PGEG S2 01

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

SEMESTER 2

ENGLISH

BLOCK 2: NOVELS: FIELDING TO DICKENS

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Subject Experts:

Prof. Pona Mahanta, Former Head, Department of English, Dibrugarh University
Prof. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami, Former Srimanta Sankardeva Chair, Tezpur University
Prof. Bibhash Choudhury, Department of English, Gauhati University

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

SLM Preparation Team:

Units	Contributors
5-6	Dr. Prasenjit Das
7-8	Dr. Prasenjit Das & Debobhushan Borah, Majuli College, Majuli
9-10	Dr. Dolikajyoti Sarma Dept. of English, Gauhati University

Editorial Team:

Content: Prof. Robin Goswami, Former Head, Department of English
Cotton College

Structure, Format and Graphics: Dr. Prasenjit Das

Reprint : April, 2022

ISBN: 978-81-934669-1-9

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

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

Headquarters: Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017
City Office: Resham Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022; Web: www.kkhsou.in

SEMESTER 2
MA IN ENGLISH
COURSE 1: 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY NOVELS
BLOCK 2: NOVELS: FIELDING TO DICKENS

DETAILED SYLLABUS

CONTENTS

Unit 5: Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (Part I) 93-108

Henry Fielding: The Novelist, His Life and Works, Story of the Novel, Critical Reception of Fielding

Unit 6: Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (Part II) 109-128

The Prefatory Introductions to the Books of the Novel, Major Themes, Fielding's Art of Characterisation, Fielding's Narrative Style

Unit 7: Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park* (Part I) 129-146

Jane Austen: The Novelist, Her Life & Works, Story of the Novel, Critical Reception of Austen

Unit 8: Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park* (Part II) 147-164

Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Austen's Art of Characterisation, Austen's Narrative Style

Unit 9: Charles Dickens: *Tale of Two Cities* (Part I) 165-176

Charles Dickens: The Novelist, His Life & Works, Story of the Novel, Critical Reception of Dickens

Unit 10: Charles Dickens: *Tale of Two Cities* (Part II) 177-194

Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Dickens' Art of Characterisation, Dickens' Narrative Style

BLOCK 2: INTRODUCTION

Block 2 of the Course—18th and 19th Century Fiction provides a discussion of a three important novels from the period mentioned, which are namely Tom Jones by Henry Fielding, Mansfield Park by Jane Austen and *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. By the time you finish reading this unit, you should be in a position to apply the different aspects of narrative fiction that you have read in the previous Block, to your discussion of the novels prescribed in this course.

This Block comprises 6 units, the details of which are as the following:

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

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

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

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

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Henry Fielding: The Novelist

5.3.1 His Life

5.3.2 His Works

5.4 Story of the Novel

5.5 Critical Reception of Fielding

5.6 Let us Sum up

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

5.9 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

5.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

5.3 HENRY FIELDING: THE NOVELIST

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

5.3.1 His Life

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



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

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

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

You will find that despite his rakish life style, Fielding was a man who had a well-deserved reputation for the generosity of spirit and a natural sympathy for the fellow men. As an Anglican, he believed in the 'good nature' of human beings. As a novelist, he was a committed citric of corruption and hypocrisy prevailing in his society. He brought to English novel a new degree of 'psychological realism' and a 'linear narrative style' besides drawing inspiration from multiple sources like classical epic, prose romances, the European picaresque and the Scriblerian satires. His own dramatic background introduced a new sophistication in the representation of the comic characters through dialogue. In 1906, George Bernard Shaw acclaimed him as "the greatest practising dramatist, with the single exception of Shakespeare,

produced by England between the Middle Ages and the 19th century."

5.3.2 His Works

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

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

novel shows through numerous comic episodes the perennial problem of rendering virtue as colourful. Fielding called *Joseph Andrews* 'A Comic Epic in Prose.'

