallen women etc.It was only gradually, that the Victorian women with education and an awakened, intellectual self-consciousness, took to the ideas of refashioning themselves as the 'liberal' woman or the New Woman like Mrs. Caroline Norton "**an ardent feminist-what we would call today a liberal**" or Sarah as an amanuensis to the radical Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood.

Realist Fiction versus Metafiction:

The narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* comments that "fiction is woven into all…I find this new reality (or unreality) more valid" in the text. If language is what mediates our understanding of the world, then 'literary fiction', which are "worlds constructed entirely of language" facilitates in our comprehending the 'construction' of reality itself. Realistic fiction is often considered the classic, traditional mode of representation of reality and the nineteenth century realism saw fiction derive from the "commonly experienced, objectively existing world of history" (pg, 6) or from "ordered reality" (pg, 7). In the representative mode of realism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the 'individual' was integrated into the social structures but in the modernist fiction the individual opposed these set structures. Modernist fiction of the twentieth century, like the one you are reading, opposed and broke away from that traditional world view and "a sense of fictitiousness" came to influence their mode of writing as exemplified by the works of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce in the novels *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Ulysses* (1922) respectively. Contemporary metafiction on the other hand, not only explores the creation of fiction but also the very process of creation itself. Metafiction "does not abandon 'the real world'" (pg, 18)…….. According to this form, reality and history are subject to multiplicity. Instead of just a singular mode, there are plural ways of interpreting reality, history and to decipher meaning. Metafiction opposes "'objective' facts in the 'real' world" along with, the 'language' representing the realistic mode that sustains such a structured view of reality.



LET US KNOW

The French Lieutenant's Woman was published in 1969, it met with critical and popular success. James Aronson, in the Antioch Review, stated that with this novel, Fowles showed himself to be "a novelist as great as Joyce Carey and E. M.

Forster." Paul Edward Gray of the Yale Review called it "a modishly-framed imitation of Victorian fiction" that was nonetheless "remarkably satisfying." Not all reviewers were as pleased. Jonathan Keates of *The New Review*, after reading the work, felt "irritated at having to endure a drenching from a mixture of archly self-conscious detachment, toe-curling patronage, and a set of opinions, stated or implied, on the Victorians which I didn't share." Some critics saw the virtues of the book in comparison to his later works. Denis Donoghue, in a negative review of Daniel Martin for the New York Review of Books, notes that "The French Lieutenant's Woman is Fowles's best work because he found for that occasion a major theme of great historical and personal importance, and he commanded a language at least adequate."

While John Fowles' reputation was based mainly on his novels and their film versions, he demonstrated expertise in the fields of nature, art, science, and natural history as reflected in a body of non-fictional writings. Throughout his career, Fowles committed himself to a scholarly exploration of the place of the artist in contemporary society and sought the personal isolation and exile that he felt essential to such a search.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How, according to you, is the Victorian ethos presented in this novel?

Q 2: What would be the status of women in the Victorian society?

Q 3: What is Metafiction? In what ways, can the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* be read as a Metafiction.

13.3.2 Fowles' Art of Characterisation

The French Lieutenant's Woman was inspired by Fowles' vision of a woman staring out at the sea. Fowles' narrator in the text admits that "it is only when our characters and events begin to

disobey us that they begin to live." According to Fowles, the author still is God and he uses the 'omniscient author' in the narration who engages in the very process of metafiction.His narrator in the novel is of the idea that "the novelist is still a god, since he creates" even the avantgarde modern novel cannot do away with its narrator completely, only the difference is that such a god's position is one of "freedom our first principle, not authority". He says that "there is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist." The narrator stresses that in order to be free himself he has to give "their (the characters) freedoms as well."Though, he as an author can choose when to reveal and when to mystify, his characters do not have the same choice. But according to Patricia Waugh, in almost all of Fowles' novels, "the characters who deny the possibility of freedom (in existential terms) are those who compulsively label, fix, categorize and define" (page, 124). Similar to the freedom of the existential human being, fictional characters are pre-determined or written into the script and in a way they can never be free. Fowles agrees that there is a problem of freedom and yet they are 'free' in the sense that they can be recreated in people's imagination. Although history or life provides endless possible endings, he has to stick to offering limited endings, hence the three probable endings to his novel.

Sarah Woodruff:

She is the central figure of the text and the title also indicates the same, it is the same infamous term of the French Lieutenant's Woman that is referred to in the town of Lyme. She is introduced to us as a mysterious figure, a dark shape standing motionless staring out to the sea, "like a living memorial to the drowned, a figure of myth" around whom the plot of the novel revolves. In the novel there are several references and comparisons of her to the painter Grunewald's 'Mater Dolorosa', to the Virgin Mary, to Christ's face and also referred to with vulgar appellation's such as the 'French Lieutenant's whore', 'poor Tragedy', 'loathsome succubi', 'wicked

Jezebel' or 'the scarlet woman'. She is even likened to Eve who mostly escapes to the outdoors and later meets Charles in the forbidden Undercliff. She is the focus of everyone's gaze and is as much a subject of fascination as censor. When she is first looked upon by Charles, she is an almost unforgettable face, a tragic face. Sarah's father, a tenant of Lord Meriton's near Beaminster, was a farmer and a man of **"excellent principles and highly respected in the society"**. Most wisely he had chosen to provide Sarah with a good education. After he passed away, she was employed at Captain John Talbot's family at Charmouth. This is where she met with the three rescued sailors, one of whom had become her lover. She was well conversant in French, as all governesses were trained to be. The sailor was a French man and had later jilted her after engaging her affections. She in her tragic circumstances performed all work and duties well but suffered "grave attacks of melancholia". She even charms Mrs. Poulteney by her demeanour before she is taken in as a company to her. Sarah was constant at her attendance at divine services. She had a mind captured by the **"romantic literature of her adolescence"**. It is difficult to establish why she chooses to 'marry shame' or what leads her to make certain unpredictable moves. These remain an unexplained mystery in the novel. In one instance she seems to even internalize the shame that society heaps on her by uttering the words**" I am nothing, I am hardly human anymore. I am the French Lieutenant's Whore"** to Charles. But, there is a change in her in the later part of the novel she is much transformed into the New Woman with an **"intellectual equality in her"** to that of Charles. When Charles had made her know how remarkable she was to him, she even acknowledges the same saying **"Yes, I am a remarkable person."** It is rather the **"swarm of mysteries"** surrounding her that makes her such an unforgettable character in English literature.

Charles Smithson:

Charles in the novel is a 32 year old gentleman who is

engaged to marry Miss Ernestina Freeman. His grandfather was a baronet who had interests in collecting books and pursuing trophies of excavation in his large acres in Wiltshire. It is from his grandfather that Charles inherited the same temperament, as he was fond of spending afternoons at Winsyatt Library with books and realizing in himself the interests of palaeontology. Charles's father was left well provided for and having lost his mother when he was a year old, he is brought up in the company of tutors and "**drill-sergeants**". Charles who was educated at Cambridge had a mind of his own, who unlike an English gentleman preferred to "**adamantly refuse to hunt the fox**", abhorred hunter's cruelty, liked to take walks instead of walking, subscribed to the 39 Articles and Darwin's ideas. In his second year at Cambridge when he sins with a Cockney girl, he in his own disbelief desires to take Holy Orders. Dispatched to Paris by his father, his intention of marriage with the Church dies. He turns an agnostic and "**what God he managed to derive from existence he foundin Nature**." After his return from the "**City of Sin**", his father passes away and he settles in a well provided home in Kensington with man-servants and staff to look after his needs. Thus, he spent a great deal of time travelling. But laziness was also Charles' distinguishing trait. He was a sought after young man "**ogled by the mamas, clapped on the back by the papas and simpered at by the girls.**" He is led into self realizations at several stages in the novel, with the way things take turns after he chooses to acknowledge his love for Sarah. He even expresses his want to be 'unFreemanish', to be out of that shadow and not to be compulsorily married into the Freeman family. But also by the end of the novel, he finds that in his unrequited love for Sarah, "**he was one of life's victims….a potential turned into fossil**."

Ernestina Freeman:

Ernestina is the only child of Mr. Freeman and niece to Mrs. Tranter, whom she visits at her home in Lyme. Growing up with much parental concern by her doting parents, she was brought up

very delicately and "**she liked every luxury….but she had a very sound bourgeois sense of proportion.**" She had a proper respect for conventions, with a sense of humour, "**self-irony**", and innocent narcissistic self-contemplation in front of the mirror, having come of age. She is pretty by the standards of her period and is even likened to a "**sugar Aphrodite**" in the novel. When Charles confesses that he cannot marry her, after having given his commitment, she is left shattered. Because all she wanted was the love and protection of "**a husband, wanted children**" and a home to herself, like most women of her time. She had her own fears like "**the matter of whether he** (Charles) **had slept with other women worried her less than it might a modern girl**." Perhaps, this was because of the insulated world that she was brought up in.She has a somewhat childlike innocence that suffers a 'delusion' considering Charles more experienced and hence more mature to be her partner. Because no matter how educated or well travelled he was, when it came to taking the right measures or decisions regarding his life, he didn't know any better. Ernestina comes across as the more docile woman whose concerns are limited to the indoors or the four walls of her home, who is not worldly-wise unlike Sarah who is seen outdoors most of the time and with a head-strong persona by the end of the novel.

Some instances can be read symbolically for example the possible future of the relationof Ernestina and Charles. For instance, Ernestina orders a bunch of 'flowers' that Charles sends her, to be placed at a distance from her, disliking them up close and in contrast her easy acceptance of the piece of 'fossil' picked by him. When Sam presents a bouquet of yellow crocuses, it can be read symbolically as the flowering of Sam and Mary's love leading into marriage.

The Minor Characters in the Novel

Mrs. Poulteney: A rich elderly widow, who is stern and a strict disciplinarian at her Marlborough house.

Mr. Freeman: Ernestina's prosperous father, who had a new

mansion in the Surrey pinewoods.

