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KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017



SEMESTER 1

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE I: ENGLISH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

SECTION 1: ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY

BLOCK 4: LITERATURE: ROMANTIC TO MODERN

CONTENTS

Unit 13: The Romantic Age

Unit 14: The Victorian Age

Unit 15: The Modern Age [Till World War II]

Unit 16: The Modern Age [After World War II]

REFERENCES : For All Units

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BLOCK 4: LITERATURE: ROMANTIC TO MODERN

DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 13 : The Romantic Age **Page : 227 - 243**

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

Unit 14 : The Victorian Age **Page : 244 - 255**

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

Unit 15 : The Modern Age (Till WW II) **Page : 256 - 278**

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

Unit 16 : The Modern Age (After WW II) **Page : 279 - 292**

Novels, Poetry, Drama

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the last Block of Course I of the MA English Programme. As the title of the Block suggests, the learners will be introduced to the literatures from the Romantic to the Modern age. After completing this Block, the learners will be able to conceptualise the development of English literature of the Romantic age, particularly in the hands of the poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Keats. However, in a more theoretical and intellectual context, Romanticism can be seen as a reaction to some of the Neo-classical doctrines—such as the too much dependence on classical rules and regulations in artistic creations. Because, the adherence to ideas of the 'Sublime' and to the role of emotion and imagination in literary creations offered an alternative means of literary creations in the Romantic period. Then, the learners will be introduced to the different aspects of the Victorian age, which mostly reflect the impact of the Industrialism on the lives of the common people. Subsequently, social issues and themes are seen to be used abundantly by the Victorian writers. After that, the learners will be introduced to Modern Literature to discuss which this Block contains two separate units—one dealing with modern literature till the 1939 when World War II started, and the other dealing with literary activities following World War II. It is important to note that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing.

Block 4: Literature: Romantic to Modern contains four units, which are as the following:

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

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

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

who began experimenting with different forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols.

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

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in “LET US KNOW” along with the text. We have kept “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the “FURTHER READING” list, which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know, the world of literature is too big and so we advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you should read the original texts of the writers as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 13: THE ROMANTIC AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Intellectual Context

13.4 Major Literary Form(s)

13.5 Important Writers

13.6 Let us Sum up

13.7 Further Reading

13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.9 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the general tendencies of the Romantic Age
- trace the intellectual inspirations that led to the development of Romanticism in English literature
- identify the major literary forms that flourished during the Romantic age
- make special mention of the major Romantic writers

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you shall be reading about the Romantic Age, which perhaps began in reaction to many of the Neoclassical ideals of the preceding age. The beginnings of the English Romantic Age in English literature may be traced back to the latter half of the reign of George III, and may be said to have ended with the accession of Queen Victoria to the English throne in 1837. Historical records tell that it was an age that witnessed great events like the Independence of the United States of America (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the Reform Bill (1832) – all of which primarily influenced the minds of men shaping the all-round spirit of the age. Politically

speaking, drawing inspiration from the previously mentioned events, the English society realised the need to lend its voice for the abolition of class distinctions and the assertion of the natural rights of men. However, you should also mark that there is a noticeable influence of the French Revolution on the literature of the Romantic Age. For example, the slogan of the French Revolution – "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" came to be asserted within the English society in a manner that tremendously influenced English patriotic zeal. By the time you finish reading this unit, I hope you will be able to discuss the literature of the Romantic Age in detail.

13.3 INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

As you know that the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution, played a key role in developing a sense of nationalism, and this appeared to many as symbols of political progress and rise of democracy. While taking into account the general socio-economic and political atmosphere of the age, the literature of the period may be seen to represent a sense of enthusiasm, which as we shall see later, was amply reflected in the different literary forms of the age. However, we need to keep in mind that it was not only literature through which the ideas of romanticism were spread. Besides, the overwhelming impact of the French Revolution, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant of Germany and John Wesley's advocacy of religious revival installed in the human spirit a desire for liberation.

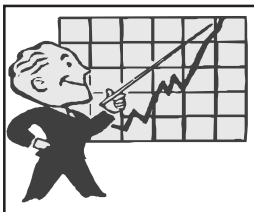
When we examine the traits of this age, we should take note of the fact that the period may be distinguished into two phases–the first phase of Romantic fervour characterised by the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott, and the second phase characterised by a disillusionment and revolt epitomised in the works of the younger generation of Romantics– Byron, Shelley and Keats. Nevertheless, certain general tendencies can also be discerned in the works of the poets of this age. The Romantic Age may be defined as a break away from the social and literary conventions, a going back to nature while advocating a spontaneous and genuine life and reasserting the right of man to satisfy his impulses and emotions. The reassertion of the rights of man happened in two directions. First, in the

advocacy of whatever was distant and out of the ordinary, and the other reflected in an inward journey into things that were apparently common, which, after close examination, seemed to contain new meanings. Thus, we may summarise that the fundamental philosophy of Romanticism inculcated a belief that literature must echo all that is spontaneous and unaltered in nature and in man, and be free to pursue its own fancy in its own way.

Thus, this age is marked by the development of fresh ideas for poetry and novel, the rejuvenation of the form of the essay, and the unprecedented activities of critical and miscellaneous writers. As part of this new literary endeavour, the classical writers are explored anew, contemporary times are analysed and critically discussed in the work of the novelists. The treatment of nature regains unprecedented response from the great Romantic poets, as in the new race of poets; the observation of nature becomes more mature and intimate. Notably, in the case of Wordsworth's poetry, nature is amplified and glorified. However, this period is also marked by other Political and Periodical writing too. There appeared a number of periodicals like *The Morning Chronicle* (1769), *The Morning Post* (1772) *The Times* (1785), and so on. Other than these, a number of other powerful literary magazines like *The Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1809), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), *The London Magazine* (1820), and *The Westminster Review* (1824) sprang to life. Such excellent publications reacted strongly upon authorship, and were responsible for much of the best work of Hazlitt, Lamb, Southey. Another important aspect of this age is the declining of the French influence over the English following the long war with France. In the place of French, the study of German literature and philosophy came rapidly into vogue to alter the idea of English Romanticism for the periods to come.

One of the most convenient ways to understand the characteristics of the Romantic Age is to compare it with those of the preceding Neo-classical age. The prevailing 'Romantic' attitude favoured innovation over traditionalism in the materials, forms, and style of literature. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth in 1798 and the Preface to the second edition in 1800, proclaimed Wordsworth's revolutionary aim of denouncing

upper-class subjects and the 'poetic diction' of the preceding century in favour of materials borrowed from "common life" in "a selection of language really used by men." This violated the basic neoclassical rule of 'decorum', which asserted that the serious genres of literatures should deal only with the momentous actions of royal or aristocratic characters in an elevated style. In his famous Preface, Wordsworth declared that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." According to this declaration, poetry is not primarily a mirror of men in action; rather it is an essential component in the poet's own feelings. "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree," Keats wrote, "it had better not come at all." Coleridge substituted for neoclassic "rules," which he described as imposed on the poet from without, the concept of the inherent organic "laws" of the poet's 'imagination'; that is, he conceived that each poetic work, like a growing plant, evolves according to its own internal principles into its final 'organic form'. Representative Romantic works are in fact poems of feelings filled with meditation, which, though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with general human experiences and problems.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What were the main international influences that shaped English Romanticism?

Q 2: Mention the two phases of Romanticism in England.

Q 3: In what ways is Romanticism a reaction against Neoclassicism?

13.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORM(S)

During the Romantic period, there emerged three major literary forms, which are as follows.

Poetry:

The Romantic Age is known as the age of poetry owing to the great surge in poetic creativity of the major literary figures of the age. The preceding age was dubbed the age of prose since literature produced during the period predominantly dealt with a practical view of life. However, with the ushering

of Romanticism (generally believed to have begun with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798) young enthusiastic individuals with a literary bent of mind turned naturally to poetry to give expression to their feelings and emotions. The conventional rules of art were now treated with open disapproval in the practice of the new doctrines of poetry. There was an open display of vehement criticism of Pope and the Augustan school and the assertion of spontaneity became a part of prominent creative endeavours. Poetry of this age exhibits an innovative concern with form, which encompassed both the poetic genre and its comprehensive pattern as a literary creation. The poets displayed their experiments with novel forms, while at the same time; they were rarely content to imitate the pre-existing model. The use of metre, verse form, rhythm and rhyme displays an entire array of technical experimentation started by the poets.

When we talk of the forms of poetry, which flourished in the Romantic Age, we find that they include lyric, ode, ballad, and sonnet, which were the most predominantly popular forms during this period. Lyric poetry refers to short poems with intensely musical expressions. It is in fact, the product of a swift, momentary and passionate impulse. For example, Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems reveal the poet's consistent innovations with regard to this form where he attempts to blend the impersonality of the ballad with an intimacy that proximate confessional voice of the poetic persona. Again, Shelley's 'Adonis' is another lyric remarkable for its artistic power. He is remembered for the histrionics and the swift moving of all pervasive emotional elements he had infused in lyric poetry. Generally speaking, the lyrics of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Byron are remarkable for their personal element. The word ode denotes in its simplest form 'a song'. It is a strain of passionate and illustrious lyric verse directed to a predetermined idea and deals progressively with a theme. Essentially, it comes in the form of an address, often to some abstraction in a manner that is elaborate and intricate. Some fine odes were written during this period, instances of which are Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' and Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode', Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. It is in the hands of Keats that the ode reached its highest degree of perfection through his immortal creations

such as 'To Autumn', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The odes composed by the romantics are remarkable for their harmonious flow of music expressed through their exquisite imagination and lofty idealism. The ballad on the other hand, is a song transmitted orally which narrates a story in verse. Originally, the ballad was a song with a predominant narrative substance sung to the accompaniment of dancing. Generally considered to be a medieval verse form, the ballad was revived in the romantic period through the publications of Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Coleridge's 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The charm of the ballad is enhanced by its haunting melody coupled with the use of dialogue, which infuses dramatic quality in it. The sonnet is a short lyric of fourteen lines, which during the romantic period flourished in the hands of Wordsworth and Keats who introduced nature as one of the most prominent themes in their sonnets. The sonnet as a literary form contains subjectivity and unity of expression with a display of a wonderful harmony in its subject matter. The sonnet, it may be noted, is devoted to the development of a single mood and the expression of a single thought within a brief canvas.

Novel:

When one speaks of the novel during this period, one would agree that the Romantic and the Gothic form gained predominance. Both these forms were preoccupied with imaginary supernatural forces seen as operating in nature or human destiny. The romantic novelists were inclined to find material for their creative purpose, in an increased knowledge of the past and the remote and in alien cultures as well. The practice of the Gothic in literature provided the Romantics a sense of freedom in spirit, variety, mystery that mingled seamlessly with their emphasis on individuality, imagination and sublimity. **The gothic novel**, a popular form during the romantic period, implied a long horror narrative that displayed the typical gothic elements of doom with special emphasis on mystery and magic. It is characterised by a conspicuous presence of dark medieval castles, secret passages and super natural elements that kept the reader thrilled. The practitioners of Gothic fiction bestowed a sense of sublimity in their work by taking recourse to ideas related to vastness, infinity and astonishment through

contemplation of nature, panorama of the wild, rugged castle ruins, and mediaeval cathedrals. It may be assumed that Gothic fiction was, in reality, a response to and reaction against comfort, security, political stability, progress that became a part of contemporary commercial and industrial ventures.

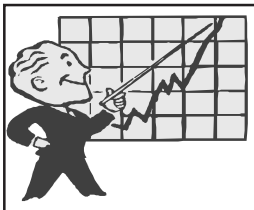
Besides the above-mentioned type of novel, **Regional novel** was also another form that came to be widely practiced during this period. As the name suggests the regional novel represented a narrative that was specifically confined to its creator's regional milieu. Such novels projected a world – social, political and cultural, restricted strictly to the physical locale of the novelist while the narrative focused on the typical qualities of the character situated in the contemporary setting. Notable examples of this genre are Hardy's "Wessex novels" and William Faulkner's novels set in Yoknapatawpha Country.