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

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

In 1748, there came an important opportunity in Fielding's life when he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Westminster and for Middlesex. His serious concerns at the social abuses and judicial corruptions during his times are reflected in essays like "A Charge Delivered to the Great Jury" (1749), "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of

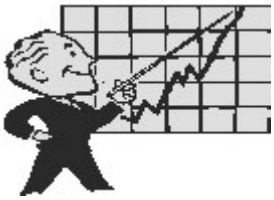
Robbers" (1751), "Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder" (1752), and "A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor" (1753). As a magistrate, Fielding was very dedicated and effective, and he was responsible for Britain's first organised detective police force.

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



LET US KNOW

Although what constitutes a 'novel' caused much debate during Fielding's time, there was some consensus that a novel was a prose work charting the everyday lives and events of the people. Fielding is generally agreed to be an innovating master of the highest originality. He believed that he had been "the founder of a new province of writing", and even Sir Walter Scott, commended him for his "high notions of the dignity of an art which he may be considered as having founded." In breaking away from the epistolary method of his contemporary Samuel Richardson and others, he devised what he described as "comic epics in prose", which may be characterised as the first modern novels in English, leading straight to the works of Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

5.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL

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

"The rich and benevolent country gentleman Mr. Allworthy arrives home from a trip to London and discovers baby Tom in his bed. Allworthy tries to find the parents of this foundling and succeeds in discovering the fact that a local woman Jenny Jones and her tutor, Mr. Partridge, are guilty of having an illicit child. Allworthy sends Jenny away from the country, and poor Mr. Partridge too vanishes suddenly. Allworthy decides to bring up the boy. Soon after, Bridget, Mr. Allworthy's sister, marries

Captain Blifil, and becomes the mother of a son named Blifil. Captain Blifil regards Tom as a threat to the future of their own son as he is concerned more with making his own son the heir of Mr. Allworthy's huge properties."

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

In his death-bed, Allworthy reads out his will stating that Blifil will inherit most of his estate, although Tom too will get something. Both Thwackum and Square Western are upset after finding that each of them will receive only a thousand pounds. Tom experiences great emotional disturbance at Allworthy's illness and remains near his bed all the time. When the doctor announces that Allworthy will not die, Tom rejoices and gets heavily drunk. Blifil calls Tom a "bastard" and Tom retaliates by hitting him. Tom, who has sworn faithfulness to Sophia, encounters Molly by chance and makes love to her. Sophia's aunt Mrs. Western comes to stay at her brother's house. Both unite over a plan to marry Sophia to

Blifil. Mrs. Western promises not to reveal Sophia's love for Tom as long as Sophia submits to Blifil as a suitor. Sophia, however, strongly opposes the proposal, and Squire Western grows violent with her. Blifil tells Allworthy that Tom is a rascal who danced drunkenly about the house, and Allworthy banishes Tom from the country. Tom does not want to leave Sophia, but decides that he must follow the honourable path.

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

Soon after, Squire Western, Mrs. Western, Blifil, and Allworthy arrive in London, and Squire Western locks Sophia in her bedroom. Mr. Fitzpatrick thinks Tom is his wife's lover and begins a duel with Tom. In defending himself, Tom stabs Fitzpatrick with the sword and gets imprisoned subsequently. Partridge visits Tom in jail with the ghastly news that Mrs. Waters is none other than Jenny Jones, Tom's mother. Mrs. Waters meets Allworthy and explains that Fitzpatrick is still alive, and has admitted to initiating the duel. She also tells Allworthy that a lawyer acting on behalf of an unnamed gentleman tried to persuade her to conspire against Tom. Allworthy realises that Blifil is this very

gentleman, and he decides never to speak to him again. Tom, however, takes pity on Blifil and provides him with a pension.