Mrs. Fairley: The housekeeper of Mrs. Poulteney who delights in spying on Sarah and informing her mistress of the same.

Mrs. Tranter: The aunt of Ernestina who resided at Lyme and was sufficiently kind by nature.

Sir Robert: Charles' uncle who lived at Winsyatt who had "**sufficient generations of squirearchy**"

Mrs. Tomkins: The wife of Sir Robert who gives birth to a son thereby disinheriting Charles from the property.

Dr. Grogan: An Irishman and a Doctor, who is a rational man and advises Charles with whom he shares a close bond.

Mr. Forsyth: The Vicar who advises Mrs. Poulteney to perform charity at home in order to save her soul by taking in Sarah in her household as a companion.

Miss Timble: She kept a ladies' trinket shop at the bottom of Broad Street that served as the "**information centre of the town**".

Varguennes: The French sailor who is Sarah's lover, who plays with her affections and jilts her.

Captain John Talbot: The previous employer of Sarah as a governess to look after his children.

Mrs. Talbot: The wife of Captain Talbot and the mother of two children, Paul and Virginia.

Miss Mary: The pretty maid to Mrs. Tranter, the wife of Sam and mother to a girl child.

Sam Weller: Charles' valet who remains with his master only as long as his own future prospects are secured.

Lady Cotton: She presided over a missionary society and set up a home for fallen woman.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: How, according to you, is the idea of the narrator conceived by Fowles in this novel?

Q 5: Present a character sketch of Sarah Woodruff.

13.3.3 Fowles' Narrative Style

John Fowles' narrator journeys through the nineteenth and the twentieth century, back and forth in time by setting both the Victorian and the modern times against each other. But Fowles also calls the novel a 'science fiction journey back in time'. Due to such dislocations in time and constant shifts in historical contexts, his novels have also been read as historical fictions, a new trend in British fiction. In order to shake the reader's moral, conventional or aesthetic ideas, he lays open the Victorian prejudices and sexual hypocrisy. His novel draws from or "rehearses" certain elements from various authors like George Eliot's "intrusive moralizing", characterization of Charles Dickens, "the suspension between two worlds" of Arnold, the "mysterious heroine" of Hardy and by weaving the ideas of Marx, Linnaeus and Darwin as a subtext to the narration. But this is all in keeping the ideas of Roland Barthes or the French New Novelists intact in the novel. According to them, history just like fiction is under continuous re-construction, hence being only provisional and open ended. Therefore, only when one is self-consciously aware of the same, can one exercise some form of freedom in making "responsible choices".

Each of the chapters in his novel interestingly, begins with epigraphs which act like commentaries on the contents of the chapter and hence act as points of entry in some ways into the chapters. It is important to note that the narrator with his twentieth century perspective in quoting the epigraphs can only 'recount' and have a 'hindsight' in turning back time to the history of the Victorian age, in which he locates his characters.In several instances the narrator is seen to be precocious for example, in simultaneously revealing Ernestina's death in the future "on the day that Hitler invaded Poland" while narrating her into the present context.

Narratorial invasions like, "my story", "my opinion", "I do not mean", "I believe", "I risk making Sarah sound like a bigot", "our

understanding", "before you think I am" among countless other examples indicates the narrator's on and off presence. The narrator is also precocious while narrating the events, by displaying a knowledge of the future events or happenings and sometimes also foreshadowing certain events to the reader, for an instance the moment when Charles first treads into the pathway that leads to the Undercliff, it is foreshadowed by the narrator as a choice that would turn his world into a different direction altogether. In another instance the narrator is also seen to suddenly shift his perspective of time and context, while narrating from that of the Victorian to the preceding "Edwardian Age" while making comparisons of the standards of beauty of both the periods at the same time.

In the end, Fowles offers three possible endings to the novel- which are "alternatives to both Victorian morality and historical-romance conventions" (page, 123). The intriguing story is presented with a narration in a typical Victorian manner and a true picture of the Victorian England. Fowles shows how from a modern point of view, a novel should be written while also criticizing the noveau roman school and the drawbacks of literary techniques practised during this period.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: How did Fowles' predecessors or contemporaries influence the narrative of this novel?

Q 7: Comment on the narrative strategies presented in this novel.



13.4 LET US SUM UP

You have just finished reading the unit on the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles. The text through its play of narration and the use of metafiction brings into reference the significant contexts of a

post modern work. It presents an interesting take on the meta-levels of reality and problem it presents. The characters situated in the novel are created by the narrator as well as represented to be developing on their own, thereby investing them with a certain form of freedom that makes them interesting. The enigmatic Sarah Woodruff, the open endings, the play of fiction and reality make the novel an interesting read. Therefore, it is necessary for the learner to invest time in reading this monumental work, to unearth its meta-levels of significance and at the same time to struggle in being closer to the eluding enigma that makes the novel a search in itself. The background of the Victorian society in which the novel is situated in and the other significant themes related to the text have been provided for a better perspective of the text. The character sketches give an insight into the main characters and the minor characters are briefly enlisted for the learner's easy reference.



13.5 FURTHER READING

1) Fowles, John. (2009). *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Random House Group.

2) Hutcheon, Linda. (1988). "Historiographic metafiction: "The pastime of past time" in *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London Routledge.

3) Shaffer, Brian W. (2001). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

4) Waugh, Patricia. (1984).*Metafiction:* The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. *Methuen & Co. Ltd.*



13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Representation of conventional Victorian society… …Reference to Charles' Darwin's theories and the resultant Victorian dilemma…

...reflection on the insulated Victorian society and the moral and sexual prejudices against women.

Ans to Q 2: A woman was to be subservient or submissive to her husband and the 'angel in the house'… …the "rich husband-seekers in London society" had such a "market for brides" and which had no place for woman considered as a "social resentment". If a woman was assumed to have morally or sexually erred she was condemned as "fallen" and if the Victorian gentleman did the same he was perceived in a notoriously masculine as "Casanova".

Ans to Q 3: According to Patricia Waugh, 'metafiction' as a "fictional writing" poses questions about the relationship between fiction and reality in a self consciously and systematic way… …the novel is a metafiction as the narrator comments that "fiction is woven into all…I find this new reality (or unreality) more valid"… …If language is what mediates our understanding of the world, then 'literary fiction' facilitates in our comprehending the 'construction' of reality itself.

Ans to Q 4: His narrator in the novel is of the idea that "the novelist is still a god, since he creates" even the avant garde modern novel cannot do away with its narrator completely, only the difference is that such a god's position is one of "freedom our first principle, not authority".

Ans to Q 5: She is the central figure of the novel… …she is a mysterious figure, a dark shape standing motionless staring out to the sea… …she is even likened to Eve… …she is the focus of everyone's gaze… …she internalizes the shame that society heaps on her as the French Lieutenant's Whore… …but in the later part of the novel she is transformed into the New Woman with an "intellectual equality in her".

Ans to Q 6: George Eliot's "intrusive moralizing"… …characterization of Charles Dickens… … "the suspension between two worlds" of Arnold… …the "mysterious heroine" of Hardy… …and also influence of Marx, Linnaeus and Darwin as a subtext to the narration.

Ans to Q No 7: John Fowles' narrator journeys back and forth through the nineteenth and the twentieth century… …in order to shake the reader's moral, conventional or aesthetic ideas, he lays open the Victorian

prejudices and sexual hypocrisy… …Fowles begins each chapter with epigraphs which act like commentaries on the contents of the chapter… …narratorial invasions like, "my story", "my opinion", "I do not mean", "I believe", etc. indicates the narrator's constant presence…. …the narrator is also precocious while narrating the events, by displaying a knowledge of the future events or happenings and sometimes also foreshadowing certain events to the reader… …In the end, Fowles offers three possible endings



13.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Why does John Fowles provide multiple endings for the novel? Do you consider them to be equally viable? Illustrate.

Q 2: How does the novel help in understanding the Victorian attitudes towards life?

Q 3: Read the novel carefully and compare it with a novel by Thomas Hardy or Charles Dickens.

Q 4: Compare the characters of Sarah and Ernestina. In what ways are they affected by Victorian attitudes towards women?

Q 5: Discuss the character of Charles. How is Charles changed by his romance with Sarah?

Q 6: Why does Sarah allow herself to be called "the French lieutenant's whore" when in fact she never had a sexual affair with him?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 14: SALMAN RUSHDIE: *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Salman Rushdie: Life and Works

14.4 Story of the Novel *Midnight's Children*

14.5 Critical Reception of Rushdie

14.6 Let Us Sum Up

14.7 Further Reading

14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.9 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss Rushdie's life and works with particular reference to his fictional and non-fictional works
- trace the basic outline of the story of *Midnight's Children*
- critical discuss the reception of Rushdie as a leading English language writer of current times
- appreciate the new space created by Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in Indian English fiction writing.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall introduce you to Salman Rushdie and his novel *Midnight's Children* which is one of his most celebrated novels winning the Booker Prize in 1981. The novel is also categorised as the best of all the Booker winners marking the 25th and 40th anniversary of the prestigious award. However, it does not mean that the greatness of the novel is conceived of primarily because of the award it has pocketed to its credit. In reality, the novel engages many a good seminal issues giving it a distinctive

colour and position in literary circle. Given its wide-ranging reception, *The New York Review of Books* hails *Midnight's Children* as "an extraordinary novel" that has given a new orientation to fiction writing at world stage. An eminent critic named Clark Blaise also gives major thrust upon the novel saying that "the literary map of India" is going to ink up a new chapter and the entire "continent" finds a new voice with the novel. Such a strong belief in the novel, particularly the one relating to the continent is debatable since it brings into fore an essentialist formulation Rushdie himself has long been up against. Moreover, the statement refers to an underestimation of the literary output in the vernaculars, and it is more of a pro-English judgment. Putting the debate aside, what strikes us the most about the novel is its distinct approach to various subject matter and issues. Hence the novel makes an interesting reading, which could be situated at various trends of thought in recent critical schools. As Rushdie is well known for his keen interest in history, the novel could be approached from this perspective. Indeed, it is a revisionist reading of Indian history that constitutes major space in the narrative. Denial of official version of history reiterates Rushdie's postcolonial position, which he carries out to the extent of historiographic metafiction. As the presence of the past characterises historiographic metafiction, the phenomenon has its say in the form of history, which is personal, non-official, often blurred by non-remembrance or the failure of remembering. This is somewhat very much potent in breaking down barriers assigned to public-private domains. Saleem Sinai's narration of Indian history is materialized not in its unadulterated form; rather it is coloured, manipulated, and "pickled" subject to change and, if required, rectification. Hence, the pickle factory introduced into the novel is a metaphor establishing the impossibility involved in presenting things in fundamental spirit.