Literary Criticism:

You should note that the Romantic Age also witnessed a flourish of critical literature in the form of literary and critical essays, which appeared in the contemporary magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1802) and *The Spectator* (1828). These magazines exerted a considerable influence on contemporary lives. Initially however, the literary magazines were bent on negative criticism finding faults with the literary outputs of the likes of Wordsworth and Keats But, with the passage of time; they adopted a more pragmatic approach and devoted themselves to the true function of criticism while establishing normative injunctions for literary works. These magazines also performed one very significant function in that they became the voice of the unknown writers giving them a scope to publish their works thereby producing in the process essayists of repute like Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt.

The publication of Wordsworth's *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, added more impetus to the ideas of literary criticism. While Wordsworth in his famous Preface discusses the nature and purpose of his 'Romantic' poetry and the kind of 'poetic diction' to be used for such poetry, Coleridge in his work mainly discusses the processes of human creativity. According

to Coleridge, the English tradition of literary and philosophical thought often tended to view culture and creativity as given rather than as the products of specifically constituted intelligence. Borrowing his raw materials from the German philosophers like Kant, Schelling and Schlegel, Coleridge provides the famous definition of 'imagination' or 'the creative intelligence', to explore the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, self and the world, speculative reason and rational understanding. The poet John Keats, on the other hand, introduced the term "Negative Capability" in a letter written to a friend in December 1817 to define a literary quality. This was a quality, which according to Keats "Shakespeare possessed so enormously". By "Negative Capability", Keats meant—"When man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats differed from Coleridge, who "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude . . . from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge," and went on to express the general principle "that with a great poet the sense of beauty over comes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." As M H Abrams states, Keats's "Negative Capability" first characterises an impersonal and objective author who maintains *aesthetic distance,* as opposed to a subjective author personally involved with the characters and actions represented in a work of literature. Secondly, "Negative Capability" also suggests that, when embodied in a beautiful artistic form, the literary subject matter, concepts, and characters are not subject to the ordinary standards of evidence, truth, and morality, as we apply these standards in the course of our practical experience.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the innovative concerns of English Romantic poetry?

Q 5: What is the significance of the Regional novels?

Q 6: Comment on the role played by Periodicals and Magazines in the Romantic period.

Q 7: Comment on Literary Criticism in the Romantic Period?

13.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

In this section, you will be provided brief information on some of the most important Romantic writers and their works.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: (1772 – 1834)

Coleridge was one of the three prominent "Lake Poets". He is probably best known for his poem *Kubla Khan*, as well as for his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. The Romantic Movement gained momentum from the works of Coleridge who along with his contemporary William Wordsworth created some of the most notable verses in keeping with the Romantic tradition formulated in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Coleridge's contribution to Romanticism was remarkable for the treatment of mysterious and supernatural subjects in a manner that bestowed an illusion of reality. Coleridge's greatest poems include 'Frost at Midnight', 'France: An Ode', 'Kubla Khan', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and the first part of 'Christabel' which were all composed during 1797 – 1798. In his poems, you will very often encounter a Romantic imagination that builds an atmosphere of dream, supernatural realm and phantasmal scenery. For instance, his poem 'Kubla Khan' may be considered an oriental dream vision with its portraiture of castles, valleys and caverns arousing a sense of wonder and mystery hidden in it. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is another great poem which paints a picture of awe with its delineation of seas and oceans, night and morning, the rustle of sails and the wonder of a dream caught in a magic mirror. Thus, Coleridge's poetry is indeed a splendid instance of the Romantic imagination at its best. However, Coleridge is also well known for his critical works. His work on Shakespeare was highly influential. He also introduced German idealist philosophy to the English-speaking world.

William Wordsworth: (1770 -1850)

Wordsworth was a major English Romantic poet who helped to formally launch the Romantic Age in English literature through the publication of *Lyrical Ballads in 1798* with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Perhaps it would not be disagreeable to say that in Wordsworth's poetic oeuvre, we find

some of the best poems of Romanticism, and it is he who exhibits in his Romantic association with nature the realisation of the divine and the mystic inherent in nature. The poems of Wordsworth are best representatives of the poet's belief in poetry as a medium of communication with nature and man. He was marvellously sensitive to nature around him which was inspired by the life he spent at the countryside and which intensified as he matured. Remarkable for their display of a sense of serenity and tranquillity, his poems seem to be keen observations on nature and commonplace experiences of life seen around him. With immortal creations which include 'The Solitary Reaper' (1803), 'Michael' (1800), 'Westminster Bridge' (1802), 'The Prelude' (1805) and 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1806), Wordsworth reached the zenith of his poetic career. Moreover, in him we can also trace the makings of a mystic, which made him acknowledge the mystical presence of the natural spirit around him, a man establishing a mutual relationship between the two. Such a philosophy is perhaps best expressed in his 'Tintern Abbey' published in the *Lyrical Ballads.*



LET US KNOW

Lyrical Ballads:

It is a collection of poems composed by Wordsworth and Coleridge first published in 1798. A second edition of 1800 contains a Preface by Wordsworth replaces the original short 'advertisement' in the first edition. This collection of 23 poems is often considered an important reference point of English Romantic literature. It finally established Wordsworth's fame as a poet.

Robert Southey: (1774 – 1843)

Robert Southey forms the last of the triad known as the "Lake Poets", the other two being Coleridge and Wordsworth. Southey devoted himself to a study of literature while writing both prose and poetry. Born at Bristol and educated at Westminster School and at Oxford, Southey settled down to lead the laborious life of a man of letters. He produced works of considerable merit. He was made 'Poet Laureate' in 1813. His reputation

as a poet rests mainly on poems like *Joan of Arc* (1798), *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814). Typically, Romantic in theme, most of these poems are too ambitious. In terms of poetic style, they are straightforward and unaffected. Some of his shorter pieces are *The Holly-tree, The Battle of Blenheim,* and *The Inchcape Rock.* Very often, Southey expressed his impulse to flee from the contemporary world into a world of the ancient and remote past, the Orient, olden Wales and Spain and ancient Mexico. In his long poems such as *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama,* Southey gave full expression to his Romantic instincts. Robert Southey is also remembered for his prose pieces. His numerous prose works include *The History of Brazil* (1810-19) and *The History of the Peninsular War* (1823-32). The slightest of them all, *The Life of Nelson* (1813), is the only one now freely read.

George Gordon Byron: (1788 – 1824)

George Gordon Byron or Lord Byron, as he was popularly known, was reputed to be one of the most expressive poets of his times voicing displeasure at the failure of the idealism associated with the French Revolution. His first published work *Hours of Idleness* was written at a young age. His poems voice his intense individualism and his feeling of revolt against the society. Some of his best known poems are ‘Mazeppa’, ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ and so on. It may be mentioned that Byron’s poetic creations are known for their splendid descriptions of natural scenery, exquisitely lyrical display of love and despair. However, critical assessment of Byron’s poetry reveals that his poetry at times tend to be a rather loud display of pomposity and rhetoric which on the whole, gives an impression of unwholesomeness to his creations. Nevertheless, you will do good to remember that in Byron we find a faithful association with nature, and his poetry contains some of the most beautiful and unsurpassed portrayals of nature in English language.

Percy Bysshe Shelley: (1792–1822)

In Shelley we find, as in other Romantic poets, an intensely passionate liking for everything represented in nature, which he rendered

into extremely melodious verse. At times, however, he displays a sense of vain revolt against the contemporary society in a manner that likens him to Byron. Through his poetic works, we may chart two distinct moods – first, in which he appears as a zealous reformer displaying a sense of hurry. Instances of such mood are available in his poems like 'Queen Mab', 'Revolt of Islam' and 'the Witch of Atlas', which portray his vehement diatribe against almost everything visible around him–the government, priests, marriage, religion and even God. In his other mood, we find the wonderful lyricist in Shelley creating poems remarkable for their melody. For instance, in poems such as 'Adonais' one finds the poet in the garb of a wanderer in search of a beautiful yet abstract vision only to meet with disappointment and discontent. It is perhaps 'Prometheus Unbound' (1818–1820) which immortalises Shelley's poetic genius. Displaying his revolutionary enthusiasm, the poem portrays a hero Prometheus conceived in the image of humankind, desirous of freedom and liberty but captive and tortured by the ruler of Heaven. His poetry represented a world of dreams inhabited by ethereal forms and at times a world of myths. For him, the world of nature represented truth and all symbols from the natural world, perhaps best exemplified in 'The Cloud', 'The Skylark' and 'The West Wind'.

John Keats: (1795-1821)

The greatness of Keats' verses lie in his sensitiveness toward the idea of 'beauty', which he worships with the unreserved ecstasy of a devotee. Keats' famous utterance "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" perhaps best encapsulates his philosophy, which for him was at equal par with truth. The sensuous richness of Keatsian verse emanates from this passion for beauty revelled through extraordinarily fresh and energetic compositions. The concern for form is revealed in Keats' later verse. His poem 'Endymion' appears to be essentially formless. However, we see a wonderful display of a sense of structure in his great odes especially, the 'Nightingale', 'Grecian Urn' and 'Eve of St. Agnes' and so on. Apparently, Keats' verses represented him as indifferent to human affairs. A deep scrutiny however reveals that the poet was a keen observer of reality as he harboured an intense sympathy towards human life and affairs thereof. His contribution to romantic literature

lies in the treasure of sensations and the enriched diction and melody, which he bestowed upon poetry, which made him one of the most unparalleled artists of the period.

Jane Austen: (1775–1817)

Jane Austen brought to prominence the novel of manners in which she exploited with unparalleled expertise the potentialities of social experience within a seemingly narrow mode of existence. Her most famous novels include *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park.* In her novels, Austen presents the world of provincial folk through a well-defined story, which develops naturally through the influence of one character upon another in society. Jane Austen is thus renowned for her novel of manners. One of her famous work *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) narrates the predicament of characters located in a provincial setting. Austen's later novels such as *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816) continue to represent the provincial society and culture with their well- defined story, characters developed in a manner that very well reflected the characteristic humours of provincial life. Other notable novels of Austen include *Persuasion* (1818) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). A cursory review of her novels reveals that she engaged in an ironic exposure of pretentiousness and blended her moral message with an ideological assertion on merits of good conduct, good manners, sound reason and marriage as an admirable social institution. The comparatively confined world of her novels and the limitations of her setting potently display an illusion of reality, which urges the reader to relish the world she narrates.

Sir Walter Scott: (1771–1832)

Walter Scott was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet. Contemporary to Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott has to his credit several novels which include *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *Kenilworth* (11821) among others. Scott's style revealed his long descriptions of the locale combined with an exactness and vividness, which enhances his realism. In his works, the setting becomes an actual requirement of the action. He displayed his intense understanding of the local Scottish types with his very first novel *Waverly* that was published

anonymously in 1814. Scott is remarkable for his liking of the past which provided him with materials for his 'historical' fictions. Though his stories at times appeared to lack symmetry, they were however, significant for the manner in which he consummately represented the characters and action in a picturesque setting, which bestowed the narrative a sense of appropriateness, which only seemed natural. The genre of historical fiction attains a sense of perfection with Scott through his definite portraiture of historical characters and historical events which reflect his exquisite imagination and insight.

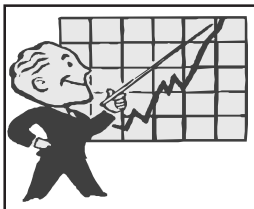
William Hazlitt: (1778–1830)

The Romantic essayist and critic William Hazlitt is known for his famous essay 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' in which he presents a vivid and detailed portrait of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the invigorating conversation that he had with Coleridge which left a strong impression on him. Hazlitt became a critic of art, literature and politics. His lectures influenced the English writers and he was a champion of the liberalism in politics. His energetic spirit is reflected in his criticism and often he introduces the authors and their books to his readers through a narration of the story of his personal acquaintance with them. The mood that Hazlitt builds in his criticism spreads to the reader who moves along with the essayist in the process of reading. He is mainly remembered for his essays such as 'On Going a Journey', 'On Actors and Acting', 'On the Pleasures of Painting', which he contributed to several periodicals and later published in volumes such as *Table Talk* and *The Round Table*.