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



LET US KNOW

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

Therefore, you find two main threads to the action in the storyline of the novel: one, the mystery attached with the birth of Tom, and the other, the love story of Tom and Sophia. However, they are not necessarily interrelated. Because, Tom is a foundling who cannot make any claim to Mr. Allworthy's properties and this prevents him from being

an acceptable suitor for Sophia. The working out of these two main themes together through riddles and surprising solutions goes to the credit of the writer. I want to draw your attention to what Fielding himself says in the book. In the Dedication he claims that to "recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history." Then again, in his Farewell to the readers he says: "no man detests and despises scurrility more than myself…" Such information should make you aware of the concerns of Fielding while writing this novel.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

Q 7: Tell the story of Tom Jones briefly.

5.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF FIELDING

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

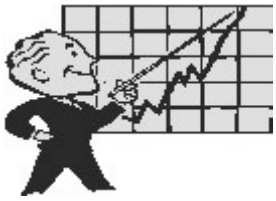
Most of the early critical studies of Fielding took as their foundation the moral complexity of the fiction and its formal intricacy. For critics in the 1950s and 1960s, Fielding's interest in freedom and licence appealed strongly. More recently, critics have reclaimed the importance of the

dramatic works, while others have begun to investigate the fiction from feminist perspectives. For the contemporary student, a greater range of contextual information and biographical detail is available than ever before. In very recent times, however, Fielding's generous optimism, his delight in the senses and the plenitude of his fictional universe obviously commend him to the new 'modern' age. Subsequently, Fielding becomes more attractive a model for the new generation of novelists than George Eliot and Henry James.

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

That *Tom Jones* is an immoral book became commonplace in literary criticism in subsequent periods too. The Victorian people too might have been offended by Fielding's honest and straightforward portrayal of men, women and manners. You will find it interesting to note that Victorian writers like Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Charlotte Bronte and Matthew Arnold never liked this book. Stevenson called *Tom Jones* "dirty, dull, and false." However, contrary to such an attitude towards the

book, 19th century critics spoke out in defence of Fielding and this book. Coleridge defended the novel by saying—"I think Tom Jones is one of the most perfect plots ever planned." Bulwer Lytton called Fielding a "deep, accurate, and scientific moralist''. Anthony Trollope hailed *Tom Jones* as "one of the greatest novels in the English language, for there he [Fielding] has shown how a noble and sanguine nature may fall away under temptation and he be again strengthened and made to stand upright." However, in the general perception of the 19th century, *Tom Jones* enjoyed a rather factitious reputation as an expression of frank and robust masculinity in contrast to the prudishness and sentimentality of much Victorian fiction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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



5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have been introduced to Henry Fielding, one of the greatest precursors of the English novels and his famous novel *Tom Jones.* You have learnt that Fielding was the progenitor of the novel as a genre in the 18th century. Through the medium of the novel, he not only depicted the contemporary currents of events in the history of England but also provided incisive insights into the follies and foibles of the middle class milieu of the time. You have learnt that in writing this novel *Tom Jones*, Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction, which he outlined in the prefatory chapters to the Books of the novel, and then proceeded to translate theory into practice. At the same time, in creating his hero Tom Jones in this novel, Fielding introduced a concept of a 'character' new to the English fiction.



5.7 FURTHER READING

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

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

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



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

Ans to Q 3: In writing this novel Fielding introduced a new concept of fiction… …through Tom Jones Fielding introduced a character new to the English fiction…. …this new character shares typical human frailties, failings and vices but is finally redeemed by his natural and unfailing goodness in heart.

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

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

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

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

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

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



5.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 The Prefatory Introductions to the Books of the Novel

6.4 Major Themes

6.5 Fielding's Art of Characterisation

6.6 Fielding's Narrative Style

6.7 Let us Sum up

6.8 Further Reading

6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.10 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

6.2 INTRODUCTION

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

6.3 THE PREFATORY INTRODUCTIONS TO THE BOOKS OF THE NOVEL

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

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

Introduction to Book 1

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

Introduction to Book II

Here Fielding deals with his treatment of time in the novel. He tells his readers that this work is purposefully termed a 'history' but it is a

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

Introduction to Book III

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

Introduction to Book IV

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

Introduction to Book V

Here Fielding provides an excellent analysis of the function of a critic and the function of 'contrast' in a work of art. Fielding shows little admiration for critics. Irrespective of the criticism, every work of art is a law unto itself and is centered on its own organic growth. Fielding boldly asks: "Who are the critics and whence did they derive their authority?" Finally, he argues that critics are men of "shallow capacities" who

"mistook mere form for substance" and that "time and ignorance: the two great supporters of imposture" have lent their dubious authority to the critic.