14.3 SALMAN RUSHDIE: LIFE AND WORKS

A well-known personality in world fiction today, Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born on June 19, 1947 in Bombay. Belonged as he is to a Muslim family of Kashmiri descent, Rushdie enjoyed the liberal outlook the members of the family would like to maintain at home and the larger spectrum



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

of society as well. His father, Anis Ahmed Rushdie was a Cambridge-educated lawyer turning his attention to business. The name of his mother was Negin Bhatt. Rushdie was the eldest of four siblings. Showcasing his talent and inquisitive bent of mind right early in his life, Rushdie's alma mater was Cathedral School followed by John Connan School in Bombay. Subsequently, he got admitted into the prestigious Rugby School in Warwickshire, and availed many a good lesson pertaining to various subjects. Though his stay at Rugby was not sweet memorizing, given the prevalence of racism, he confessed his indebtedness to the institution in respect of education and learning. However, racism was not a hindrance to his pursuit of higher learning at King's College, Cambridge, where he met a number of influential thinkers. Here he took a degree in history in 1968. He lived in England from 1961 to 2000 with exception to a few occasional visits to India and Pakistan. He has been married four times, and has two sons, Zafar and Milan. He now lives in the United States of America. During his stay in England, he first worked in a fringe theatre and then as a copywriter in an advertising agency.

Rushdie is very much open to the developments all around, and hence his literary career is fabricated with myriad of issues and perspectives. Indeed, he carried out an uncompromising zeal and protested against all sorts of injustice and discrimination. Global politics, especially geo-political developments draw his attention at the earliest. For instance, in the 1980s in the UK, he supported the Labour Party and stood in favour of breaking down the shackle of racial discrimination. Similarly, he expressed satisfaction at the removal of the Taliban from Afghanistan. He did not like the war in Iraq and the exclusive nature of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India. What he stands for is the mandate of a secular human being and a society free of all anti-human forces.

Till date, Rushdie has a good number of texts to his credit. Though he started his writing career in a fringe theatre and as a copywriter, his real

gusto has been for fiction and non-fiction writing. As such, he arrived at the scene with *Grimus* (1975), a fantastical science fiction par excellence. Drawing on a twelfth century Sufi poem by the name of "The Conference of Birds", the novel is an anagram of the name 'Simurg' meaning a large, wise and fabled bird in Persian mythology. The novel is followed by his magnum opus *Midnight's Children* (1981), the narrative of which ranges from the infamous Jallainwala Bagh Massacre till the imposition of the Emergency during the rule of Indira Gandhi. A rich amalgam of magic, farce, symbolism and allegory, the novel places history in association with fiction with the story of Saleem Sinai and the one thousand children, born at the stroke of midnight when India achieved independence, running parallel to the social and political destiny of the new nation.

Then he wrote *Shame* (1983) taking the socio-political turmoil of Pakistan into account. The clash between military and civilian rule and the culture of shame and honour affecting the concerned are highly allegorical in nature. With Omar Khayyam Shakil, a bicultural narrator, recounting the events, the text introduces Hyder Raza and Iskander Harappa, the fictional recreations of President Zia-ul-Haq and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is one of his most controversial novels, attacked primarily for the alleged blasphemy against Islam. There are three distinct plots constituting a major space in the novel. The first one is that of two actors namely Gibreel Farishta, who has played numerous roles in scriptural movies of all faiths, and Saladin Chamcha, who is a stage radio actor accumulating vast experience to his credit. The second plot is that of Mahound, a fictionalized representation of Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. And the third plot is that of a mystic named Ayesha whose meeting with Archangel Gabriel proves disastrous as she leads the villagers to the Arabian Sea and getting drowned despite the assurances of Gabriel regarding their safe passage to the sea and consequently to Mecca. However, setting aside the controversy, the novel may be studied as an incredible rendition of the immigrants' problem, especially racial discrimination at the hands of the British.

When controversy had been at the peak with the fatwa being imposed

upon, Rushdie published *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1900) in a fairy-tale manner. Very much popular with children, the novel recounts the adventure of Haroun, who along with the army of Gup City throws out Khattam-Shud from the city of Chup meaning silence. As Khattam-Shud pollutes the Ocean of Notions, the main source of stories for Haroun's story-telling father, Rashid, Haroun's successful mission at overthrowing the pollutant establishes the importance of stories in one's life. Indeed, it is through stories or narrative that one's existence is felt in every aspect of life.

Rushdie's next major novel is *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and it is through the Zogoiby family saga that he recounts the failure of pluralism and multiculturalism in a country like India. Here too, the theme of good versus evil is repeated with the commentary on India's politics getting due focus. The narrator-cum protagonist Moraes Zogoiby, who is affected with a disease that ages his body at twice the normal rate, witnesses the darker aspect of life right from his father's spice business to the more profitable job in drug trading and smuggling.

Next novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) presents the love story of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama with the former being dead when the narrative begins. Cama's search for the love in the extraordinary life of music forms a fascinating space in the narrative. *Fury* (2001) is his first major novel completely set in the west. Malik Solanka, a doll maker, leaves England for New York nurturing the romantic idea of leaving the past behind. Contrary to this, he experiences fury as an inseparable entity both within and without. With *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Rushdie returns to India taking Kashmir as a major theme. There is a triangle that most of the Indo-English writers seem to be obsessed with. Shalimar is a Muslim; he is in love with Boonyi, a Hindu, and his rival is Jewish Max Ophuls. Imbued with melodramatic elements as the novel is, what is unusual is the characters' failure of moral responsibility.

His next venture *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) is basically focused on trans-national migrants and the cultural alienation felt and experienced by the concerned. With Niccolo Vespucci visiting the Court of

Akbar the Great and claiming himself to be the child of the lost Mughal Princess Qarakoz or Lady Black Eyes, the novel is more of the experience of exile and the series of changes that accompany such a phenomenon. This work of excellence was followed by *Joseph Anton* (2012), a memoir written under the pseudonym as used in the title. While in hiding following the period of the *fatwa*, Rushdie used the name for personal activity. The memoir provides us with vital information about the life of the novelist and also the background of various literary undertakings by him.

Next novel *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) is another significant addition to his illustrious career. Latest novel *The Golden House* (2017) recounts the story of a wealthy family from Rushdie's hometown Mumbai. Desperately trying to forget the 26/11 attack to reinvent in New York city, the family does have bitter experience about the political upheavals in recent US history. Documenting socio-political events like the rise of the ultra-conservative Tea Party, the Gamergate scandal, the novel makes an interesting reading.

Besides the novels, Rushdie also has written one collection of short stories, *East, West* (1994), and a documentary entitled *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* (1987). His numerous literary reviews and essays are included in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), and *Step Across this Line: Collected Non Fiction* (2002). His non-fiction works give us valuable insights into fiction writing and the various issues as embedded.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What type of family back up Rushdie enjoys during his childhood?

Q 2: How much was Rushdie influenced in his Rugby and Cambridge days?

Q 3: How would you locate *Midnight's Children* in contemporary Indian fiction writing?

Q 4: What is your approach to the accusation of blasphemy brought against Rushdie?

14.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* recounts the longer span of India's socio-historical and political developments ranging from the infamous Jallianwala Bagh Massacre till the lifting of the emergency in the late 1970s. This has been done introducing Saleem Sinai as narrator, who is born precisely on the stroke of midnight when India got independence from the British rule. Including himself, there are one thousand one children born at the historic moment, and interestingly they have respective talent showcasing the possibilities the new nation-state is capable of. There is a close bond between the children and the nation since both of them are newly created. Saleem is very much candid saying, "…I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country." His grandfather, Dr. Aadam Aziz is an interesting personality whose stay in Germany pursuing learning changes his outlook and finds it hard to adjust himself to native culture. After his return from Germany, he hardly concentrates on tradition-laden prayer as it prevails in society. In contrast to Dr. Aziz, the text engages the boatman Tai, who expresses disgust at foreign culture and influence. Indeed Tai is very much concerned with ethnic identity, and a separatist ideology always conditions his existence. He says, "Kashmiris are different…we are not like Indians, always making battles."

Dr. Aziz's approach to Naseem Ghani through a perforated sheet is a metaphor standing for presenting something in microcosm, not in whole. Despite his love, he never succeeds in seeing her face. It is through the parts that he forms an image of the whole. In the meantime, the Muslim League becomes powerful and the followers are hell bent on demanding a separate country. To this, Mian Abdullah opposes in the strongest terms. Unfortunately, his secular ambience is rejected and consequently killed with his right hand Nadir Khan being scarcely saved. Dr. Aziz is closely associated with them, and this has brought public history into contact with personal history. Further Nadir Khan's marriage with Dr. Aziz's second daughter, Mumtaz gives this relation a firm base. His eldest daughter, Alia and the youngest Emerald get engaged to Ahmed Sinai and Major Zukfiqar

respectively. Getting married, Alia has been christened as Amina Sinai, the rearing mother of Saleem Sinai. Lifafa Das' peepshow, a novel way of exhibiting small pictures shown through magnifying glasses, is a significant episode warranting a shrewd and observant eye to attain the details. Ahmed and Amina Sinai are intended to buy a house owed by a British by the name of William Methwold. The latter exhibits his capitalist attitude and wants to retain some of the features of the house. It relates to the clutch of the colonizers even after handing over the political reign. Though Ahmed Sinai is a successful businessman, he finds it hard to sustain the stature since his property has been confiscated going against the mandate of a secular society.