Charles Lamb: (1775–1834)

Charles Lamb achieved success with critical literature for the first time with his volume titled *Tales from Shakespeare* published in 1807 written in collaboration with his sister. However, he is given recognition not as a literary critic but especially as a commentator upon life, his amusing and fond remarks and as a mild egoist without a hint of vanity. It was the *Essays of Elia* published at intervals in the *London Magazine* in 1823, which established him as one of the most delightful essayists of England. These essays cover a wide variety of topics in which we witness the intimately

personal voice of the essayist suggesting his lovable personality that adds to the charm of essays. Some of his best-known essays include 'Imperfect Sympathies', 'Dream Children', while 'A Dissertation upon a Roast Pig received wide acclaim for its extravagance. Though his style is reminiscent of older writers, yet in his hands these essays emerge as highly individualistic renditions remarkable for their novelty.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What are the contributions of Hazlitt and Lamb as prose writers of the Romantic period?

Q 9: What are the two distinctive moods in P B Shelly's poetry?



13.6 LET US SUM UP

You must have understood by now that the Romantic Age roughly falls between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. During the first phase of this period, England experienced turmoil in both political and economic sphere of life. The core of all troubles raised in England was however, the French Revolution which had a tremendous impact on the life and literature of the period. You have learnt that literature of this age is predominantly poetical in form and intensely Romantic in spirit. You have also realised that the triumph of democracy in political arena is accompanied by the surge of Romanticism in literature. During the initial phase, especially in the literature of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, we note the reflection of the tumultuous spirit of the age and a violent desire for establishing of the ideals of democracy. You may summarise the chief literary characteristics of the age based on the predominance of Romantic poetry, the creation of historical novel by Walter Scott, the first appearance of women novelists such as Jane Austen, development of literary criticism, and the prose works of Hazlitt and Lamb.



13.7 FURTHER READING

Daiches, David. (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol IV. Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

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

13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: American Declaration of Independence… …French Revolution… …influence of German philosophy.

Ans to Q No 2: The first phase is characterised by a return to nature as found in Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott… …the second phase is chracterised by a disillusionment and revolt as available in Byron, Shelley and Keats.

Ans to Q No 3: Romanticism favoured innovation over traditionalism in the materials, forms, and style …. …Wordsworth denounced upper-class subjects and the *poetic diction… …*This violated the very basic neoclassic rule of *decorum*—that serious genres of literatures should deal only with the momentous actions of royal or aristocratic characters in an elevated style.

Ans to Q No 4: Experimentation with metre, verse form, rhythm and rhyme… …lyric poetry was sought to be made intensely musical expressions…. …Romantic odes were responsible for their harmonious flow of music and lofty idealism… …the sonnet was revived by Wordsworth and Keats.

Ans to Q No 5: This type of novels represented a narrative that is specifically confined to the author's regional milieu… …the socio-political and cultural world is restricted strictly to the physical locale of the author.

Ans to Q No 6: Periodicals and magazines like *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1802) and *The Spectator* (1828) became popular… …they published criticisms on

individual authors and their works…. …these magazines also encouraged relatively inferior writers to publish their works.

Ans to Q No 7: Wordsworth's famous Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* discusses the nature and purpose of his 'Romantic' poetry and the kind of 'poetic diction' to be used… …Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* discusses the processes of human creativity, provides the definition of 'imagination' or 'the creative intelligence'… …John Keats introduced the term "Negative Capability" which refers to *aesthetic distance.*

Ans to Q No 8: Hazlitt became a critic of art, literature and politics… …his criticism helped in introducing the authors to the readers in a mode of narration based on personal acquaintance… …Lamb on the other hand, mostly wrote personal essays… …the essays in *Essays of Elia* cover a wide variety of topics including the author's lovable personality as well as that of his acquaintances.

Ans to Q No 9: Shelly as a reformer… …Shelly as a wonderful lyricist.



13.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the general tendencies of the age of English Romanticism?

Q 2: Why do you think poetry evolved as a predominant literary form during the romantic period?

Q 3: Write a comprehensive note on Romantic criticism with special reference to Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.

Q 4: What are the most important forms of Romantic prose? Trace the significance of William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb as Essay writers of the Romantic Age.

Q 5: Can you identify the two generations of Romantic poets? Provide an analysis of their poetry.

Q 6: What are the main concerns of the Romantic novelists? Elaborate with examples.

Q 7: Who are the "Lake Poets" of the Romantic Age? Why are they called so? Describe their contributions to Romantic poetry.

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UNIT 14: THE VICTORIAN AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 The Victorian Age: Intellectual Context

14.4 Victorian Novel

14.5 Victorian Poetry

14.6 Victorian Prose

14.7 Let us Sum up

14.8 Further Reading

14.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.10 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the intellectual context of the Victorian age
- explain the changes of English literary history in the Victorian period
- identify the major Victorian writers and their works
- trace the development of literary forms specific to the age
- find out how Victorian literature emerged from specific socio-historical conditions of Industrial England

14.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit shall help you to discuss the literature of the Victorian Age. The term "Victorian" briefly denotes the historical era in England roughly coinciding with the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901. This is an age of rapid economic and social changes that had noticeable impact on the minds of writers. Historians often subdivide this long period into three phases: Early Victorian (to 1848), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901). Much poetic and prosaic writing of this period, whether imaginative or didactic, dealt with or reflected the pressing social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems of that era. Thus, in this

unit, we shall concentrate on some of the issues related to literature of the Victorian age, and try to examine how the writers reacted and responded to these variegated changes of the Victorian age.

14.3 THE VICTORIAN AGE: INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

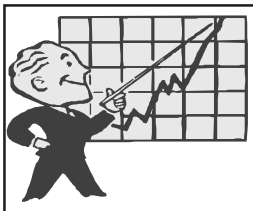
The term Victorian age generally refers to the period of Queen Victoria's reign stretching from 1837 to1901. An age of radical movements in terms of artistic styles, literary schools, as well as, social, political and religious movements, it also witnessed prosperity, broad imperial expansion, and great political reform. This extraordinarily complex age has often been loosely addressed as the 'Second English Renaissance' and may be considered the beginning of modern times. Historians generally attribute these changes and developments of the Victorian age to the growth of democracy, which seems to be a consequence of the Reform Bill of 1832 that placed the political power of England in the hands of the middle class. Rise and growth of democratic ideals in the English political scene facilitated on the, common suffrage on the one hand, and education for the masses, on the other. With an increase in readership, a large number of Victorian writers began an initiative to instruct and enliven the huge mass of society. However, political expansionism with its accompanying industrialisation instilled a desire for comfort in the people and deep-seated materialism affected the society significantly. It was against this outlook of contemporary society that the Victorian writers raised their voices in protest and warning.

The word 'Victorian' may also be understood to denote the contemporary scenario in the field of social, cultural, political and literary disciplines as well. When one speaks of the intellectual contexts of the Victorian period, it is imperative to acknowledge the profound influence of Charles Darwin's magnum opus *The Origin of Species* (1859). However, the fundamental ideas related to evolution and the process of natural selection were already circulating in the society and Darwin's theory served to strengthen the feeling of apprehensive emotions of the society thereby leading to the formation of the now clichéd *Victorian Faith and Doubt* structure. We also need to keep in mind that during this period the thoughts

pertaining to civilization and progress gained importance through a well-structured device of imperial policies exercised by the government and the commercial agencies as well. Another significant development of the period is the impact of Industrial Revolution, which was most intensely felt during this time. The outcome of the Industrial Revolution was felt in all spheres of human activity as there was a growth of industrialisation and mechanisation, which speeded up human life radically. With radical changes affecting the life and affairs of the Victorian period, new ideas and concepts evolved in cultural, intellectual and social realm. The distinction between social turmoil and change and the affirmation of ideals and values, had come to be recognised as the hallmark of Victorianism. It was a unique belief, which finds resolution in the idea of Victorian compromise which may be understood as a kind of double standard between exploitation (of working classes and the colonies overseas) and national success in terms of political and economic achievements.

Common Literary Features of the Victorian Age:

1. The writers and thinkers of this age protested against the effects of conventions.
2. The literary products were affected by newer ideas borrowed from science, religion and politics.
3. The New Education Acts made education almost compulsory and soon produced a huge reading public.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the major developments that affected the intellectual context of the Victorian age?

Q 2: What are the major concerns of Victorian literature in general?

14.4 VICTORIAN NOVEL

The Victorian age witnessed the predominance of the novel among other literary genres that were being cultivated during this period. The novel became the primary literary form and throughout this period, one may see

the novel being experimented with a variety of narratives by the great exponents ranging from Dickens to Hardy. One should need to keep in mind that there was an upsurge in the production of the novel because not only there was an increase in the number of writers but there was also an equivalent rise in the reading public for whom the writers consistently produced narratives. Thus, the novel became one of the most entertaining forms, and its easy accessibility, made it the most predominant form in the society of the times. The popularity of the novel may be attributed to realism, unlike the novels of the preceding age, and perhaps the use of the realistic mode enabled the reading public to identify themselves with the narratives and to closely associate them to the stories of real life.

The Victorian novel as such appeared to be a mirror of the contemporary society reflecting the radical changes in the field of transport and communication, railways, industrialisation and the consequent shift of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation and rise in educational opportunities. These comprised the topics on which most of the novels were based. Another significant aspect of the Victorian novel was that while most of the reading public comprised of women there was also a surge of women writers who enriched the genre by depicting women's lives and issues which included domesticity, familial structures, marriage and morals of the times. Thus, women during the Victorian age were occupying prominence not only as producers and readers of novels but also as the subjects of the novel around whose lives the narratives were woven. However, it should be kept in mind that women became the subjects of novelistic art not only in the hands of women writers, but women also invited narrative focus even in the writings of male writers. These male writers perhaps attributed to the creation of stereotypes such as 'the angel of the house' and the 'fallen woman' whereby women were scrutinised under the predominant patriarchal ideology prevalent in the contemporary society and culture. During this period various categories of novels were being produced during the period, which included the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among others were being produced. The following are some of the renowned Victorian novelists.

Charles Dickens: (1812-70)

One of the most prominent novelists representing the Victorian Age is Charles Dickens who had achieved remarkable success during his lifetime owing to his output of novels which include the famous *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times* among others. Dickens is famed for his caricatures, which he accomplishes with an unparalleled expertise that enabled him to bring his caricatures alive and closer to real life. His *Pickwick Papers* shall remain an illustration of Victorianism in its best while the characters come alive with their identifiable attitudes and manners. Another feature of Dickensian art was his ability to bring out the horror of living in the Victorian times illustrated best through his novels such as *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Oliver Twist* where we have a world of pain, sorrow and evil which excite not humour but loathing. A third category of characterisation prevalent in his novels is the individual visualised as the victim of society, especially a child. In novels such as *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*, you will come across child characters who fall prey to the vicious social practices. Dickens will be remembered as an artist endowed with the unique capability of portraying a vast and fascinating canvas. His novels represent a world replete with farcical characters, grotesque and terrible creatures and sensitive pictures of children.

William Makepeace Thackeray: (1811-63)

Another novelist who gained prominence during the Victorian age was William Makepeace Thackeray whose novelistic art catered to a representation of contemporary human life and nature. The realistic narratives of Thackeray reveal that he was more often an observer than an analyst, which consequently seemed to deprive a somewhat compact structure from his novels. His vision in his novels is that of a man who sees life through the wider prism of society and culture rather than studying characters as isolated, individual cases. His most famous work *Vanity Fair* illustrates very well his art in as far as it represents the contemporary Victorian society through the central female characters Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp. Subtitled 'A Novel Without a Hero', the anti-heroic novel *Vanity*

Fair satirises the materialistic inclinations of the middle class through the interweaving of the stories of its two heroines. The quest of crude materialism in the wake of an industrial and mechanised society and culture forms the object of satire in Thackeray's novel written in the genre of domestic fiction.

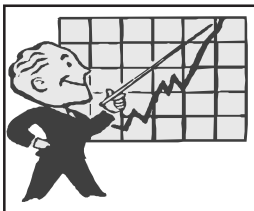
The Bronte Sisters:

Among the Victorian women novelists, the Bronte sisters were very prominent. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* captures the reader's imagination owing to the gothic atmosphere that it represents. Regarded as one of the classics of English literature, the novel works with an intensely passionate love story which has however, been subjected to a variety of interpretations through the passage of time. *Wuthering Heights* has also been viewed as a novel of revenge that justifies its gothic air. It is a novel that narrates the world of a unique love affair that puts into question the generally accepted paradigm of marriage and love. The narrative technique of this novel has received critical attention. The use of multiple narratorial voices was an innovative tool during the time when the novel was written. This established Emily Bronte's imaginative forte for years to come. Charlotte and Anne Bronte, both sisters of Emily also wrote novels that primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world that was gendered and thereby imposed limitations on their womanhood. In Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey*, you will come across the romantic imagination of the authors as they deal with issues pertaining to womanhood and femininity within the varied worlds of marital experience.