Introduction to Book VI

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

Introduction to Book VII

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

Introduction to Book VIII

Fielding starts with a discussion of the marvellous versus the real in fiction. Every writer should be within the bounds of possibility in his own writing. The general principle, however, is that man is the highest subject but we should be careful enough not to exceed the capacity of the agent we describe. Actions should not be only keeping with "the compass of human nature," but they must be consistent with the character of the performer. The modern comedy writers are to be blamed only for this reason, for their heroes are presented as notorious rogues for four acts and in the fifth, he becomes a worthy and respectable gentleman. If the writer strictly observes the rules of probability and possibility, he is entitled to some faith from his readers.

Introduction to Book IX

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

Introduction to Book X

Fielding opens this book with a few suggestions to the readers

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

Introduction to Book XI

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

Introduction to Book XII

Plagiarism is the most important topic of this chapter. Fielding freely confesses that he has borrowed passages from the ancient authors without acknowledging the source, for those who have a classical education will at once recognise the source immediately, and those who lack this education will have no use for the information on the

source. The practice of 'borrowing' from the ancients, then, is not plagiarism. However, Fielding promises that if ever he is caught, he will give credit where credit is due.

Introduction to Book XIII

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

Introduction to Book XIV

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

Introduction to Book XV

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

Introduction to Book XVI

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

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

(b) A condemnation of all contemporary authors and critics

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

Introduction to Book XVII

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

Introduction to Book XVIII

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

From these very brief summaries of the prefatory chapters it must be clear to you that this novel provides an interesting analysis of ''authorship'' as Fielding never allows his readers to forget that he is the 'novelist.' However, what is important is that Fielding's self-conscious authorship is intentional artifice. Fielding makes the readers acknowledge the basic features of fiction—the interplay of reality and illusion. Therefore, parallelly in this huge work of art there runs a concern with the story of a foundling called Tom and a projection of Fielding's narrative strategies and art of writing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

Q 3: Do you think that Fielding justifies ‘Plagiarism’?

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

6.4 MAJOR THEMES

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

Idea of the Picaro:

The novel falls into an important genre of novel writing, known as the picaresque novel. The term ‘picaresque’ is derived from the Spanish word *picaro* which means ‘a low-life character who lived dishonestly by his wits’, but the meaning of the term was soon expanded to refer to anyone at odds with, or outside, society. The picaresque novel is like an episodic narrative, describing the progress of the *picaro*. Some of the earliest novels based on the picaresque hero are anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and Mateo Aleman’s *Guzman de Alfarache* (1559) translated into English by James Mabbe. In English literature, the tradition of the picaresque novel begins with *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) by Nashe. This tradition was continued in the works of Daniel Defoe (*Moll Flanders*), Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*) and Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield*). In the hands of these writers, the picaresque narrative mainly becomes an episodic story involving a narrative. *Tom Jones* depicts the journey of the foundling named Tom Jones, in his journey not only through the phases of his life from childhood to maturity, but also literally through various places en route his journey towards London. He learns his lessons through the trials and tribulations of life, by the

mistakes he commits, by being misunderstood and misinterpreted. Finally, he emerges as a somewhat chastened and refined individual, ready to take on life and its ordeals.