In course of time, Ahmed Sinai turns out white, and this shows the residues of colonial air or the hold of the Europeans in new forms. Including Saleem, there are one thousand and one children born between 12 to 1 a.m. on Aug. 15, 1947. However, all of them do not survive since malnutrition, disease and misfortune cost their life and as many as 420 died, and the rest 581 survived. Saleem becomes the central figure of all the midnight's children. Hence, the Midnight's Children Conference is formed, the prime agenda being co-ordination among the children. The conference does not last long as it soon disintegrates. As developments of national interest have bearing on private life, it may also turn out the other way round. Commander Sabarmati's murder of his wife and Homi Catrack ignites so much public ruckus that the entire nation involves in it. Recounting India's political and historical developments is an uncontested aspect to Saleem. However, he also becomes a part of Pakistan's history when General Zulfiqar summons him to attend the occasion meant for sending President Iskander Mirza to exile following Commander-in-Chief Ayub Khan's directives. As the narrative progresses, everything starts crumbling. For instance, the rage of Saleem's spinster aunt, Alia Aziz puts the condition of Pakistan in peril. Moreover, Amina's getting pregnant at the age of 42 or Ahmed Sinai's total failure at the business validates this state of affairs. This personal history finds its ramification in the disorder observed in the wake of the war with Pakistan in 1965. Unfortunately, the war with Pakistan cost the life of Saleem's family

members. Rushdie's gusto for satire is very much pronounced in the novel. For instance, his religious satire comes into effect when Ayooba Baloch, Shaheed, and Farooq, three young Pakistani soldiers, come under the exotic influence of goddess Kali in the cave of the Sundarbans.

Like Saleem's parents, his son does have the same condition, i.e. the mixed parentage. Though society knows Saleem and Parvati as parents, their son, Aadam Sinai is born out of the relationship between the latter and Shiva. Interestingly, he is born when Emergency is clamped upon India by Indira Gandhi following the impasse conditioned by the Janata Morcha as it opposes her political leadership. Once again, public event gets intertwined with the personal one. Speaking of his son's disease, Saleem observes, "…our private emergency was not unconnected with the larger, macrocosmic disease, under whose influence the sun had become as pallid and diseased as our son." Despite all sorts of misfortune and misconception, Saleem wants to stay connected to history or the past. When he loses the silver spittoon in an eviction drive, he laments the blur it would create on his connection to history. Ironically, Saleem's visit to the brothel is somehow assumed as an attempt at defying history and genuine identity since this is a place "without faces or names; here people have no memories, families or past…"



LET US KNOW

Rushdie has been a votary of metafiction, and this aspect, among host of others, brings him closer to postmodernist perspective his writings constantly warrant. The epical span of the novel and the multi-layered discourse bring into being polyphonic structures, and this phenomenon breaks down the essentialist and originary ideas usually assigned to various discourses. Instead of a chronological order of things and issues, there is a free-flowing, fluid and timeless patterns of history, nation etc. that Rushdie convincingly deals with. Saleem's narration is self-reflexive, self-conscious, at times paradoxical and critical. Hence, the novel is unanimously accepted as something about itself and about other

literature as well. Given the engagement of parody and intertexuality of history, which is an inseparable part of historiographic metafiction, *Midnight's Children* stands tall since the political, social and cultural domains of India have been presented in the mode of parody, as the novelist thinks it appropriate to do the same. Moreover, public history of the country is related to the personal one, which has made it subject to many versions of history. In fact, Rushdie's approach to history in its non-official parlance and conditioning is equally applicable to other issues as well. For instance, his views on homeland that he has left behind years back is unfailingly concerned with plural or multiple versions. In his *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism*, Rushdie talks about homeland in its imaginative or fictional rendering, and this turns out more real than a realistic portrayal.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Why are the life of Saleem and the rest of the midnight's children seen against the backdrop of history?

Q 6: How would you trace the rootedness and rootlessness in the personality of Dr. Aadam Aziz?

Q 7: How is the secular fabric conditioning the life of the Sinai family?

Q 8: Write a note on the Midnight's Children's Conference.

14.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF RUSHDIE

Rushdie is perhaps one of the most worked-out novelists drawing wide-ranging interest from critics as well as well-wishers. On the one hand, both his life and writing claim much recognition and accolade, while on the other, unparalleled criticism has been levied upon him, prime cause being the alleged blasphemy and approach to a sensitive issue like religion. His relentless contention against an essentialist, closed, official, monolithic, and originary rendering of various issues and subject matter makes his writing worth counting, which at times puts him into utter limbo as well. If his stature as a novelist is firmly established with *Midnight's Children,* it is *The Satanic*

Verses that engages him in the whole range of controversy, and the development is very unfortunate sine it undervalues some of the striking features his writing upholds. Still Rushdie occupies a position of a dignity that is simply astonishing. Given the epic grandeur of *Midnight's Children*, Robert Taubman talks about the rich amalgam of family history, fantasy, allegory, political satire, and, above all, a quest motif and self-examination most of the major characters would like to carry out to the utmost. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her edited work, *Rushdie's Midnight's Children: A Book of Readings* observes high of its postcolonial colouring that subverts the received versions of historiography, and a postmodernist thrust upon decentering and hybridity covers a considerable space in the narrative. As these trends have been much in vogue, Rushdie comes out relevant in terms of addressing them in an incredible manner. This has been given further edge with Rushdie harping upon metafiction as a preferred area in writing. Keith Wilson makes an in-depth study on this aspect and brings out many a good insight into his texts. Referring to *Midnight's Children*, Wilson observes that the novel is about itself, and there is an abundance of self-reflexive, self-conscious, and even paradoxical narrative enterprise. Engagement of parody and intertexuality of history characterize much of Rushdie's writing. Metafiction being a postmodernist phenomenon is well executed by Rushdie, which has been a point of major discussion among the critics.

Rushdie's rejection of public-private barriers, as also other barriers, is one of the preferred areas most of the critics have taken note of. The stance appears in opposition to the colonialist and other self-assuring ideologies as rampant in socio-political scene. Andrew Gaedtke, in his essay on "Halluci-nation: Mental Illness, Modernity, and Metaphoricity in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*", talks about the mixed space consisting of Saleem and the larger spectrum of nation. To quote: "Born at the precise hour of India's emergence as an independent nation, Saleem Sinai finds himself endowed with the ability to 'tune-in' to the thoughts of his fellow citizens. Saleem's mental reception extends to the borders of the young dominion- a condition that transforms his mind into a forum for a chaotic,

national conversation." This phenomenon brings into fore a new perspective to historiography undermining its official and formal rendition. Another vital area of Rushdie is the use of symbol and metaphor, the purpose being the exploration of some hidden issues he strives to bring to the limelight. In most of the writings on him and also his interviews, there is a constant reference to symbol and metaphor, and how they impact various issues being dealt with. However, a critic like Clare Barker cautions the readers of the tendency, and the way it may deter one's approach to the texts in respect of focusing the significant issues. Citing *Midnight's Children* and its readership, he says that "symbolic readings of *Midnight's Children* problematically sideline its keen interest in the material nature of embodied experience: analysis of diversity within the Indian body *politic* obscures Rushdie's explorations of the *human* body and the vast spectrum of abilities and disabilities found within a nation's citizenry."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What are the major issues in Rushdie's writing that most of critical observations engage?

Q 10: How is historiography viewed in *Midnight's Children* by the critics?



14.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that the Indian-origin writer Salman Rushdie has given a new orientation to Indian writing in English. His publication of *Midnight's Children* attains recognition worldwide getting the Booker Prize in 1981. Given the magnanimity of the novel, entire continent is thought of having a voice. This unit has introduced you to the interesting story of *Midnight's Children* in which Saleem Sinai, the narrator, is mysteriously born at the precise hour of India's independence, and the novelist makes a perfect blend of private and public life, while also providing a renewed interest in historiography. *Midnight's Children* is a wonderful novel

recounting the life of the Sinais or the Azizes in close relation to the socio-political and historical contexts. There is fine mixture of private and public life in good proportion. Introduction of major women characters is equally interesting. Amina Sinai, Mary Pereira, Parvati, Padma, among many others, encapsulate many a significant vital issue in the novel. While narrating the incidents, Saleem's constant address to Padma whether the narrative is worth counting sets up the dignity assigned to female characters in the novel. Rushdie has been one of the most worked-out novelists at the world stage. Vital issues like the postcolonial nation state, hybridity, historiographic metafiction, parody, metaphor, Indian body politic etc, have been well documented by most of the critics. Besides, the use of parody, intertexuality of history mingled with self-reflexive, self-conscious, and often critical narrative enterprise reiterate Rushdie's preference for metafiction in his writing.



14.7 FURTHER READING

1) Brennan, Timothy. (1989). *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation.* London: Macmillan,

2) Mukherjee, Meenakshi. (Ed). (2003). *Rushdie's Midnight's Children—A Book of Readings.* Delhi: Pencraft International.

3) Rao, M. Madhusudhana. (1990). "Quest for Identity: A Study of the Narrative in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children". The Literary Criterion*. Vol. 25, No. 4.

4) Walsh, William. (1995). "India and the Novel." Boris Ford (Ed) *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Orwell to Naipaul.* Vol. 8, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Born to a Muslim family of Kashmiri descent, Rushdie enjoys a liberal back up during his childhood… …unlike most of the orthodox or dogmatic mind set of his family members, his family members were receptive… …his father, apart from being a successful businessman, was a Cambridge-educated personality… …mother, Negin also showcased a tendency to adapt whatever good comes into effect.

Ans to Q 2: Rushdie was largely influenced during his Rugby and Cambridge days… …having done schooling at home town at the initial stage, he quenches his thirst for knowledge at the famous Rugby School… …faced racism… …much of his political commentary sets strong dissent against this inhuman development… …his stay at the King's College, Cambridge dispels the dark episode of racism and he enjoyed pleasant moment pursuing higher learning… …association with E. M. Forster went a long way in directing his pursuit of learning… …his interest in history is coupled with distinctive approach that undermines the conventional mode of thinking.