George Eliot: (1819-1880)

George Eliot is the other significant women novelist of the Victorian period. The world of her novels reveals the author's intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world. Her famous novels like *Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, Middlemarch, Silas Marner* have been regarded as examples of the realist novels, which revolve around the theme of human action in relation to the context of imminent social change. Such juxtaposition of the individual and the social within a common

context forms an interesting aspect of Eliot's novels. Eliot very often preoccupies herself with the individual personality, which is also the concern of the Bronte sisters. Often drawn from the lower strata of the society, her characters present the English country people in the fullest sense.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Why do you see the upsurge of novel writing in the Victorian period?

Q 4: What do the Victorian novels reflect?

Q 5: Which are Charles Dickens' major preoccupations as a Victorian novelist?

Q 6: Mention the important themes in the novels of the Victorian women writers.

Q 7: What are the causes behind the emergence of the novel as the most popular form of literature during the Victorian period?

14.5 VICTORIAN POETRY

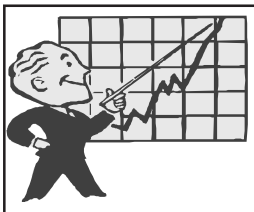
Poetry of the Victorian age, unlike that of the preceding Romantic age, displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis which were an outcome of the upheavals in the social and cultural ethos of the time initiated by the changes wrought with rapid urbanisation, mechanised lives, changes in men and morals and the repeated tussle between faith and doubt, hope and despair. The ideas evinced from Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals while creating a value system that afflicted that society with a feeling of crisis and anxiety. Poetry of the age therefore, reveals the poet's persistent efforts to come to terms with the visible changes happening in every sphere of life. There was a variety of poetic forms that emerged ranging from the elegy to the dramatic monologue. A cluster of poets such as Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were among many others whose works are seen as representative of the Victorian ethos. Gerard Manley Hopkins is another Victorian poet whose poetic oeuvre includes pieces that uniquely blend both Victorian and modern sensibilities.

Victorian poetry is probably best represented in the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson whose *In Memoriam* (1850) stands as the mouthpiece of Victorian dilemma, giving voice to the feeling of hope and despair which created a sense of crisis for the entire society. The poem was composed at the death of Arthur Henry Hallam who was Tennyson's close friend. From an intensely personal impulse of sorrow, the poem embraces larger universal questions of life and death, immortality of the soul in the context of contemporary scenario. Through states of doubt, desolation and tormented debates, the poem gradually moves on to the realm of solid though dismayed confidence and closes in a full hymnal music breathing hope and courage of heart. In Matthew Arnold, another poet representing the Victorian ethos one shall notice a blend of classical and modern tendencies. Besides being a poet, Arnold was also recognised as a prose writer and in both these genres; he imbued his moral consciousness into his creations. Arnold's famous poem *Dover Beach* may be understood as his response to an age- torn between numerous contradictions and dilemmas, and the poet stands disillusioned at the radical upheavals in all spheres of human life. More often than not, Arnold's poetry is influenced by an overwhelming moral vision under which the poetic sensibility seems to be suppressed.

14.6 VICTORIAN PROSE

The Victorian age saw a remarkable growth in prose with a variety of prose writings that were being published during this period, which includes rhetorical writings dealing primarily with the 'Condition of England' issue, debates on religion, scientific writing and philosophical writings. It is within this literary domain that the age saw a flourish of prose writers, the prominent among them being Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. Macaulay's skill as an essayist lies in his oratory style and clarity. The success of his historical volume titled *History of England* lies in its narrative and the manner in which he imbues a sense of romance to the factual events of history. His essays were written chiefly during a time when England was witnessing various events of social, political and cultural

significance such as the Reform Bill of 1832, and the industrial and commercial expansion of English lives and society, which brought the middle class into power. While reflecting on the general mood of the period Macaulay presents a complacent view of life in most of his essays Carlyle's essays on the other hand reflect his disappointment and intense moral indignation against anything that he found was weak and superficial. On the other hand, his spirited arguments were moral and sincere. Carlyle is known for *Sartor Resartus* and *Hero and Hero Worship*. Through *Sartor Resartus,* Carlyle professes his indignation at the pretentiousness of the society and critiques contemporary culture and social customs, which very often act as the veil to the shortcomings of actual life. The text is replete with idioms, astonishing pauses and radical inversions, which were aimed to gain the reader's attention.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Briefly state the tendencies prevalent in Victorian poetry.

Q 9: Name the authors who popularised Victorian prose.



14.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have found that both the Victorian Age represents a significant phase in English literary history. You have seen that the socially conscious writers of the Victorian age have addressed the havocs brought by capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. For example, writers like Charles Dickens had turned his fictions towards describing the social disparities brought by this change in society following Industrialism. The strange dualities, which afflicted the Victorian period, find sensitive expression in the literature of the time. You have seen that literature of this period is prominently characterised by a sense of strenuousness and conscious purpose. The disease of the Victorian society, the struggle with science and material culture, the debates with religious faith find expression in the

works of most of the poets and prose writers of the period. Thus, you have found that almost all writings of the period are replete with doctrines and preaching for the human soul in turmoil and therefore, the prevailing mood is one of earnest in confrontation with the crucial issues of life.



14.8 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H. (1993). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Bangalore: Prism Books Pvt. Ltd.

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

Daiches, David. (1984). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. IV. Allied Publishers Private Ltd, Delhi.

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



14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Dualism between the religion and Victorian materialistic culture… …influence of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) that led to the dualism of Victorian faith and doubt… …impact of Industrial Revolution that affected all spheres of human activities.

Ans to Q No 2: Victorian literature is steeped in strenuousness and social purpose… ...it addressed the intrusion of science and material culture… …debates over religious faith… …Victorianism startled men from their taken-for-granted attitude… …such tendencies helped in the development of poetry and novel.

Ans to Q No 3: The novel became the primary literary form… …experimented with a variety of narratives by the great exponents ranging from Dickens to Hardy… …increase in the number of writers and rise in the reading public… …the popularity of the novel may be attributed to realism.

Ans to Q No 4: Novel as a mirror of the contemporary society reflecting the radical changes in the field of transport and communication, railways, industrialisation and the consequent shift of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation and rise in educational opportunities.

Ans to Q No 5: Dickens is famed for his caricatures… …presentation of the horror of living in the Victorian times… …depiction of the world of pain, sorrow and evil… …individual, especially a child, visualised as the victim of society,.

Ans to Q No 6: The Bronte sisters were very prominent… …Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* captured the reader's imagination… …Emily's use of multiple narratorial voices as an innovative tool… …Charlotte and Anne Bronte, primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world… …George Eliot intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world.

Ans to Q No 7: Novels not only increased the number of writers but also the reading public… …it became one of the most entertaining and easily accessible form of literature… …also emerged a number of women novelists concerned mainly with women's lives and issues… …soon there emerged various categories of novels.

Ans to Q No 8: Victorian poetry displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis… …Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals of the poets like Tennyson… …poetry thus reveals the poet's efforts to come to terms with the changes in society.

Ans to Q No 9: Thomas Babington Macaulay… …Thomas Carlyle… …Matthew Arnold.



14.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: State the implications of the term 'Victorian'. Can we really call it to be the "Second English Renaissance"?

Q 2: 'The Victorian age witnessed the predominance of the Novel form.' Explain with reference to any four major novelists of the Victorian age.

Q 3: How do you think the modernist poets deviated from the traditional modes of poetic expression? Elaborate with examples.

Q 4: What are the techniques used in modern drama? Explain with examples.

Q 5: What are the characteristics of Victorian prose writing in English? Explain with reference to the writers you have read.

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UNIT 15: THE MODERN AGE (TILL WW II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 The Modern Age: Intellectual Context

- 15.3.1 From 1890-1918
- 15.3.2 From 1918-1939

15.4 Major Literary Forms and Writers

- 15.4.1 Modern Novel
- 15.4.2 Modern Poetry
- 15.4.3 Modern Drama

15.5 Let us Sum up

15.6 Further Reading

15.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints only)

15.8 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the intellectual contexts of Literature of the Modern age
- read about the literary activities first from 1890 to the end of World War I, and then from 1918 to the outbreak of the World War II
- indentify the important trends in modern novels
- explain the different aspects of modern poetry
- note down the important aspects of modern drama

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with modern literature until the occurrence of World War II. The application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style. The Modern age in literature and arts appears to have ensued towards the last decades of the 19th century when contemporary society and culture were exposed

to several challenges in the wake of a large number of changes affecting every sphere of human life. The conscience of modern man was torn between the ideas of faith and doubt, hope and despair. However, you need to remember that the experience of modernism was not confined to England alone. It was a unique condition that had spread to various parts of the Western world and thus, modern literature too, under such circumstances, did not remain confined to the English soil alone. There were a host of writers who began experimenting with forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols which were also equally being experimented in other genres of creativity especially the arts. However, for your convenience, in this unit, we shall discuss the various aspects of modern literature roughly from 1890-1918 and through 1945 when World War II ended.

15.3 THE MODERN AGE: INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT
[Adapted from Edward Albert's History]

In the following subsections, you will be taken through a brief study of the intellectual contexts of the Modern Age out of which emerged a huge chunk of modern literature. First, we shall look at the contexts from 1890 to 1980 and then from 1918-1939.

15.3.1 From 1890-1918

You have learnt that the Modern Age in English Literature begins with the end of the long reign of Queen Victoria (1901), and with the stability, which the country had so long enjoyed. Following the shock left by the **Boer War** (1899-1902) and the experience of Victoria's reign in later years helped to divert attention from imperial expansion to social problems at home. This necessitated sweeping social reform and progress. The reawakening of a social conscience found its expression in the development of local government and the rapid extension of its influence upon the health, education, and happiness of the citizen. This period also saw the emergence and rapid growth of the Labour Party. Political passions ran high, and

the years before the War, saw serious labour troubles, many of them connected with the growth of Trades Unionism. Home Rule for Ireland, Free Trade or Protection, Votes for Women, the decline of agriculture and the growing urbanisation of the country were some of the major problems of the day. Thus, the intellectual contexts of the Modern Age can be seen in terms of the following points:

The Spread of Education:

The full effect of the Education Act of 1870, strengthened by the Act of 1902, began to make itself felt in the pre-War years. From elementary school to university, Educational opportunity was now available to the poorest of the poor who had the ability to take advantage of it. Thus, the literacy rate increased significantly. So increased the demand of literary works. Besides a larger market for the 'classics' and for all types of fiction, there arose an entirely new demand for works in science, history, and travel. As a profession and as a business, literature offered better financial prospects to the writers. Authors and publishers were always ready to supply the public with what they wanted, and there could be seen a pouring of new books from the presses with astonishing rapidity.

The Literature of Social Purpose:

The spread of literacy was accompanied by the awakening of the national conscience to the evils resulting from the Industrial Revolution. More than ever before, persons and writers with a reformist zeal pinned their faith on the printed word and on the serious theatre as the tool for social propaganda. Consequently, **problem or discussion play and the novel with a social purpose** became the two most typical literary products of the period. In view of the developments outlined above, it is not surprising that for the first time in its history, the novel became the dominant literary form in English. Similarly, after a hundred years of insignificance, drama reappeared as an important literary form, and the experienced men of the theatre succeeded in creating a live and significant drama out of the problems of their age.

Experiments in Literary Forms:

Long before 1918, it had become obvious that in poetry, novel and drama, the old traditional forms were outworn. Experimenters in all three fields were producing new forms to sustain the new demands being made upon them. Progress had been most rapid in the field of drama, but the novel too in the hands of the great masters underwent revolutionary changes. In the field of poetry too, experiments were less sensational, and the bulk of the poetry published was in the traditional manner. For the first time, after so many years, poetry regained significance.