Universality of Human Emotions:

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

Idea of Virtue:

Fielding insisted that nothing in *Tom Jones* “can offend even the chastest eye on perusal.” This might have sprung up from his awareness of the morality based on the goodness of heart rather than technical virtue that he was trying to preach. The protagonist Tom Jones is a lusty, passionate, highly sexed young man but equally generous and easily moved by the sufferings of others. In tracing the fortunes of this kind of a hero, Fielding could come to terms more with the moral complexities of the world as it is than with the simple-minded virtue of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams in his novel *Joseph Andrews*. You are already told that central to Fielding’s philosophy is the idea that a good man can be guilty of bad act, but we should not condemn an individual as bad because he is not perfectly good. Although not a philosopher in the real sense, as early as 1740, in a newspaper names *The Champion* under

the pseudonym Captain Hercules Vinegar, Fielding laid stress on the necessity of the 'good nature' in man, a quality he equated with virtue. He emphasised that good nature was "the benevolent and amiable temper of mind, which disposes us to feel the misfortunes, and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter and prevent the former." Tom attains wisdom and better knowledge of mankind and in the process he learns how to lead a happy life. He may be a sinner, but never a villain. Fielding is seriously concerned with his strategy of showing vices and hypocrisies in their repellent ugliness. However, he was equally conscious that virtues and goodness be shown in terms of their innocence and beauty. Thus, the story of *Tom Jones* is derived from life itself. As he wrote in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews "everything is copied from the book of nature, and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experience." Fielding insisted that his purpose was "to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices."*

Mock Heroic Convention:

Tom Jones is a comic epic in prose with many mock-heroic conventions like invocations and descriptions scattered throughout the narrative. But the mock elements serve as important artistic purpose and they enable Fielding to make certain important remarks about society, to deflate certain kinds of pretentiousness, to communicate the relish of the colour and variety of human life simultaneously with his ironic perception of the underlying identity of the high class battling and low class brawling. The mock heroic also enables him to bring the hero into a series of situations in which his imprudence gives power to his enemy, which ultimately becomes the cause of his downfall. Whatever Suspense is created becomes comic, seasoned with the comic awareness of the absurdities and futilities of life. However, readers do sympathise with the way Tom gets himself embroiled in troubles. Along with this, the description of the hero as 'Foundling' indicates that Fielding is not exactly following the normal procedure of epic. Instead, he deals with his English society as it is.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: In what ways is *Tom Jones* a picaresque novel?

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

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

6.5 FIELDING'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

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

Tom Jones:

Tom Jones is the principal character in the novel. The story delineates his development from infancy to young adulthood. Born out of wedlock, he becomes the adopted child of Squire Allworthy. He grows up along with Blifil, the son of Allworthy's sister, Bridget, and her husband, Captain Blifil. However, they soon become fierce rivals. By nature, Tom is honest, courageous, and generous, but at times, becomes imprudent and downright reckless. His faults prevent him from being a perfect hero but his goodness in heart also makes him an icon of virtue. His handsome look and gallantry make him win the love and affection of many women of the countryside. One thing you should note that women

always take the initiative but Tom never corrupts innocence in the unmarried, or virtue in the married. He is simple minded enough to believe that he has fathered Molly Seagrim's child and is prepared to marry her. When a similar situation emerges in London as Nancy Miller is pregnant after getting seduced by Mr. Nightingale under promises of marriage, Tom gives his ethic of sexual behaviour like the following: "Lokee, Mr Nightingale, I am not canting hypocrite, nor do I pretend to the gift of chastity more than my neighbours. I have been guilty with women, I own it; but am not conscious that I have ever injured any. Nor would I, to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being." Thus, although the plot of the novel is concerned with *who* Tom is, Fielding makes it clear that his theme is *what* Tom is.

Squire Allworthy:

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

Bridget Allworthy:

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

Sophia Western:

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

manages to reconcile her love for Tom, her duties towards her father and her resentment of Blifil.