Ans to Q 3: *Midnight's Children* enjoys a distinctive position in Indian Writing in English… …in addition to the novel approach to subject matter, his use of the English language keeping open to the sentiment and mood of the people of India imparts a new dignity… …eminent writer, Anita Desai speaks very high of Rushdie's novelty of treatment… …MC engages a perfect amalgam of history, myth, folk culture, magic realism, politics etc, in an enviable manner.

Ans to Q 4: With *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie enters the whole gamut of controversy… … on Feb 14, 1989 *fatwa* was imposed upon him by the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran… …the charge being his intentional move against the Islam… …it was called blasphemy… …largely

political than critical… …in academics, the allegation flares up much discussion… …Gauri Viswanathan observes that "it (blasphemy) has usefulness in providing an index to the uneven development of world societies, as well as establishing the status of their laws in guaranteeing fundamental liberties of speech and the degree of tolerance that their civil societies are inclined to show."

Ans to Q 5: In his Cambridge days, history was his chosen area of study… …in his view, history is not a dead past… …however, it is not the unadulterated form of history that he strives to focus… …rather in its manipulated, fragmented, coloured, conditioned parlance… …showing Saleem and the rest one thousand children against the backdrop of history, the novel undermines the strict public-private barriers and the official version of historiography… …moreover, selection of the tumultuous phase of Indian history in the 20th century from the onset of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre till the later part of the Emergency clamped by Indira Gandhi is significant… …the Nehruvian concept of the nation-state and its history is seen with a sceptical eye…

Ans to Q 6: The ideas of rootedness and rootlessness are very significant in the novel… …if the boatman Tai is uncompromisingly rooted in his *Kashmiriyat*, Dr. Aziz inherits both the developments… …his foreign education finds it hard to adjust to the native tradition… …on the other, he is not completely free of the customs and code of belief… …his dislike for Nadir Khan and second daughter Mumtaz for not having children after two years of marriage establishes this point… …the dualism relates to the conditions people mostly experience in present context when we talk about diaspora or trans-national movements across the globe.

Ans to Q 7: Secular fabric of life impacts the Sinai family to a greater deal… …upholding this ideal is significant, especially in view of intolerance and communal violence impacting society… …Amina Sinai's protection to Lifafa Das when the latter falls victim to the rage of the Muslims at Chandni Chowk refers to her secular bent of mind… … though a minor, Saleem also sustains the ideal that finds the

opposite of its postulation in Shiva… …in contrast to Saleem, Shiva follows discriminatory practices and divisive policies.

Ans to Q 8: The Midnight's Children Conference is a platform of all the children born on the stroke of midnight when India got independence from the British colonial rule… …Saleem bears the responsibility to maintain correlation among the children who are gifted one way or the other… …his absolute control is not supported by his anti-thesis Shiva… …he says to Saleem, "you can't run the Conference; without me, they won't even be able to listen to you!"… …ironically, the conference dies out in the succeeding phase… …the impossibility of binding people into a common platform is well documented here…

Ans to Q 9: It is widely known that Rushdie is one of the most worked-out novelists… …every aspect of his writing engages much discussion among the critics… …of many a good issue, history, politics, representation of metropolis, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, hybridity, metafiction, parody, subaltern dynamics, symbol, metaphor etc. have been approached in a greater degree… …focusing major issues by the critics makes his writing more interesting… …indeed the critics' concern for various aspects as represented relates how far-reaching influence he has exerted upon contemporary thinking.

Ans to Q 10: Undeniably, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* engages historiography as a preferred area… …historiography not in its official rendition, but its non-official, subjective and constructed formats… …dealing with or recounting history from the point of view of a child, someone not coming into the mainstream recorder of history, the novel also brings into limelight the taste of subaltern discourses of history… …blurring the personal-public barriers in history writing involves the postmodernist conditioning as well.



14.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1. How does Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* initiate a new trend in Indian writing in English? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 2. Would you say that Rushdie's personal life affected his writing to a great extent? How far is it applicable to a writer claiming himself from a postmodernist viewpoint?

Q 3. How is history represented in *Midnight's Children*? What kind of similarity do you notice between history and fiction? Discuss.

Q 4. Given the accomplishment of nation and nationality, would you consider *Midnight's Children* as an allegory of nation? Give a justified answer.

Q 5. How do secular and religious ideas affect the characters in the novel? What kind of society is envisioned in the novel?

Q 6. What is your approach to the ideas of rootedness and rootlessness as presented in the novel? What does Rushdie want to highlight in the postmodernist context? Discuss in detail.

Q 7. Write a note on the gender issues as raised in the novel. How are they relevant to Rushdie's macro narratives?

Q 8. What are the major critical practices bestowed on Rushdie? Examine their prime concerns relating to his writing?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 15: SALMAN RUSHDIE: *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Reading the novel *Midnight's Children*

15.3.1 Major Themes

15.3.2 Rushdie's Art of Characterisation

15.3.3 Rushdie's Narrative Style

15.4 Let Us Sum Up

15.5 Further Reading

15.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

15.7 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- read the novel in terms of its various important aspects
- discuss the important themes of the novel
- explain Rushdie's mastery over the art of characterisation
- describe Rushdie's narrative style used in the novel
- make an assessment of Rushdie as an important English language author through your reading of the novel *Midnight's Children.*

15.2 INTRODUCTION

There is no denying the fact that Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has curved a niche on the world literary scene that is unprecedented on many fronts. Be it the choice of subject matter or the distinctive narrative style or both, what comes up is the sheer mastery he has materialised, and that is so in an enviable manner. Though the novel has heralded a new dawn in Indian English fiction, it is not simply bounded to the confines of the said category; rather it extends the horizon and turns out an exemplary rendition

in respect of mapping the world fiction as well. The greatness of the novel is not simply the matter of the Booker Prize; in reality, the novel touch Rushdie has imparted, especially to the use of a global language in engaging the mood and sentiment of the newly formed Indian nation state is worth remembering. Given such a magnitude the novel has scaled, it is imperative that meticulous reading is given the topmost priority. While reading, it comes to the purview that the text engages a number of chapters, in total thirty (30), each of which dealing with the tumultuous history and politics of India in close connection with individuals, and the way they are influenced by developments of public interest and vice versa. This has been made more interesting with the fabric of magic realism the novelist finds himself at a comfort zone. Like other literary giants in this category including Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Gunter Grass, Rushdie also makes use of, significantly as one of the postcolonial devices. In addition, he is very much successful in capitalizing the scope offered under the belt of magic realism. This unit shall help you to discuss the novel *Midnight's Children* in terms of the various important aspects.

15.3 READING THE NOVEL *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

It is widely known that Rushdie presents a panoramic view of the Indian sub-continent with myriad of political, historical, social, and cultural milieus in *Midnight's Children*. Taking such a magnanimous effort into account, he adopts the technique of a family saga, and through the means of relating their stories and narratives, the larger spectra of issues of public concern are noticeably referred to. This novel technique caters to the dual taste of the reading public, besides facilitating ideas of historiography, especially in the postcolonial and postmodernist parlance. The shrewd mix up of family and the nation seems to be a challenge to the official and originary trends of representing things and issues. The essentialist and exclusive bent of representation is something Rushdie discards in the novel, and both the family and the nation have been looked upon from this perspective. The three generations of the Sinai family and a disintegrated, fragmented and coloured nation constitute the very gist in the narrative.

Though one way or the other, the novel appears to have a close bond with the nation, and such a conditioning relates to the controversial Fredric Jameson's generalised observation regarding all "third world" texts as *national allegories*. It is known that Jameson's is the stance that has flared up much dissent among the academics, perhaps most powerfully with Ijaz Ahmad. For him, Jameson's too simplistic a comment brackets all "third world" texts as national allegories, and it relates to the shallow knowledge he is in possession of. Indeed Jameson's observation is based on writing in English, completely missing the output in the vernaculars. However, setting aside the debate centering the major thrust on national allegories, we cannot rule out the presence of the nation in the text, albeit in a different colouring. It is not the Nehruvian idea of the nation as a homogenous and unitary entity; rather as a heterogeneous and constantly shifting body in which sticking to a distinct, dominant, and singular ideology is a misnomer.

The tumultuous history of India in the 20th century is a major area of interest Rushdie executes in the novel. Dealing with history in one's literary pursuit is not new; it goes far back. What is new with Rushdie is the recounting of history with the lens of a person born mysteriously at the stroke of midnight when India inks up a new chapter in her long and arduous run. As such official and recorded history that gained due momentum in the colonial phase is not taken into count, and the self-reflexive nature of historiography introduced into the novel orients it towards the level of metafiction. This postmodernist device goes a long way in situating Rushdie in the present context. The metafictional fabric gets further vent in the distinctive usage of narrative, and some other vital developments like hybridity. The contradictory and often paradoxical narrative strategies of Saleem Sinai are effective measures in realizing metafictional colouring in an enviable manner. Despite Saleem's usual self-assuring and self-justifying position, keeping constant company with Padma and asking her to look into the narrative is contradictory in nature. In addition to this, a kind of polyphonic structure characterizes the novel to a great extent. Though Saleem is the narrator and the narrative structure depends largely upon his narrativising acumen, other characters having distinctive voices are not

sidelined. Instead, they have their equal say, which impairs the dominant authorial position. In this context, French poststructuralist critic Roland Barthes' a bit radical view about the "death of the author" may be referred to. Indeed Rushdie has taken up so many issues of public concern that the self-assuring tendency of being an author bears the least attention, and most often getting sidelined.