LET US KNOW

Idea of Modernism:

Culturally speaking, modernism implied a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities, which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation. Thus, when we look at the Modern Age, we shall see that the reaction and responses to these variegated changes were mixed and contradictory. Human life became more materialistic and fast that visibly influenced the creative impulses of the time.

15.3.2 From 1918-39

This period was almost completely overshadowed by the two World Wars, the after effects of the First and the forebodings of the Second. After the Treaty of Versailles, much attention in England was laid on foreign affairs like the growing need of a new League of Nations, uncertainty in the Middle East, and troubles in India and Ireland. The General Strike of 1926 was a major manifestation of the post-War slump, which culminated in the 'depression' and its problems of want and unemployment. All these made the early thirties a period of great distress, particularly for the industrial areas. With

the rise of the Nazis in Germany, and from 1934 until 1939, there was mounting tension abroad and at home, new problems and tensions led to rearmament. Spiritually, the immediate post-War mood of desperate gaiety and determined frivolity, give way to doubt, uncertainty of aim, and a deeper self-questioning on ethical, social, and political problems. The following are some of the features of the period under consideration.

The Breakdown of Established Values:

The spirit of the age was perfectly reflected in the literature of the time. Novel, poetry, drama, and miscellaneous prose, all mirror the perplexity and uncertainty of aim, which sprang from the post-War breakdown of accepted spiritual values. The multiplicity of reactions to the contemporary situation was equalled by the variety of literary work. You should note that in this period, there could be seen an attempt to find new values in political thought. Besides that, politics and psychology became two most essential clues for the interpretation of the inter-War literary works.

The Resurgence of Poetry:

The pre-War years had seen a relative eclipse of poetry and the dominance of the novel and drama as literary forms. The demand, long before expressed by Yeats, for a new and living poetical tradition was met between the Wars in his own work, and in that of the new poets like T.S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, and Louis MacNeice and others. Poetry again became a vital literary form closely attached to life.

Variety of Technical Experiment:

It is doubtful whether any period of English literature saw experiments so bold and various as those of the inter-War years. A natural corollary of the quest for new values and for a new vital tradition was the desire for new forms and methods of presentation, and in all the major literary genres, the age produced revolutionary developments.

The Influence of Radio and Cinema:

The rapid development of two important media had an enormous impact on life and society. Radio brought literature into the household in the form of broadcast stories, plays, and literary discussion, which opened up an entirely new field for the authors. The same may be said of the cinema, which, for many people, became the main form of leisure activity. At the same time, it must be remembered that film techniques were the basis of a number of experiments in the novel.

The Speed of Life:

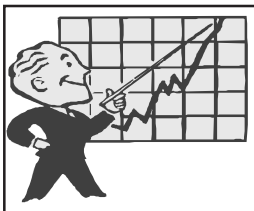
In the inter-War years, life generally was lived in an atmosphere of hustle and restlessness never known before. At work and at play, the demand was for more and faster action, stronger and more violent stimulus, and the general atmosphere thus created was by its very nature inimical to the cultivation of literary pursuits, which necessarily demanded a degree of calmness of spirit and leisure of mind.



LET US KNOW

How to Understand Modernism in Literature?

Modernism is a term often used to identify new and extraordinary features in form, content and styles of literature and other similar arts in the early decades of the 20th century mainly after the World War I of 1914. The ideals of modernism are signified by a radical break with some of the traditional bases of the Western art as well as the whole Western culture. Writers and Intellectuals influenced by Modernism questioned traditional modes of social organization, religion, and morality. The year 1922 is marked by the publication of remarkable experimental works like James's Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. These writers chose to 'experiment', as the catastrophe of the World War had shaken their faith in the continuity of Western civilization and raised doubts about the adequacy of the traditional literary modes to represent the harsh realities of the post-war world.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What does the term 'Modernism' imply?

Q 2: Which are the important contexts that helped in spreading ideas of Modernism in literature between 1890-1918?

Q 3: Note down the important aspects of modern literature from 1918-1939?

Q 4: What were the changes brought about by Modernism to English literature of early 20th century?

15.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

The Modern Age is marked by a number of experiments in both form and content. In this section, you will read briefly about three most important literary forms—Novel, Poetry and Drama that emerged during the Modern period.

15.4.1 Modern Novel

From 1890-1918:

As you know, the form of the novel emerged as a serious rival to poetry and drama in the 18th century, but throughout the 19th, its status grew even more thanks to the Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, George Eliot, and George Meredith. In this period, for the first time, the novel gained an unprecedented popularity over all other literary forms. Its growing importance has been accompanied by serious study of the novelists' art of writing. Besides this, the problems, aim and scope of the novelists too are now seriously posed in England perhaps for the first time. Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Henry James, John Galsworthy and their ilk devoted themselves to these issues. Abandoning the direct loose biographical method, they were in favour of an indirect or oblique narrative, with great concern over pattern, composition and characterisation based on the study of the inner consciousness.

You should note that much modern fiction has been written in this manner.

This was also the period in which emerged the novel of Ideas and Social Purpose. Novelists like Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad proposed that the aim of the novel should be to interpret life. While novelists like Butler, Wells, and Galsworthy saw it as a means of social propaganda, or as a medium for disseminating their ideas on religion, shifting social values, family life etc. Another underlying strain of modern novel of this period was **Realism.** Many short story and fiction writers were influenced by the realist conception of fiction, which also makes itself felt in the works of the novelists of social purpose. However, **French and Russian Influences** from the likes of Flaubert (1821-80), Zola (1840-1902), Maupassant (1850-93), and Balzac (1799-1850), too was clearly felt as the English writers learned about the art of minutely accurate portrayal of everyday life with special emphasis on the structure, pattern, style, and finish. The Russian authors like Dostoevsky (1821-81), Turgenev (1818-83), and Tolstoy (1828-1910), found a new interest in the darker hidden sides of human nature, which influenced the form and structure of English novels. Besides this, the growing popularity of the Short Story writing could be seen everywhere. Writers like Hardy, Bennett, Conrad, Gissing, Kipling, Wells, and Moore—all used this medium with great success.

From 1918-39:

During this period, the form of the novel became an Interpreter of Life. The disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment following World War II are nowhere to be seen so clearly than in the novel. That is why perhaps, the inter-War generation of writers looked to the novel to be an interpretation of contemporary scene. They sought to portray the complexities of inter-War life with no attempt at deeper purpose. However, the members of a third group of writers found themselves driven by focussed attention on the impact of life on individual consciousness. Character, rather than action, became the sole preoccupation of this group.

The novelists of this period experimented with new forms of fiction. The most significant novelists of the pre-War novelists had been Henry James; and of the inter-War years James Joyce. These novelists moved away from the controlled, finished, artistic form advocated by Henry James to a novel more loose, fluid, and less coherent. In place of Impressionism, they resorted to expressionism by which they sought to present, not the outward appearance, but the inner realities of life. The presentation of the 'Stream of Consciousness', the use of the interior monologue and an allusive style were the main characteristics of the novelists attempting to write from within the mind of his character. You will find that novelists like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, and Dorothy Miller Richardson excelled in this type of novels.

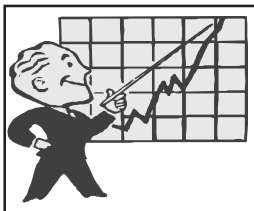


LET US KNOW

You must also pay attention to the fact that before the War, the rapid development of the science of psychology had already done much to deepen and enrich the study of human character in the novel, but its full impact was not felt until the inter-War period, when the works of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) most specifically his *Interpretation of Dreams* became a handbook for all interested in the study of personality. Freud's study of the subconscious and the unconscious encouraged the novelist's tendency to dwell more and more within the mind of his character. D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf were among major writers whose work reflects strongly the influence of modern psychology.

The growth of the American novel is one of the striking features of the period we call 'modern'. The American writers have been among the boldest so far as experiments in fictional techniques are concerned. The most famous writer is Ernest Hemingway (1898-1962), who published between the Wars *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *Men without Women* (1927), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *To Have*

and Have Not (1937) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). For him, violent action brings out the essentials of manliness, especially comradeship, endurance and the acceptance of danger as a way of life; in the world of Hemingway women are of little importance. Yet, for all his concern with the harshness of reality, he was extremely sensitive to beauty. His stark, emphatic, often almost curt language influenced a whole generation of writers. William Faulkner (1897-1962), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), John Dos Passos (1896-1970), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) were the most important American novelists of the time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the status of novel writing during 1890-1918?

Q 6: What charges occurred in the field of novel writing in between 1918-1939?

Q 7: What is the nature of Modern literature in terms of technique?

15.4.2 Modern Poetry

Modern poetry displays an experience of experiments that were introduced following the changes in the first decades of the 20th century. We may begin with a reference to the War Poets whose compositions reflected the experience of war and their response to it. In most of their compositions, they employed their first-hand experience of the war to depict a reality that very well created a sense of meaninglessness associated with the entire experience of war. These poets brought to light the futility associated with conflict and war, and the tragic destiny of mankind compelled to suffer within the given context. Moreover, the experience of the World War I was so overwhelming within the creative community that it initiated new trends in the world of poetry through the works of W. B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. In the poems of these poets, the readers shall notice

significant departures from the available modes of poetic expression. Yeats' early poems for instance, are remarkable for their romantic vein combined with the influence of Irish folklore, country theme and an appeal for nature. His 'Lake Isle of Innisfree' is one of the most famous poems where the poet juxtaposes country life with that of an urban world to bring out the points of conflict between the two. His later poems reveal his engagement with issues related to Irish nationalism skilfully displayed in poems such as 'Easter 1916'. Yeats' poetic sensibility moves on to attain philosophical heights in his Byzantium poems where we find him toying with the challenges of form, culture, time, language in the context of contemporary culture. In T.S. Eliot's poems, you will come across the poet's effort to debate the notion of subjectivity situated within the modern and contemporary life and culture. His monumental *The Waste Land* represents the anxiety of living in the society seeped in gross material culture. The following is an attempt to discuss different groups of poets that emerged during the periods mentioned.

Poetry From 1890-1918

1. The Decadents: The poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne, Morris, and the Rossettis gave way to the decadents of the 1890's. They adopted the motto of "art for art's sake" propounded by Walter Pater. Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) and Lionel Johnson (1867-1902), with a number of other poets, formed "The Rhymers' Club" of which W. B. Yeats was also a member. This group had little to say anything worthwhile, but they introduced a new and racy vigour into English poetry.

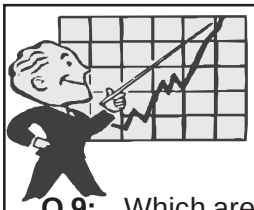
2. The Georgians: The decadent conception of poetry, so unhealthy and devitalised, had little hope of long survival, and by 1900, the search for a more natural type of verse had already begun. It resulted in the poetry of the Georgian School, much of which appeared in the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry.* In addition to the works of Rupert Brooke, Edmund Blunden, W. H. Davies, Walter de la Mare, and Lascelles Abercrombie, these collections included

works of poets like Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948), John Drinkwater (1882-1937), James Elroy Flecker (1884-1915) and so on. These poets were famous for their rejection of the ideas of the decadents, their quest for simplicity and reality, their love of natural beauty, especially as found in the English landscape, and their adherence to the forms and techniques of the main traditions of English poetry. They were in some sense escapists because for the most part their work shows little awareness of the industrial world around them.

3. The Imagists: Then emerged the Imagists Poetry in Reaction to the Georgians. Before the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* appeared, the seeds of revolt against its ideals were being sown in the lectures of T. E. Hulme (1883-1917), who exercised a profound influence on English poetry. Reacting against the facility and looseness of texture of much Georgian poetry, Hulme insisted that poetry should restrict itself to the world perceived by the senses, and to the presentation of its themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualised, concrete images, accurate in detail and precise in significance. He also advocated the use of *vers libre,* with its unlimited freedom, and its rhythms approaching more closely to those of everyday speech than to those of conventional verse patterns. Hulme's ideas were quickly taken up, particularly by the Americans, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Ezra Pound, who coined the name Imagism for this movement.