Blifil:

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

Squire Western:

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

Mrs. Western:

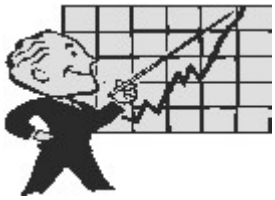
She is the sister of Squire Western. Just like her brother, she too is a caricature of the artificial city woman always acting out expediently. She takes pride on herself being knowledgeable about the contemporary society, culture, and love. However, her ignorance reveals itself on numerous occasions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

Partridge:

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

Jenny Jones / Mrs. Waters:

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

6.6 FIELDING'S NARRATIVE STYLE

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

You should have noted that the novel *Tom Jones* is largely picaresque and episodic which very well serves Fielding's purpose of castigating vice and upholding virtue in a style filled with irony and wit and borrowed freely from the mock epic tradition. Fielding was alert enough to see that the tradition of the mock-heroic offered him a chance to decide on those modes of the ridiculous that mainly arise from hypocrisies and affectations. However, while defining the novel as an epic genre, Fielding emphasised its function in presenting a broad picture of

a historical period, but like verse epics of the ancient times, it will not always display the weaknesses of humanity. His model might be Don Quixote and his aim was to present a 'prose epic' through which he wanted to create a panorama of society seen through ironic and satiric comedy and farmed in a commentary of his own on the theory of human nature and literary art.

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

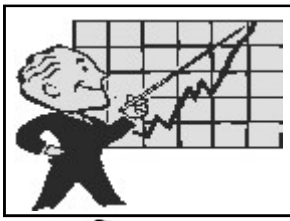


LET US KNOW

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

Structure:

There are three types of structure to be found in *Tom Jones*. These are deftly combined by Fielding into one framework. The first structural level is simply associated with the plot content with the sequential narrative movement of one event into another. Fielding followed the ancient epic tradition, especially that of Homer in the *Iliad* with the 'unity of action' being the primary concern. This required the novelist to construct the plot in the way that there are causal relationships among the incidents. In the first section of the novel, upto Book VII, Tom's actions are misinterpreted by Allworthy leading to Tom's expulsion from the latter's home. In the next section, Fielding shifts his focus to Tom's journey to London and, as a critic says, the novelist is following the picaresque tradition, which is related to the medieval romance. Fielding seems to follow the tradition of *Don Quixote*. In the section that describes Tom's journey to London, Tom moves from one incident to another, from the band of soldiers to Mazard Hill, then to Upton Inn and to the Gypsies of London. There is, however, no causal relationship between one incident with another. In the final Section of the novel, Fielding combines these two structural levels– that of classical epic and medieval romance. We can also notice the comic structure at the end, with a comic tone consistently adhered to by Fielding. In the introduction to Book V, Fielding lays out his comic principle: he would alternately present the sober and comic passages not without some subtle relationship between the two. Again, there can often be found an ironic comment on the serious elements of an earlier passage. This enables the novelist to maintain the comic tone pervasively.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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



6.7 LET US SUM UP

We have found that *Tom Jones* appears to be a novel about life and its trials and tribulations, narrated with a somewhat comic approach.

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



6.8 FURTHER READING

Alter, Robert. (1968). *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Amigoni, David. (2000). *The English Novel and Prose Narrative*. Edinburgh University Press.

Coles Editorial Board. (1996). *Fielding Tom Jones Notes.* New Delhi: Rama Brothers.

Compton, Neil. (ed.) (1970). *Henry Fielding Tom Jones: A Casebook*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Drew, Elizabeth. (1995). *A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces*. Radha Publishing House: Calcutta.

Ehrenpreis, Irving. (1964). *Fielding: Tom Jones.* London: Edward Arnold Ltd.

Fielding, Henry. (1994). *Tom Jones.* Norton Critical Editions.

Nandwani, Aditya. (2009). *Henry Fielding Tom Jones.* New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Paulson, Ronald. (1962). *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays (20th Century Views)*. Prentice Hall.

Watt, Ian. (1957). *The Rise of the Novel.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Websites Resources:

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



6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: They constitute the first extended attempt by an author to define and discuss the novel as a literary genre… …they discuss Fielding's aims and objectives in the novel… …issues of self conscious authorship… …Fielding's telling of the basic features of fiction—the interplay of reality and illusion.