It is true that Rushdie's writing inherits the tag of postcolonial condition, and he looks upon this aspect, not in a conventional manner or what others usually take for granted. Interestingly, the contradictory nature of postcolonial condition is something that he represents in his writing. As in *Midnight's Children*, the romantic concept of the nation state in postcolonial context is made fun of since everything does not turn out good as it is expected. When stark criticism is laid upon the colonial juggernaut particularly in terms of all out exploitation of the native inhabitants, it is assumed that the breakdown of colonial machinery will address the untoward developments going on under the pall of colonialism. This messianic assumption bears a wry face once the colonial rule is over. In fact, conditions remain more or less the same. It is an irony that Saleem's towering presence also experiences insecurity since he is constantly under fear that the anti-national forces will "trample" him at any moment. Moreover, the cracks and fissures in his body point out the lacuna the country is passing through. This aspect is a blur on the romantic idea of a postcolonial nation state. If postcolonialism envisages uniformity and equality that were improbable under the pall of colonialism, ground reality speaks the other way round. In postcolonial nation state, many disturbing developments, particularly communal tensions, condition the life and society. Lifafa Das' victimization to the rage of the Muslims at Chandni-Chowk or losing Ahmad Sinai's business property at the hands of the Hindu activists presents the picture a postcolonial nation state sustains. However, this is a part of the larger structure, which speaks of a different picture too. Democratic and secular aspects meant for involving people at equal fronts are to be noticed in the family set up of Dr. Aadam Aziz, and his daughter Amina Sinai is seen to have nurtured in a greater degree. Even in the household of Ahmad Sinai,

one may see the close bond among the followers of various religious sects.

It is transparent that the novel presents the concept of nation, but not in its Nehruvian parlance as a unitary and an essentialist conditioning. Instead, it presents the nation as a fragmented, coloured and conditioned entity. This postulation is pertinent in trans-national and global context in which sticking to the monolithic idea of a nation is not logical. In addition, enunciation of major themes, discussed in the designated section, relates the great variety of taste the novel evokes. As such, themes like history, memory, rootedness/rootlessness, secularism, body politic, private/public barriers, hybridity etc. come to the purview, and dealing with the same make the novel of count and recognition. Taking into account the major themes as introduced into the novel, what is intended is the great variety of tastes Rushdie has designed to impart. Given his preference for history, the novel engages the long history of India strikingly ranging from the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre until the critical phase of the Emergency. In fact, history is conjoined with political developments, and this has made the theme more interesting. Usually recounting of events and actions is primarily based on official records and other forms of sources that are validated in formal standpoints. In opposition to this, Rushdie makes dexterous use of memory in the narrative, which bears the edge of a postcolonial stance, something he uncompromisingly stands for. In the pretext of this, other issues of importance also come to our view, notably the sense of being rooted at a period when everything is in flux. Of course, socio-cultural aspects go a long way in conditioning one's sense of being rooted and/or uprooted. The novel engages this aspect in the personalities of Dr. Aziz, boatman Tai, and a few others. Another significant area the unit discusses is the body politic, something that speaks a lot, albeit the least attention given in most of the associated critical discourses. As it is seen that having a unique and originary cultural body is simply unthinkable in this global world, Rushdie presents hybridity as a relevant concept to accomplish such a development. The novel involves a number of characters and situations in which a rich mix up of different factors are at play. Interestingly, hybridity does not appear as an obstacle; rather a part of life that goes all along. Like the role played out by

memory in postcolonial narrative, hybridity also relates a postcolonial condition ruling out the essentializing back up of the colonial state of affairs.

Apart from the major issues and their faithful adaptation in view of the existing trends and developments worldwide, Rushdie also scales enviable mastery over the art of characterization. Almost all the characters are aptly interwoven, and each one of them comes to the help of the narrative one way or the other. They are made more interesting because of their engagement in both private and public affairs that are of substantial resonance. Birth of the children at midnight is made concomitant with that of India when the country is going to ink up a new chapter after the end of the British colonial rule. To recount this, Saleem is given the responsibility, also power, of narrating the major events from his perspective. Even all the midnight children are presented as being in possession of distinctive capacities, which also relates the prospects the newborn nation is assumed to have in the following decades. Dr. Aadam Aziz's involvement in the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, of course in its aftermath, adds a significant dimension to the art of characterization, provided it establishes crossing individual bounds and getting entangled to the larger concern of the nation. At times it is supposed that Rushdie has given too much space to the public life of the individuals, and they are found missing some vital aspects.

However, the observation is partially true since the characters may not be seen having no individual life. In reality, they have distinctive personal life, and represented myriad of elemental issues pertaining to it. Apart from all this, the novel also engages significant narrative style, an aspect that has given Rushdie the status of an immaculate artist. Though Saleem Sinai executes the role of a first person narrator relating the events and action both of private and public interest, it is interesting to see multiple voices in the narrative, thus sidelining the dominant authorial voice that is usually noticed in most of the novels. As the narrative hardly follows linearity in recounting events, there is a greater scope in treating myriad of jumbled issues and incidents that are found relevant to the major thrust in the novel. This makes the narrative a patchwork reiterating Rushdie's larger concerns of issues brewing up in the postcolonial and postmodernist contexts. In

view of his life long campaign for a plural and multicultural society combined with the recurring concepts of hybridity and adulteration, an inclusive nature of the narrative as introduced into the novel turns out handy in their realisation. This relates the meticulous sense of artefact Rushdie always stands in favour of in his literary pursuits.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does the idea of nation impact *Midnight's Children*?

Q 2: What type of historiography do you notice while reading the novel?

Q 3: Discuss Rushdie's treatment of a postcolonial nation state in the light of the novel.

15.3.1 Major Themes

The novel presents a number of vital themes, and taking a look at all this, one may experience the great variety Rushdie has introduced into the novel. Indeed the major themes bring out a wide range of issues to the fore that are of immense public value in present context. In order to come into terms with the text, studying the major themes is of utmost importance. Let us discuss the themes as follows.

History/Politics:

In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, of all the major themes, that of history and politics takes upon wider circulation and considerable weightage. As Rushdie is very much open to the developments in the areas, which he deals with in many essays included in *Imaginary Homelands*, and *Step Across this Line*, the Booker Prize winning novel is no exception to it. The tumultuous historical and political developments in the 20th century constitute a major space in the novel. Right from the second decade of the 20th century until the seventh, India passed through major hurdles,

especially in political and historical domains. Be it the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre or the traumatic experience of the Partition or the lethal Emergency, the people of India did not have the usual course of life. Almost every phase of life was immensely impacted, and this is what Rushdie tries to encapsulate in the novel. The national life is seen through the lens of that of an individual and vice versa. This ingenuity establishes Rushdie's status as someone who rejects official representation of historical and political records outright. Involvement of the mysteriously born midnight's children and the Azizes or the Sinais in the events of national interest points out the nexus between individuals and developments of public interest.

Hybridity:

Sustaining a single, dominant identity in the postcolonial context is exquisitely impossible. Formation of one's identity, also a given culture, relates to a number of factors and sources; all of which have their voices pronounced. This phenomenon results in the emergence of the concept of hybridity, and recent literary and cultural discourses harp heavily upon the idea. In *Midnight's Children*, hybridity plays an important role, and this establishes the text's association with the postcolonial, also postmodernist conditioning. Narrator-protagonist Saleem Sinai is a hybrid personality whose parentage is of many people. Though he is reared up by Ahmed Sinai and Amina Sinai, his biological parents are William Methwold and Vanita. Besides, he finds people like Nadir Khan, Wee Willie Winkie, General Zulfiqar as father figures and Mary Pereira and Pia Azia as mother figures. William Methwold's estate is a rich conglomeration of people having different religious, cultural, and economic baggage. Metropolitan life of Bombay, setting of the novel, also presents hybridized cultural and social ambience. Apart from all this, hybridity may also be located in the use of language. Instead of the use of a particular language, there is a mix up of various languages under one belt.

Rootedness/Rootlessness:

Most of the characters bear the sense of being rooted, which assumes greater degree when placed along the idea of rootlessness. In present context, being rooted in one's native culture is not so easier a phenomenon. The global and trans-national positioning of people or their diasporic experience does not allow them to remain fixed or rooted in a specific location. Dr. Aadam Aziz's exposure to European learning, particularly that of Heidelberg finds him lacking in adjustment to his native way of life and society. On the other hand, boatman Tai is very much rooted in his native culture and identity. He likes to carry out the cherished idea of *Kashmiriyat* all through life. Even the children of midnight including Saleem have the sense of being rooted in the newly born nation. Ironically, they experience rootlessness remarkably in the vortex of anti-national developments like language specific state borders and conflict centering this.

Allegory:

Allegory is one of the significant themes, which has given an added weightage to the novel. As this distinctive device is designed to mean one thing in the form of telling or showing the other, the novel makes maximum use of it. Given the fictional quality in *Midnight's Children*, the life history of the Aziz family or the Sinai family, among many others, is recounted. However, the prime intention in the novel is not to deal with personal life in its own sake. In reality, it stands in conformity to the larger concerns of the nation—its history, politics, religion etc. Whatever is told or/and shown in personal life, it bears every resonance of public life, and vice versa. The allegorical dimension dries out strict barriers between public and private life, as in other areas. This postulation is given further vent in the form of body politic the novel engages in. Saleem's bodily fissures and scars or his impotence may be seen echoing the lacuna and points of disturbances the country is experiencing. Ahmed Sinai's

skin going complete white refers to the continuing presence of the British machinery even after handing over the charge to the people of India.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4. What message does Rushdie circulate through the treatment of history and politics in the novel?

Q 5. Discuss hybridity as a postcolonial device.

Q 6. What contradiction do you notice in postcolonial conditioning?