4. The War Poets: World War I brought to public notice many poets, particularly among the young men in the armed forces, while it provided a new source of inspiration for writers of established reputation. Many of the war poets were either killed or died in the struggle. A representative selection of the work of poets of this War is to be found in *Anthology of War Poetry,* edited by Robert Nichols (1943). Broadly, two phases in War Poetry may be distinguished—the patriotic fervour and rejoicing in the opportunity of self-sacrifice in the cause of human freedom, and a revival of the romantic conception of the knight-at-arms. Poets like Rupert Brooke (1887-

1915), Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), and Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) are some of the most renowned of the war poets. Brooke is usually considered typical of the early group of war poets and wrote with a youthful, healthy joy in life. While Siegfried Sassoon based nearly all his important works on his experiences in the War. A lover of the countryside, of rural sports, of music and painting, Sassoon represented a class, which was fast disappearing, and his work provides an admirable picture of a life of cultured leisure. Wilfred Owen was the greatest of the war poets. With a frankness, Owen set out to present the whole reality of war—the boredom, the hopelessness, the futility, the horror, occasionally the courage and self-sacrifice, but, above all, the pity of it. He himself wrote: "I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: How did the World War influence the modern poets?

Q 9: Which are the main groups of modern poetry from 1890-1918?

Poetry From 1918-39

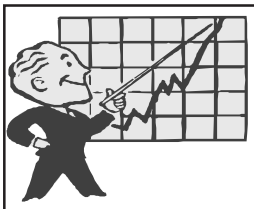
A brave new world torn apart by the disillusionment and despair of the World War found their supreme expression in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925). The modern tension, so different from the complacency of the mid-Victorian period or of the Georgians, clearly demanded a new poetic technique. The new poets now turned to free verse. The development of a new medium also owed much to the poetry of Hopkins, with its sprung rhythms, complex verbal patterns, and disregard for normal syntax. Such an emphasis on the evolution of new forms had obvious dangers, chief among them a lack of proportion, which elevated form above substance, and a glorification of eccentricity for its own sake. The freedom of *vers libre* encouraged licence and the pursuit

of novelty increased the obscurity, which came from the attempt to communicate complex states of mind. Much of the poetry of the period is admittedly difficult, and poetry was in danger of becoming an art for the initiated few. This trend was emphasised by the popularity of the metaphysical conceit, which accompanied the rebirth of interest in Donne and his fellows, the growing use of symbolism under the influence of Yeats and the French Symbolists, and the imitation of the allusiveness of the early Eliot. On the question of difficulty, Eliot himself wrote: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."

Already in the 1920s, the new interest in psychological research had turned poets to a deeper investigation of the hidden impulses of man. In the early Eliot, for instance, we have that rather inconsequential revelation of the most secret thoughts of the character, which became known as the internal monologue. It was, in fact, in psychology and politics that the poets of the 1930s, led by W. H. Auden, sought a solution to the world problems. Auden and his followers, basing their thought on left-wing political ideals, took up the cause of the masses, whose lives they studied with sympathy and often with striking realism. Some of them actively supported the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, and their proletarian sympathies led to some rather cheap satire on contemporary England. In the poorer poets, political writing deteriorated into mere pamphleteering; in the best, we have a serious attempt to produce something positive and constructive. Though Eliot and Hopkins were among their acknowledged masters in matters of technique, the poets of the 30s were strongly critical of the conception of poetry for the few. In an attempt to make contact with a wider audience, they

abandoned the academic style for a more colloquial expression, and used the vocabulary, idiom, and rhythms of everyday speech with considerable force and vigour. They found much to admire, not only in the simple diction and rhythmical subtleties of Yeats, but also in the variety of his themes, and the fresh constructive outlook, which lay behind them. The impact of psychology on the poets of this decade is seen in the importance attached to sex in such writers as Auden and Dylan Thomas, and in the interest in the individual personality seen in such poets as Spender. Freud's revelation of the importance of the subconscious and his development of psychoanalysis lent greater depth to this study.

The picture of the inter-War years is, then, one of continued uncertainty and experiment in an age well described in the title of Auden's collection, *The Age of Anxiety,* which was not, however, published until 1948. There was still no strongly established poetic tradition to compare in stability with that of the Victorian age, but at least the inter-War poets had passed through the despair of the middle twenties and had produced something like a constructive approach to life. In such an age, it is natural to find a great proportion of didactic verse, but even in the work of those poets who devoted themselves most whole-heartedly to finding a solution to the problems of a perplexed generation, we find lyric poetry of great intrinsic value.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: How did the modern poets evolve new poetic techniques during 1918-39?

Q 11: What did T S Eliot state about poetry and poets of his generation?

Q 12: In what ways, did the poets of the 30s react to those of the previous times?

15.4.3 Modern Drama

From 1890-1918

From the dramatic point of view, the first half of the 19th century was almost completely barren. Although many of the major poets had tried drama, none of them had achieved any success. The greater part of their work never saw the stage. The professional theatre of the period was in a low state. Among the respectable middle classes, it was despised as a place of vice. Audiences did nothing to raise the standard, which remained deplorably low. The popular pieces of the day were melodrama, farces, and sentimental comedies, which had no literary qualities whatever, were poor in dialogue and negligible in characterisation, and relied for their success upon sensation, rapid action, and spectacle.

However, within the melodrama itself, there could be traced a significant development from romantic and historical themes to more domestic themes, and this movement toward realism received considerable impetus from the work of T. W. Robertson (1829-71), a writer of comedies, who introduced the idea of a serious theme underlying the humour, and characters and dialogue of a more natural kind. This trend was later continued by Henry Arthur Jones and Sir A. W. Pinero. It was not until the 90s, when the influence of Ibsen was making itself strongly felt, and Shaw produced his first plays, that the necessary impetus was there to carry the serious drama over into the field of social, domestic, or personal problems. A period so keenly aware of social problems was an admirable breeding-ground for the drama of ideas, and the themes of drama became the problems of religion, of youth and age, of labour and capital, and above all, now that Ibsen had torn down the veil which had kept the subject in safe obscurity, of sex. In widening the scope of the drama Ibsen and then Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville-Barker were of paramount importance, and they did much to create a tradition of natural dialogue. New psychological investigations

reinforced the interest in character as distinct from plot, and the realistic drama of our period aimed at the impartial presentation of real life, contemporary rather than historical.

However, some of the important theatrical developments outside London at that time were the creation of the Irish National Theatre in Dublin. The idea of a national drama was born in the minds of Yeats and some of his contemporaries. Then, in 1904, the Abbey Theatre, of which Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory were directors, was formed. Of the dramatists, who wrote for this theatre, Yeats and Synge looked onto the drama as a thing of the emotions, and, reacting against realism, sought their themes among the legends, folklore, and peasantry of Ireland. You should pay particular attention to the fact that despite the efforts of the major Victorian poets, there was no tradition of poetic drama at the beginning of our period. By 1920, there were signs of a rebirth, but the atmosphere in which realistic, naturalistic drama throve was uncongenial to poetic drama. At the Abbey Theatre, Yeats attempted to revive poetry on the stage, but he lacked the essential qualities of the dramatist. Stephen Phillips (1864-1915) wrote a number of blank-verse plays, but he had little popular appeal. Masefield, too, experimented in poetic drama with but limited success, while Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948), who wrote a number of quite powerful poetical dramas, saw hope for this form only in the amateur theatre.

From 1918-39

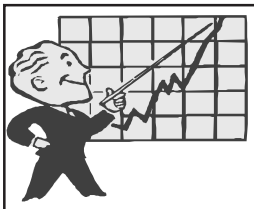
The playwrights and directors during this period explored alternative ways of expressing the modernist vision. In around 1920, the English theatre was in poor condition. From 1890 to 1920, the pursuit of realism and naturalism had dominated the work of most of the important English dramatists, though for Synge and Shaw ‘mere’ realism had always been inadequate. By 1920, Yeats’ dissatisfaction with that drama, which was an objectively accurate portrayal of the surface of life, was felt by the theatre-going public as a whole. It had had more than enough of realism, and the time

was ripe for change. Of the older dramatists, Shaw and Galsworthy continued in the realistic tradition. However, the most influential practitioner of Modern English drama is George Bernard Shaw who infused the modernist spirit into standard theatrical forms. Nearly all his plays address prevailing social problems. But, the underlying vein of comedy makes their stark themes more palatable. Shaw examined education, marriage, religion, government, health care, and class privilege. He was most angered by what he perceived as the exploitation of the working class. An ardent socialist, Shaw wrote many brochures and speeches for the 'Fabian Society'.

However, the revival of poetic drama is another development of the inter-War period, which illustrates the dissatisfaction with realism, and the tradition of naturalistic prose dialogue. Experiments in verse drama were made by a number of eminent poets, but their success on the commercial stage was very limited, though the plays of T. S. Eliot attracted considerable attention. In his later drama, Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948) frankly abandoned hope for poetry in the professional theatre, and designed his work for amateurs. In the thirties, the verse plays of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood achieved some success. T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral written* for performance in Canterbury Cathedral, is one of his greatest theatrical achievements.

However, the reaction against realism soon began to be felt and by 1920s, experimental drama from Russia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and France began to influence the drama word wide. Important dramatists contributing to the new movement were Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)—*Six Characters in Search of an Author*; and Karel Capek (1890-1938), Jean Cocteau, Georg Kaiser, and Ernst Toller. Of the experiments, by far the most influential was 'expressionism'. 'Expressionist' drama was concerned not with society but with man. It aimed to offer a deep, subjective, psychological analysis, not so much of an individual as of a type, and it made much of the subconscious. For such a study, established

dramatic forms and methods of expression were inadequate, and the expressionists threw overboard the conventional structure in favour of an unrestricted freedom. Their dialogue was often cryptic and patterned, now verse, now prose, and was in every way as far removed from the naturalistic prose of the realist school as can well be imagined. Symbolic figures, embodiments of inner, secret impulses, were introduced on the stage in the attempt to make clear the psychological complexities of character. Of the expressionist dramatists writing in English, the most important was undoubtedly the American, Eugene O'Neill.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Discuss briefly the significance of Bernard Shaw as a modern dramatist.

Q 14: What were the issues that addressed in Drama of Ideas? Name some of the greatest exponents of such drama?

Q 15: What is meant by experimental drama? Give examples.



15.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing. The Modern age in literature and arts appears to have ensued towards the last decades of the 19th century when the society and culture were exposed to several challenges in the wake of different changes affecting every sphere of human life. From the discussions made in the unit, you must have learnt that modernism implies a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities, which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation, and most importantly the World Wars. There were a host of writers who began experimenting with forms and

methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols which were also equally being experimented in genres like Novels, Poetry and Drama. Thus, in this unit, you have also read about the important trends in modern novels with particular reference to some of the important novelists of the time, have gained some ideas about modern poetry and its practitioners, and have noted down the various important aspects of modern drama with particular reference to some of the modern dramatists.



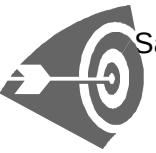
15.6 FURTHER READING

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15.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Modernism implied a moving away from the preceding modes of artistic activities which may be attributed to the radical nature of changes brought about in the contemporary lives and society through technology, advancement of scientific thought and urbanisation.

Ans to Q No 2: The Spread of Education that significantly increased the demand for literary works… …emergence of literature of Social Purpose… …experiments in producing new literary forms to suit the experience of the age.

Ans to Q No 3: Breakdown of established values due to the post war breakdown of values… …resurgence of poetry… …technical

experiments of various sorts… …the Influence of Radio and Cinema… …increase in the speed of life.

Ans to Q No 4: Life became more material and faster and this got reflected in the creative impulse of the time… …Western authors began experimenting with forms and methods, techniques and subjects… …the approach to arts was conditioned by new ideas.

Ans to Q No 5: The novel gained an unprecedented popularity over all other literary forms… …serious study of the novelists' art of writing like an indirect or oblique narrative… … emergence of novels of Ideas and Social Purpose… …Realism as an important underlying theme… …French and Russian Influences and so on.

Ans to Q No 6: The novel became an Interpreter of Life… …the disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment following World War II got reflected… …novel was used as an interpretation of contemporary scene… …novels to portray the complexities of inter-War life… …Character, rather than action, became the sole preoccupation of this group.

Ans to Q No 7: Modern novelists experimented with different novelistic genre to address new situations and perspectives…. …implies new and experimental features in form, content and styles… ….writers and Intellectuals influenced by Modernism questioned traditional modes of social organisation, religion, and morality… …doubts on the traditional literary modes to represent the harsh realities of the post-war world.

Ans to Q No 8: The war poets reflected the experience of war… …they employed their first-hand experience of the war, the sense of meaninglessness… …the tragic destiny of mankind compelled to suffer within the given context.

Ans to Q No 9: The Decadents who introduced a new and racy vigour into English poetry… …The Georgians famous for their rejection of the ideas of the decadents, their quest for simplicity and reality, their love of natural beauty … …The Imagists who presented their themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualised, concrete images, accurate in detail and precise in significance … …War Poetry providing the whole reality of war—the boredom, the hopelessness, the futility, the horror

Ans to Q No 10: The new poets now turned to free verse… …the freedom of *vers libre* encouraged licence, and the pursuit of novelty increased the obscurity which came from the attempt to communicate complex states of mind.

Ans to Q No 11: "We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."

Ans to Q No 12: In an attempt to make contact with a wider audience, they abandoned the academic style for a more colloquial expression, and used the vocabulary, idiom, and rhythms of everyday speech with considerable force and vigour. They found much to admire, not only in the simple diction and rhythmical subtleties of Yeats, but also in the variety of his themes, and the fresh constructive outlook which lay behind them.

Ans to Q No 13: George Bernard Shaw infused the modernist spirit into standard theatrical forms… …he mostly examined social problems like education, marriage, religion, government, class consciousness… …he was enraged by the exploitation of the working classes… …he became famous for his drama of ideas.

Ans to Q No 14: A period so keenly aware of social problems was an admirable breeding-ground for the drama of ideas, and the themes of drama became the problems of religion, of youth and age, of labour and capital, and above all, now that Ibsen had torn down the veil which had kept the subject in safe obscurity, of sex. In widening the scope of the drama Ibsen and then Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville-Barker were of paramount importance, and they did much to create a tradition of natural dialogue.

Ans to Q No 15: Experimental drama emerged as a reaction against realism… …experimental drama from Russia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and France rendered influence…

...Expressionist drama aimed to offer a deep, subjective, psychological analysis... ...emergence of symbolic figures, embodiments of inner, secret impulses etc.



15.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q1. Provide a detailed sketch of the intellectual contexts of modern literature during 1890-1918.

Q2. Attempt a brief definition of 'modernism' with reference to its intellectual contexts and its cultural manifestations.

Q3. Show how 'modern' literature reflected the dominant concerns of the period.

Q4. To what extent is the modernist movement in its various forms, a creation of a new form of metropolitan culture?

Q5. Which are the important aspects of modern novels? Discuss critically.

Q6. Explain the methods adopted by modernist poets to articulate their departure from older traditions.

Q7. World War I and II had a profoundly disturbing effect on Western society. How did the modern poets react to these effects?

Q8. Briefly compare the main themes of the poets written before the First World War and after it.

Q9. Write a note on major tendencies of the different groups of modern poetry in general with reference to some important poets from each group.

Q10. Write about the important trends in modernist drama with particular reference to some major exponents and their works.

Q11. Discuss the significance of the important poets who capture the mood of the inter-war years? Justify your answer with textual examples.

Q12. Would agree with the view that the metropolis predominates as a theme of modern poetry? Give specific instances to illustrate your answer.

Q13. In what ways, do you think, modern novels reflect on the experiences of the early 20th century. Elaborate with appropriate examples.

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UNIT 16: THE MODERN AGE (AFTER WW II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

16.1 Learning Objectives

16.2 Introduction

16.3 Novels

16.4 Poetry

16.5 Drama

16.6 Let us Sum up

16.7 Further Reading

16.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

16.9 Possible Questions

16.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- describe the contexts of literature at the end of World War II
- indentify the important trends in novel writing after World War II
- describe the aspects of poetry after World War II
- note down the various important aspects of drama following World War II

16.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of this course. In the previous unit, you have learnt that the application of the term 'modern' in Modern English literature is marked by various experiments in subject matter, form and style of writing. In this unit however, we shall try to examine the nature of modern English literature following World War II. During this period, there emerged a host of writers who further began experimenting with the various forms and methods, techniques and subjects, images and symbols in genres like Novels, Poetry and Drama. Thus, in this unit, you will read about some of the important trends in modern novels, modern poetry and modern drama following World War II as well as their exponents with particular reference to some of their important works.

16.3 NOVELS

The havocs caused by World War I and II, and the uncertainties of post-War years are reflected in the response of many novelists towards the disintegration of society. You should not be surprised to find the frequency with which violence and sadism appear as themes in the works of these novelists because of their experience in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction. However, many of the younger writers were involved in the new psychological problems arising from the bizarre and contradictory nature of an affluent society, which is discontented with itself, and yet is interested chiefly in retaining or acquiring material comforts. A mixture of realism, cynicism, dark comedy, shrewd comment, and satire is used to express their search for stability and basic values. Because of technological advances, space exploration, and the threat of nuclear and germ warfare, there has been a tremendous increase in science Action novels about the future on other planets, or on an earth catastrophically altered. However, English novel of this period has been affected to an inestimable extent by three entirely new influences, which are as the following.

1. The novels from the USA were read so widely like never before. Many of these have been characterised by detailed realism, lack of reticence, brutality, disillusion, and criticism of the national and international scene. In a penetrating manner, they dealt with the frustrations and emotional storms largely caused by urban-commercial life. Outstanding among such writers, and much admired and hugely read, are Henry Miller [*Tropic of Cancer* (1931)], John Steinbeck [*The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *Cannery Row* (1945), *East of Eden* (1952)], Saul Bellow, [*The Adventures of Augie March* (1953)]; Norman Mailer [*The Naked and the Dead* (1948)], John Barth [*The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960)]; John Updike [*Rabbit, Run* (1960)], V. S. Naipaul [*A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), and *The Mimic Man* (1967)].

2. The emergence of best seller novels which had rendered specific impacts because of their literary achievements, for example – *Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison; *Lolita* (1955) by the Russian Vladimir Nabokov;

To Kill a Mockingbird (1960) by Harper Lee; *Catch-22* (1961) by Joseph Heller; and *The Pawnbroker* (1962) by Edward Lewis Wallant.

3. Novels translated from foreign languages and made available in large numbers also influenced contemporary writers. The effect of the translated works of Frantz Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Andre Gide has continued over many years, but a later generation of writers is making itself felt—men like Gunter Grass, Heinrich Boll, Alberto Moravia, the Russians Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, Jean Genet, and the all-important existentialists from France – Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir. This treasury of novels has been made available chiefly because of the revolution in publishing.

However, the best-known English novelist of the period under consideration is **Graham Greene** (1904-1991) whose imaginative construction of characters made his famous. Another essentially English novelist is **Charles Percy Snow** (1905-1980), who provides an insight into the English society from the 1920s onward while describing the moral development of his hero, Lewis Eliot, the narrator of a whole series of novels. Next to them, **Evelyn Waugh** (1903-66) became the outstanding satirist of the 30s. His heroes were virtuous but naive young men who suffered embarrassment and hardship. Examples are *Decline and Fall* (1928), *Vile Bodies* (1930), *Black Mischief* (1932), *Scoop* (1938), and *Put out More Flags* (1942). His later novels, beginning with *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), had a new feeling of concern, though still illuminated by wit and sardonic comment.

Besides the above mentioned novelists, considerable praise has been given to **Lawrence George Durrell** (1912-1990) for his *The Alexandria Quartet;* **Joyce Cary** (1888-1957) and his portrayal of exuberant, bizarre figures who existed according to a code of their own; **William Cooper** (1910-2002) who may be considered the originator of the “Angry Young Man” who revolts against the system which has nurtured him; **John Barrington Wain** (1925-1994), whose *Hurry On Down* (1953) provides a more carefully considered portrait of the Angry Young Man and so on. In Wain’s novels, the anti-hero wants to opt out of a society he despises and yet stay in it without any responsibilities. Then, mention may be made of **Kingsley Amis** (1922-1995) whose novel *Lucky Jim* (1954) is about a man who claims that he wants

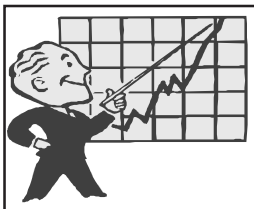
little from life but a few simple pleasures, but has no dislike for the material benefits to be culled from rising above himself; **Anthony Burgess** (1917-1993) who spent a number of years in Malaysia, from which he derived inspiration for his *Malayan Trilogy* (1956-59), a picture of that country at the end of imperial rule and a study of the relationships between races and so on.

George Orwell (Eric Hugh Blair) (1903-50) was a typical novelist of the inter-War years. However, it was only after the World War II that Orwell became a figure of outstanding importance. His *Animal Farm* (1945), an expression of his own disillusion, *Nineteen Eighty-*

Four (1949), a terrifying prognostication of the hatred, cruelty, fear, loss of individuality, and lack of human love that the future would bring are some of his greatest creations. When so many writers find almost nothing to commend the present and the near future, it is not surprising that some have retreated from actuality and created their own worlds. The best known of these was John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973), whose novels became something of a cult, especially among intellectuals. *The Hobbit* (1937), ostensibly a children's book, and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) present a world that is an amalgam of fairy lore, Norse mythology, epic, and Arthurian legends. Each book is an epic, a romance, a comedy, a Gothic fairytale, a horror story, an allegory made even more effective by inspired irony.

Finally, we must also consider some of the many outstanding novelists who are women and seem proud to assert themselves as such. Of them, we may mention the name of **Muriel Sarah Spark** (1918-2006), the creator of bizarre situations illustrating contemporary life in works like *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958), *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), and *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974); of **Jean Iris Murdoch** (1919-1999), the writer of the novel *Under the Net* (1954) which provides a typical view of the Angry Young Man; of **Doris May Lessing** (1919-2013) who spent part of her life in Africa, picturing the situation of the black people subjected to the authority of whites.

Therefore, you find that following the World War II, one can see the emergence of a number of important novelists whose works help us to understand the spirit of the time and society in which they lived.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is your experience of modern novels following World War II?

Q 2: Which are the three new influences in English novel following World War II?

Q 3: Why is George Orwell famous as a post-war novelist?

16.4 POETRY

As you know, the period of the War produced much poetry in anthologies like *Poems from the Forces* (1942, 1943), edited by Keidrych Rhys. Some poets, of course, dealt with the War in the most obvious ways- the boredom and frustration of Service life, the waste, the appreciation of friendship, a deep understanding of the English landscape, and the possibility of violent death. Some other young poets turned to writing poetry because of their experiences during the War. One of them was **Roy Broadbent Fuller** (1912-1991) who became a poet because of his service with the Royal Navy in the Middle East. His war poetry was published in *The Middle of a War* (1942) and *A Lost Season* (1944). Later came *Epitaphs and Occasions* (1949) which by its disciplined forms, spare language, and analytical approach, began to be seen as a counterblast to the so-called 'romantic' poetry inspired by **Dylan Thomas** immediately after the War. **Charles Stanley Causley** (1917-2003) was another writer from the Navy, as is suggested by the titles of his early volumes—*Hands to Dance* (1951) and *Farewell, Aggie Weston* (1951). What mattered to him most was the lost innocence of youth, country life, social groups and their habits, due to the War.

During the War, the individual and not the community became the centre of interest for poets, even for Auden and Spender. This new attitude was evident in the **Apocalyptic Movement**, led by J. F. Hendry (1912-), Henry Treece (1912-66), and G. S. Fraser (1915-) whose poetry appeared in three anthologies they compiled—*The New Apocalypse* (1940), *The White Horseman* (1941), and *The Crown and the Sickle* (1945). The movement proclaimed its hatred of the Machine Age, its faith in the individual as the

hope of humanity, and its belief in myth. The poet's aim was to express 'his own private perspective on the. World, though not in an immediately intelligible way. Before long the members of the group went their own ways, and its influence w s lost.