15.3.2 Rushdie's Art of Characterisation

Rushdie is an immaculate artist showing greater mastery over the art of characterisation. Almost all his fiction writing encapsulates major space in this regard, and it goes a long way in furthering the narrative. Indeed Rushdie's characterization is not simply ornamentation; rather it helps gain the objective of the major issues raised in the novel. As the issues are many and varied, characterization also takes up stance in consonant with them. While reading the novel, Rushdie's main thrust is to present the 20th century India keeping in view the major historical, political, and cultural developments. Looking India at the macro level mostly in the postcolonial and postmodernist contexts warrants a kind of characterization that needs to be conducive and hence often complex too. In order to accomplish this, Rushdie presents a series of characters from various background and status. All this had not been possible unless Saleem Sinai would have been given the space of being the narrator-protagonist. Being one of the one thousand and one children born mysteriously at the stroke of midnight, Saleem's characterisation is very much important since he has the task of narrating both personal and public courses of action. The larger spectrum of concerns in Saleem has been an established reality. He says, in fact self-assuringly, "…I am the sum total of everything

that went before me… to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world." Too much obsession with public life is often criticized to have cost Saleem's personal life, and recounting the latter is said to be peripheral in comparison to the former. This is partially true since his personal life cannot be taken as of the least postulation. Be it his relation to Padma or weakness for Jamila Singer or genuine feeling for the parents, Saleem's is a life of count. What he tries to maintain is some sort of balance between public and private life, and he succeeds in this regard. Of course, he comes out handy in bringing forth metafictional acumen in the novel. Though touching upon concerns for various issues is the gist of his narrative, turning reflexive at times brings out the element in a greater degree.

One of the major thrusts Rushdie has given to his novels is the exposure of the East to the West and the resulting clash between the distinctive cultural bodies. In *Midnight's Children*, Dr. Aadam Aziz is shown to have exposed to Western learning, particularly the teachings of Heidelberg, which problematizes his stance towards native culture. The confrontation between traditional and foreign values makes Aziz an interesting personality. However, he proceeds as usual, and this relates to positive acceptance of everything that comes under way. His receptive frame of mind appears more relevant, especially in diasporic and trans-national contexts. In addition, what assumes the utmost interest in Aziz's characterisation is the conditioning of secular ambience Rushdie vociferously opts for in his writing. This noble principle is so firmly established that his daughters particularly Amina Sinai inherit it in succeeding life as well. Amina Sinai's shelter to Lifafa Das at Chandni Chowk points out her secular fabric of mind. This secular aspect also conditions the household of Ahmed Sinai, for which his character becomes more striking. Besides a successful businessman, Ahmed Sinai showcases a liberal outlook and also a secular mindset. Keeping Mary Pereira, a Christian, at his household is a pointer towards this set of values. Though a maid, Mary Pereira appears as a mother

figure to Saleem in the novel. This helps establish the concept of multiple parents to the narrator-protagonist, which is relevant in the postcolonial and postmodernist conditioning.

If Aadam Aziz, Amina Sinai, Ahmed Sinai do maintain secular ambience, Shiva, another midnight's child, is just the opposite. He is the anti-thesis to Saleem as well. It is true that Saleem exhibits some kind of democratic ethos in his manners and mindset. This is what he showcases in his approach to the Midnight's Children Conference, but it is looked at with scepticism by Shiva. Ironically, though a mismatch to Saleem, Shiva biologically fathers Aadam Sinai, Saleem's son. Like Saleem, Padma is also a dominant presence in the novel. Indeed her importance is of great consideration, and she always stands as mentor to Saleem. Though Saleem is very much confident as a narrator, he needs support and co-operation, given the grand design of representing the nation and family life he takes for granted. Moreover, to address any trace of doubt, and also to impart some objectivity to the narrative, Saleem's constant company of Padma is well justified. As such, her importance can never be ruled out in the novel. In characterisation, the selections of mythological names like Shiva, Parvati etc, give a new weightage and a kind of Indian colouring. However, the personalities are not treated as they are usually noticed in the tales and romances. They are portrayed with the fabric of satire and irony, which seems to be an innovation on the part of the novelist.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How do you perceive characterisation in the novel?

Q 8: What is your opinion about characterisation and the various issues they stand for?

15.3.3 Rushdie's Narrative Style

Rushdie enjoys the added gift of a unique style and narrative technique successfully represented in his writing. After the instant success of *Midnight's Children*, like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the literary world acknowledges Rushdie as someone in possession of great sense of artistry and unparalleled imaginative grandeur. Indeed Rushdie's distinct narrative style appears in close connection with the larger designs he engages in his writing. Hence, the content or basic focus in subject matter is made more palpable with the excellence in the narrative style. As in *Midnight's Children*, the magic realist mode of narration is not a mere embellishment; rather it is concomitant with the allegorical representation of India involving the major decades of the 20th century. Well thought-out mixing up of magic realism, fantasy, history, myth in combination with personal life circle gives the novel a dignified position in respect of narrative excellence. Given such an amalgam of techniques, the novel is sometimes called a "non-fiction novel" uncompromisingly concerned with political allegory. Considering the wide range of issues and their execution through a great variety of narrative techniques, the fictional quality of the text often comes under scanner, and the critics tend more towards the non-fictional dimension.

In postcolonial parlance too, the rich narrative strategies used in the novel turn out of great count. To facilitate his postcolonial position, Rushdie presents the fictionality of history, in fact in an enviable manner. The history of India ranging from the Jallianwala Bagh massacre till Indira Gandhi's notorious feat of Emergency is what Rushdie takes up in the novel. However, recounting this long and critical history is not pursued from an official and essentialist standpoint. It is done through concerned individuals, and their personal life history is intended to showcase that of the country. This novel technique undermines the colonial and official modes of history writing. Including Saleem as protagonist-narrator, three

generations of the Sinai family are adopted to record public history. Moreover, so many voices make their presence felt, and this costs the dominant and authorial voice in the narrative.

The novel has a gratuitous mix of English, Hindi, and Urdu words. To Rushdie, this is an instance of "chutnification", and the metaphor attains due recognition in the postcolonial and postmodernist contexts. However, the over-use of this technique does not go scot free in the field of criticism. There are a few critics who call this an example of "pidgin English" having no trace of moderation and refinement. However, the observation does not speak of the entire picture. Most often, the rich mixture of words from various languages is categorized as "innovative" and "decolonizing" as well. The impossibility of adhering to a single, dominant, and exclusive language-culture warrants the extension of language boundaries, and this is what is done in the use of various languages. Such a use validates a condition that is an offshoot of the trans-national phenomenon in the global context. All this comes into effect with Saleem as a narrator who is highly self-conscious, coy, strident, subtle, aggressive, and fatalistic. Having a superhuman vision and an ability to hear unspoken words, Saleem also becomes doubtful in his narrative. The fabric of doubt relates to the rejection of absolutism, and this is somehow done in the novel.

Saleem's trace of doubt is sought to be reduced by making entreats to Padma, who stands by him all through. However, Padma does not always remain at the receiving point. Sometimes she plays tricks and it raises the element of doubt in Saleem. When Padma is asked whether it is right time for Saleem to narrate the personal account of their life, she appears to have taken it in a light-hearted manner. She says, "To me it's a crazy way of telling your life story if you can't even get to where your father met your mother." Indeed Padma symbolizes the role of a mentor in Saleem's narrative, and he gets some sort of moral support from her despite the lighter touch she imparts to the otherwise serious narrative designs.

However, Saleem's dependence upon Padma in regard to continuing the narrative is just one half of truth since her desire to get a legitimized status in the narrative of Saleem is the other half of their narrative co-ordination. Saleem says, "My dung-lotus… has seemingly succumbed to a desire for legitimacy… in short, although she has not said a word on the subject, she is waiting for me to make an honest woman of her." Another interesting aspect to the narrative is that there are a few passages marked with not having full-stops. They are too long to provide us the required details. This is intended to show haste and confusion in the narrator-protagonist, and the state of being is not simply that of Saleem, in fact it represents all of people trapped into the present day world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9. How does the magic realist mode of narration help Rushdie achieve allegorical dimension in the novel?

Q 10. What kind of metafictional fervour do you notice in the narrator's position?

Q 11. What is your opinion about Padma in the cause of the narrative?



15.4 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, it may be conveniently assumed that Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a great literary undertaking. In addition to giving Indian writing in English a dominant status, the novel appears to have mapped world literature at one go. Distinctive use of issues and themes in close connection to their treatment is what strikes the most. As the turbulent phase in Indian history and politics is one of the chosen aspects, Rushdie adopts the magic realist mode of narration taking Saleem Sinai as narrator-protagonist. Mysteriously born at midnight when India gained independence, Saleem along with the

rest of the midnight's children becomes entangled to the native land of their origin. However, the land or the nation is not presented in official and formal dimension. It is presented as being a fractured, disintegrated and conditioned entity. The postcolonial conditioning of the nation state is what the novel re-looks to point out whether the romantic ideals of the said state could be realised. Looking at the course of events, the answer to such an issue is not positive since language divide or other forms of essentialist machinery causes the failure of this state of being. The reflexive, contradictory, and often paradoxical narrative strategies bring out the metafictional acumen at the earliest.



15.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bixby, Patick. (2001). "Writing back to the Postcolonial Rushdie and the Global Aesthetic". *The Atlantic Review*. Vol. 2, No. 4, October-December.

2) Fletcher, M.D. (Ed). (1994). *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

3) Wilson, Keith. (1984). "*Midnight's Children* and Reader Responsibility". *Critical Quarterly*: 26(3).

4) Yacoubi, Youssef. (2005). "Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie's: Resisting the Ambivalence of postcolonial theory". *Alif*, No. 25.



15.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Nation or concept of the nation has always been one of the preferred areas of study among the Indian English writers… …it was perhaps the British colonial rule that had conditioned a strong sense of the nation… …even after the official and political declaration of

independence, the strong dimension of the nation does not dry out… …as in *Midnight's Children*, nation is a significant aspect… ...but the treatment is not that of an essentialist and formal stance… …nation is shown in her fragmented, constructed, discontinued parlance.

Ans to Q 2: History has been a subject of choice for Rushdie… …in his Cambridge days; he got a solid platform to quench the thirst for history… …in *Midnight's Children*, one may easily find out history as a dominant part in the narrative… …like nation, history is also seen not in an official colouring… …a revisionist reading of history characterizes the novel… … the turbulent phase of Indian history has been re-written or re-looked from the view point of the protagonist Saleem Sinai… …hence the novel takes the form of writing down history or what we call historiography.