Dylan Marlais Thomas (1914-53) may be described as the originator of **neo-roman poetry** in the forties and the enemy of intellectualism in verse. He was deeply passionate, and drew upon the human body, sex, and the Old Testament for much of his imagery and complex word play, and his verse was splendidly colourful and musical. His work appeared in *18 Poems* (1934), *Twenty-five Poems* (1936), *The Map of Love* (1939), and *Deaths and Entrances* (1946), but he is best known for *Under Milk Wood* (1954), a verse 'play' written specially for radio and at times presented as a solo reading by the author himself. The post-War years was influenced more by Thomas rather than the Apocalyptic. In some ways, there was a return to the spirit of the 18th century.

Two other poets who began writing in the inter-War years but established themselves afterwards are **George Barker** (1913-1991) and **David Gascoyne** (1916-2001); both are antipathetic to the intellectual approach, both were originally surrealists. Barker was very conscious of the failure of the world. *Eros in Dogma* (1944), *News of the World* (1950), *A Vision of Beasts and Gods* (1954), and *The Golden Chains* (1968) are characterised by stream of consciousness techniques, which engender evocative but often over-complex imagery. Gascoyne, on the other hand, has a high seriousness and a religious conviction, which helps him to endure the world's agony; latterly he has become more descriptive and less effective, and involved in nightmare imagery, as in *Night Thoughts* (1956). His best poetry appeared in *Poems* (1948) and *A Vagrant, and Other Poems* (1950).

Very much different was what became known as **The Movement** resulting from *Poets of the 50's* (1950) edited by Dennis Joseph Enright (1920-) and another collection from largely the same poets, *New Lines* (1956, 1963) edited by **Robert Conquest** (1917-2015). The Movement professed no interest in stylistic innovation, and in neo-classic mood concerned itself with reality. Most of the poets concerned were academics—Wain, Amis,

Holloway, Davie, Enright himself; with them were Larkin, Gunn, and Jennings. Enright's own poems, such as *Laughing Hyena* (1953), *Some Men Are Brothers* (1960), *The Old Adam* (1965), deal with individual man in all his conditions, showing pity and indignation for his sufferings, and faith in his innate dignity. His language is based on colloquial speech stripped of elaborations, a style that well suits his ironical disgust of hypocrisy and cruelty. Robert Conquest's poetry is devoted more to a view of landscape with Man as an integral part. The approach is intellectual and the subject matter is reality. Some of his best poems are included in *Poems* (1955), *Between Mars and Venus* (1962) and *Arias for a Love Opera* (1969). Another important poet is **Donald Alfred Davie** (1922-1995), primarily concerned with the use of language, which in his early poems was extremely difficult, and with style, which is characterised by gracefulness. His works include *A Winter Talent* (1957) and *Events and Wisdoms* (1964). Poets like John Wain gives a moral dignity to his verse, as in *Mixed Feelings* (1951) and *Weep before God* (1961), but too often he is prosaic and unambitious. **Thomas William Gunn** or Thom Gunn (1929-2004) wrote of the multitudinous forms of energy which characterise our cities, and of self-destructive violence. Gunn is best known for *Fighting Terms* (1954), *The Sense of Movement* (1957), *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Touch* (1967), and *Moly* (1971).

Perhaps more influential a post war poet is **Ted Hughes** (1930-1998), especially because of *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957). His 'verbal belligerence,' partly influenced by his interest in the Yorkshire dialect and traditional oral literature, gives positivity to his views. He sees power and vitality as essential principles always contending against death, the failure of God to create a satisfactory universe, the ever-present strength of evil, and personal survival as the only goal to achieve. Hughes had the unique gift for describing the Yorkshire landscape, and for understanding animals in an unsentimental manner. In animals, he sees the certainties, the pointlessness, and the violence that are part of man's life, and he uses them to clarify and intensify human experience. His important recent works are *Woodwo* (1967), *Crow* (1970), *Crow Wakes* (1971), and *Eat Crow* (1972).

Very much a loner is **Philip Larkin** (1922-1985). He accepts defeatism and rootlessness as part of existence. There is in his work a sense of loss, of beauty, departed, of the changing qualities of English life. He obtains his pleasures (though often melancholy ones) from his observation of little situations and places, and from dwelling on their associations, all very personal, and he expresses them in a clear, easily comprehended fashion. *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), and *High Windows* (1974) are representative works, but he also edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What did the Apocalyptic Movement proclaim?

Q 5: How did Dylan Thomas practise his Neo-Roman poetry?

Q 6: Write a note on 'Movement poetry'?

Q 7: What are the qualities of Ted Hughes as a modern poet?

16.5 DRAMA

The immediate result of the wartime blackout was the closing down of London theatres for some time. Soon it was reopened. A great step forward was made as companies sponsored by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) and Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) took drama into the provinces, to the smallest villages, and wherever Army camps and workers' hostels were situated. They created a vast new public, which was responsible for the boom, which immediately followed the War. However, in 1963, the Old Vic became the temporary home of the National Theatre Company. Another aspect of subsidised drama is the considerable number of annual festivals, aimed largely at tourists but offering splendid opportunities even to small enterprises 'on the fringe.' One must also stress the importance of the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford**, and its sister-company based in London, as well as the steady increase in university theatres and theatres sponsored by local authorities,

many of which so that to encourage future audiences by educating children to appreciate all forms of drama.

However, for some time English dramatists seemed to have nothing in common with the leading foreign writers whose influence suddenly made itself felt in the early 1950's. First and foremost was the German playwright **Bertolt Brecht** (1898-1956), with his uncompromising views on production, his use of songs and music, his humanitarian communism, and his insistence on the alienation of the audience and the actor from the character even as he projects the play into the midst of the onlookers. After Brecht, the most important influence was **Samuel Beckett** (1906-1989), formerly James Joyce's secretary, who wrote in French. His *Waiting for Godot* (1952; Eng. trans. 1954) is a static representation without structure or development, using only meandering, seemingly incoherent dialogue to suggest despair of a society which is destroying itself and of mankind unsuspectingly surrendering its natural liberties. Other important dramatic devices of Beckett are *Endgame* (1955) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958). Some foreign writers wielding great influence at the present are, from the U.S.A., Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee; from Germany, Weiss and Hochhuth; from Switzerland, Diirrenmatt; from Italy, Ugo Betti; from France, Cocteau, Genet, Ionesco, Anouilh, Sartre; and from Spain, Arrabal.

English drama took an entirely new turn with the establishment in 1956 of the **English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre.** It aimed to present the best foreign plays and to encourage new native writers; its private productions without decor gave inestimable help to young actors and writers, and helped to disseminate new ideas. Outstanding among its products was **John James Osborne** (1929-1994), whose *Look Back in Anger* (1956) gave the strongest fillip to the concept of the "Angry Young Man"; the tragi-comic depiction of the failure, the liar, and the irresponsible showed him bolstered up with optimism and nostalgia for a past that always seemed better than the present.

John Arden (1930-2012) achieved success at the Royal Court with *Live Like Pigs* (1958), a Brechtian survey of behaviour by means of words,

music, song, and symbolism. *The Happy Haven* (1960) was an expressionist farce with masks. Ann Jellicoe (1927-) is best known for her plays about the violent, unorganized world of the teenager expressed in semi-articulate dialogue which illustrates the insecurity and meaninglessness of a frivolous world; these plays are *The Sport of My Mad Mother* (1956) and *The Knack* (1961).

Not many English writers have attempted to follow Arrabal, lonesco, and Albee into the theatre of the absurd, but one who retreats from reason and deals with the logic of the non-sequitur is **Norman Frederick Simpson** (1919-2011) author of *A Resounding Tinkle* (1957), *One-Way Pendulum* (1959), *The Cresta Run* (1965) and a number of one-act farces of words without action. Other Royal Court productions of note were *The Mulberry Bush* by Angus Wilson, *Love from Margaret* by Evelyn Ford, *The Long and the Short and the Tall* by Willis Hall, and Nigel Dennis's *Cards of Identity,* a witty onslaught on the dogmatism, which restricts modern man.

The influence of Beckett is immediately seen in the plays of **Tom Stoppard** (1937-), a Czech who eventually settled in England. His characters are suspended in isolation; they do nothing but philosophise; they know less about themselves than the audience does; words, acts, ideas all seem part of a stream of irrelevancies. He made a name for himself with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), followed by *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), but more recent plays—*Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), and *Dirty Linen* (1976)—have extended his reputation in the commercial theatre.

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) conveys the rambling ambiguities and silences of everyday conversation, which are marked by a visible influence of Beckett. Pinter uses them to build up the sense of menace and scarcely restrained violence, which characterise plays like *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Dumb Waiter* (1960), and *The Caretaker* (1960). The plays are quite short and set in an enclosed, claustrophobic space; the characters are always in doubt about their function, and in fear of someone or something 'outside'. *A Night Out* (1961) and *The Homecoming* (1965) are two of his later plays.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What role did Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) & Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) play for popularising drama following World War II?



16.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have seen that the uncertainties following World War I and II are reflected in the response of many writers towards the disintegration of society. The frequency with which violence and sadism appear as themes in the works of the poets, novelists as well as dramatists in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction, have influenced the development of literature following the World Wars. The English novels of the stated period have been affected by new factors like the influences from the USA and from other continents, as well as translations of different foreign works into English. In case of poetry however, most poets dealt with the War in terms of the boredom and frustration of Service life, the waste, the appreciation of friendship, a deep understanding of the English landscape, and the possibility of violent death etc. However, there can be seen two distinct groups—Apocalyptic Poetry and Movement Poetry during this period. You have learnt that although due to the wartime black out London Theatre was closed for some time, soon reopened. However, for some time English dramatists seemed to have nothing in common with the leading foreign writers whose influence suddenly made itself felt in the early 1950's. Of these mention must be made of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Eugene Ionesco, and so on. However, playwrights like Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter struggled so hard for the cause of English drama.



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16.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Novels reflected the havocs and uncertainties caused by World War I and II… …violence and sadism in a world grown accustomed to the thought of genocide, global conflict, and nuclear destruction… …a mixture of realism, cynicism, dark comedy, shrewd comment, and satire… …tremendous increase in science Action novels about the future on other planets, or on an earth catastrophically altered.

Ans to Q No 2: Influence of the novels from the USA… …emergence of best seller novels… …novels translated from foreign languages.

Ans to Q No 3: George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is an expression of his own disillusion… … *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1948) presents a terrifying prognostication of the hatred, cruelty, fear, loss of individuality, and lack of human love.

Ans to Q No 4: Hatred of the Machine Age… …faith in the individual as the hope of humanity, and its belief in myth… …aim was to express one's own private perspective on the world.

Ans to Q No 5: Dylan Thomas's neo-roman poetry reflected a deeply passionate poetry drew upon the human body, sex, and the Old Testament for much of his imagery and complex word-play… …splendidly colourful and musical verse.

Ans to Q No 6: Movement Poetry professed no interest in stylistic innovation and in neo-classic mood… …poetry dealt with individual man in all his conditions, showing pity and indignation for his sufferings, and faith in his innate dignity… …Language was colloquial stripped of elaborations, the style suit ironical disgust of hypocrisy and cruelty.

Ans to Q No 7: Hughes saw power and vitality contending against death, the failure of God… he sought to create a satisfactory universe, the ever-present strength of evil, and personal survival as the only goal to achieve… …in animals, he saw the certainties, the pointlessness, and the violence that are part of man's life.

Ans to Q No 8: CEMA and ENSA took drama into the provinces, to the smallest villages, and wherever Army camps and workers' hostels were situated. They created a vast new public, which was responsible for the boom which immediately followed the War.



16.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Attempt a brief outline of the intellectual contexts and its cultural manifestations in Literature following World War II.

Q.2. Show how 'modern' literature reflected the dominant concerns of the period following the year 1939.

Q.3. Explain the methods adopted by modernist poets to articulate their departure from older traditions since 1940s.

Q.4. World War II had a profoundly disturbing impact on Western society. Discuss.

Q.5. Briefly compare the main themes of the poets written before the First World War and after World War II.

Q.6. Provide a detailed Sketch of the novelistic responses following World War II.

Q.7. Write in detail about the important trends in modernist drama after World War II with particular reference to some of the representative works.

Q.8. What role did the Royal Court Theatre play in spreading the cause of drama? Discuss.

Q.9. Discuss the intellectual contexts of modern literature in between 1890-1939.

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