Ans to Q 3: Rushdie's works are categorized as faithful documents of postcolonialism… …various issues and concepts are raised with a view to relating their dignity and noble postulation… …a challenging mind set finds its way into the dealing with such matters… … in *Midnight's Children*, the idea of a postcolonial nation state is not represented in its high romantic percolation… …contradictory nature of this state of affairs or development is what the novelist presents… …the novel shows how the rise of fundamentalism and fanaticism cost the fabric of a postcolonial nation state.

Ans to Q 4: Through the treatment of history and politics, Rushdie points out how significant they are in impacting life and society… …but they are to be approached from personal viewpoints… …this technique rules out the official recording of the said areas… … voice of the subalterns is missing from such an approach… …*Midnight's Children* gives voice to the multitudes in recounting many issues including history and politics.

Ans to Q 5: Undoubtedly, hybridity is a postcolonial device… …as postcolonialism strives to include various things and issues that are sidelined in the run of colonialism, hybridity also carries out an inclusive machinery… …so many people, so many cultural bodies, sources,

factors have their say in hybridity… …hence a kind of liberating principle characterizes Hybridity.

Ans to Q 6: Though a votary of postcolonialism, Rushdie carries sceptical outlook… …it is generally assumed that postcolonial conditioning will rule out the darker phase of colonial manipulation… …this is better said than done… …there are certain developments within the postcolonial conditioning that cost the romantic expectations of postcolonialism… …Saleem Sinai's outsidedness is an offshoot of the contradictory nature of postcolonial conditioning.

Ans to Q 7: Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* introduces characterization as an important segment… …irony, satire, political and historical developments have their imprints on the art of characterization… …it is systematically poised between private and public concerns… … though often criticized for having upper hand of the public domain, this does not speak of the entire truth… …indeed both the concerns have their virtually equal say in characterization.

Ans to Q 8: Characterization is not simply ornamentation… …not embellishment… …it is not done for its own sake… …instead it stands for larger issues… …it is done in accordance with the demand of the issues… …it is for this that characterization is done with a purpose at hand… …if history, politics, culture and other forms of forces are at play, it warrants in-depth skill of characterization… …moreover, magic realist mode proves effective in characterization in the novel.

Ans to Q 9: In *Midnight's Children*, the magic realist mode of narration goes a long way in achieving allegorical dimension… …as the mirror is held "at a slight angle to reality" in the mode, it opens up immense possibility of dealing with a great variety of subject matter… …many issues at one go… …the political and religious allegory the novel intends to unfold is largely possible through the means of magic realism… …as the technique assumes some kind of interdisciplinary principle, it facilitates entry of great variety of vital aspects.

Ans to Q 10: Metafiction has been one of the much preferred sides to the writings of Rushdie… …thrust upon the aspect brings Rushdie closer

to postmodernist condition… …its realisation prominently comes into being in the narrative strategies… …Saleem Sinai's narration is self-reflexive, contradictory; often paradoxical too… …hence, the narrative is about itself than something else… …this particular conditioning in the narrative is given further vent with the inclusion of Padma… …the paradoxical or contradictory nature of the narrative or the narrator's position is made more perceptible in the relationship between Saleem and Padma.

Ans to Q 11: Padma has always been a mentor of Saleem in the latter's narrative position… …it is true that Saleem is very much confident at the power of narrating both personal and public history… …this does not remain in absolute position… …element of doubt characterizes his narrative… …hence the presence of Padma turns out more relevant… …Padma's act of listening to the narrative of Saleem imparts moral boost that helps him scale further advancement… …often she also gives lighter touch to the otherwise serious narrative trajectory.



15.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a note on the appropriateness of the title in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children.*

Q 2: How does the concept of a postcolonial nation state impact Rushdie's writing? What is its irony he talks about in *Midnight's Children*?

Q 3: How does hybridity as a postcolonial device influence Rushdie? Discuss in detail with special reference to *Midnight's Children*.

Q 4: Do you find residues of colonialism despite India's political freedom announced at the stroke of midnight? Discuss with reference to Rushdie's *Midnight's Children.*

Q 5: How does native-foreign paradigm work in the novel? Elucidate in light of Rushdie's personal life.

Q 6: Write a comprehensive note on Rushdie's art of characterisation in

the novel. How does characterisation help to sustain the major gist in the novel? Give a reasoned answer.

Q 7: What does Rushdie attempt to achieve in the narrative? How much credibility do you notice in Saleem Sinai's narration?

Q 8: Write short notes on the following:

a. Adam Aziz

b. Saleem Sinai

c. Hybridity

d. Rootedness/Rootlessness

*** ***** ***



REFERENCES (FOR ALL UNITS)

- Achebe, Chinua. (1988). *Hopes and Impediments*. London: Heinemann.
- Attridge, Derek. (Ed.). (2004). *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. (2nd edn), Cambridge UP.
- Becket, Fiona. (2011). "D. H. Lawrence". In Shaffer, Brian W. edited *Encycloepdia of 20th Century Fiction. Twentieth Century British and Irish Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Company.
- Bloom, Harold. (Ed.). (1987). *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. New York: Chelsea House.
- Bloom, Harold. (Ed.). (2007). *Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer.* New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Bloom, Harold. (Ed.). (2007). *Heart of Darkness.* New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Brian W. Shaffer. (Ed.). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.
- Butler, Lance St. John. (1980). *D. H. Lawrence: 'Sons and Lovers'*, Houlow, Essen: Longman & Beimt: York Press.
- Beja, M. (1970). *Virginia Woolf To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*. Casebook Series, Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Bloom, Harold. (Ed.) (1988). *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Chelsea House.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. (1989). *The Modern World.* New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers.
- Bixby, Patick. (2001). "Writing back to the Postcolonial Rushdie and the Global Aesthetic". *The Atlantic Review*. Vol. 2, No. 4, October-December.
- Brennan, Timothy. (1989). *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation.* London: Macmillan,

- Butter, Michael. “Historiographic Metafiction” & Rousselot, Elodie. “Historical Fiction” in Shaffer, Brian W. (2001). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Celly, Ashok. (Ed.). (2006). *D.H. Lawrence, ‘Sons and Lovers’*. Delhi: Worldview Publications.
- Clarke, Colin. (Ed.). (1969). *D.H. Lawrence*: *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* : A casebook London : Macmillan.
- Daugherty, B.R. & M. B. Pringle.(2001). *Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s To the Lighthouse*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Davies, S. (1989). *Virginia Woolf: To The Lighthouse.* (Penguin Critical Studies) London: Penguin Books.
- Deane, Seamus. (Ed.). (1992). *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Penguin Books.
- Freud, Sigmund. (2006). “The Oedipus Complex” in *D.H. Lawrence*: *Sons and Lovers*. (Ed.). Ashok Celly, Delhi: Worldview Publications. pp. 433-39
- Fletcher, M.D. (Ed.). (1994). *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Fowles, John. (2009). *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. Random House Group.
- Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (Eds.). (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol1.
- Hacht, Anne Marie. & Dwayne D. Hayes. (Eds) (2009). *Gale Contextual Encyclopaedia of World Literature.* Vol II.
- Hutcheon, Linda. (1988). “Historiographic Metafiction: “The pastime of past time”in *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London Routledge.
- John Peck and Martin Coyle. (2002). *Literary Terms and Criticism*. (3rd edition). Palgrave Study Guide.

- John Peck and Martin Coyle. (2002). *Literary Terms and Criticism*. (3rd edition). Palgrave Study Guide.

- Joyce, James. (1992). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Penguin

Books.

- Kimbrough, Robert. (Ed.). (2002). *Heart of Darkness*. A Norton Critical Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kettle, Arnold. "The Consistency of James Joyce." in Boris Ford (ed.) (1961). *The Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Vol. 7. Penguin Books.
- Lothe, Jocab. (1989). *Conrad's Narrative Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leaska, M.A. (1970). *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Levenson, Michael. (Ed.). (1999). *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism.* Cambridge University Press.
- Marsh, Nicholas. (2000). *D.H. Lawrence: The Novels*. London: Macmillan.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. (Ed.). (2003). *Rushdie's Midnight's Children—A Book of Readings.* Delhi: Pencraft International.
- Ousby, Ian. (1994). *Companion to Literature in English*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
- Ruderman, Judith. (1984). *D.H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother*. Durham, NC : Duke University Press.
- Rylance, Rick. (Ed.). (1996). *'Sons and Lovers'; Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebook Series. London : Macmillan.
- Reid, S. (Ed.). (1993). *Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Rao, M. Madhusudhana. (1990). "Quest for Identity: A Study of the Narrative in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children". The Literary Criterion*. Vol. 25, No. 4.
- Salgado, Gamini. (Ed.). (1969). *D.H. Lawrence: 'Sons and Lovers': A Selection of Critical Essays*, Casebook series, London: Macmillan.
- Sarvan, C. P. (1988). "Racism and the *Heart of Darkness*", *International Fiction Review, 7* (1980); repr. in Kimbrough.
- Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed.). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.

- Singh, Frances B. (1988). "The Colonialistic Bias of *Heart of Darkness", Conradiana*, 10 (1978); repr. in Kimbrough.
- Straus, Nina Pelikan. (1980). "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness", Novel*, 20.
- Sellers, S. (Ed.). (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf.* (2nd Edn). Cambridge University Press.
- Shaffer, Brian W. (Ed.). (2011). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Vol 1. British and Irish Fiction. Blackwell Publishing Company.
- Shaffer, Brian W. (2001). *The Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Fiction.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Watts, Cedric. (Ed.). (2002). *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Raymond. (1963). *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell*. Harmousworth: Penguin.
- Worthen, John. (1979). *D.H. Lawrence and the Idea of the Novel*, London: Macmillan.
- Walsh, William. (1995). "India and the Novel." Boris Ford (Ed.). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Orwell to Naipaul.* Vol. 8, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Waugh, Patricia. (1984).*Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Wilson, Keith. (1984). "*Midnight's Children* and Reader Responsibility". *Critical Quarterly*: 26(3).
- Yacoubi, Youssef. (2005). "Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie's: Resisting the Ambivalence of postcolonial theory." *Alif*, No. 25.

Websites and Electronic Resources:

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