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

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

Ans to Q 4: The three suggestions are:

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

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

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

Ans to Q 7: Like many mock heroic conventions *Tom Jones* adopts invocations and descriptions… …the mock elements enable Fielding to make certain important ironic remarks about society… …it enables him to bring the hero into a series of situations in which his imprudence gives power to his enemy which ultimately becomes the cause of his downfall… … But Fielding is not exactly following the normal procedure of epic. Instead, he deals with his English society as it is.

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

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

Ans to Q 10: *Tom Jones* is a largely picaresque and episodic novel which very well serves Fielding's purpose of castigating vice and upholding virtue in an ironical and witty style… …Fielding borrowed freely from the mock epic tradition which offered him a chance to decide on the modes of the ridiculous arising from hypocrisies and affectations… …his aim was to present a 'prose epic' through

which he wanted to create a panorama of his contemporary society… …His experiences at the theatre too influenced his narrative technique



6.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

Q 3: What ideas can you draw about Fielding's narrative strategy from the novel *Tom Jones*? Discuss with reference to the prefatory chapters of the Books of the novel.

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Jane Austen: The Novelist

7.3.1 Her Life

7.3.2 Her Works

7.4 Story of the Novel

7.5 Critical Reception of Austen

7.6 Let us Sum up

7.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

7.8 Possible Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

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

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to Jane Austen (1775-1817) and her novel *Mansfield Park.* Along with Walter Scott (1771-1832), Austen inaugurated the great age of English novel. To Jane Austen's credit, there are six novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Austen's work may be roughly divided into two parts—the first associated with her birthplace Steventon, and the second, with Chawton where her family had to finally move in 1801 after the death of her father.

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

7.3 JANE AUSTEN: THE NOVELIST

7.3.1 Her Life

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



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

of Wollstonecraft, although they are not openly expressed in her novels.

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



LET US KNOW

Napoleonic War:

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

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: In what ways did Mary Wollstonecraft influence Jane Austen?

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

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

7.3.2 Her Works

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

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

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

You must note that Austen absorbed various genres including children's literature—nursery rhymes, Gay's *Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. She began writing delicious, sometimes surreal, stories and parodies to amuse her family from an early age of eleven. These stories are filled with anarchic fantasies of female power, licence, illicit behaviour, and general high spirits. Drunkenness, incest, and serial killings routinely occur in these stories, revealing Jane Austen's youthful awareness of the comic possibilities of language to address the absurdities of life even at this early stage. Works like "Jack and Alice" and "Love & Friendship" are examples of such early works. These juvenile productions physically mimic the grown-up book: they are written out carefully in notebooks and provided with dedications to Martha Lloyd, to 'Madame La Comtesse De Feuillide', and, of course, to her sister Cassandra. At fourteen, Jane Austen wrote the longest of these juvenile productions "Love & Friendship", taking two girls through a series of absurd adventures. "Love & Friendship" was followed by "Catharine", and a preparation for *Susan*, which would in time become *Northanger Abbey*. In "Catharine" Austen developed the character of a principled, unsophisticated heroine of ordinary achievements. "Catharine" was succeeded by "Lady Susan", a work rooted in the 18th century novel in letters, which suited the subject matter of a heroine manoeuvring within a world in which men control property. For *Mansfield Park* she made striking improvements on Maria Edgeworth's at least three novels and even wrote to her niece Anna on 28th September 1814: "I have made up my mind to like no novels really, but Miss Edgeworth's, Yours and my own."

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



LET US KNOW

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

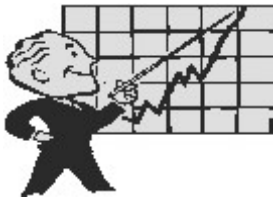
(1) Sell the copyright and avoid further anxiety over production and sales.

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

7.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL [Adapted from Wikipedia]

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

Fanny Price, a poor young girl of 10, is to be raised by her rich uncle Sir Thomas, a patriarch, and aunt Lady Bertram of Mansfield Park.

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

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

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

her flaws. Meanwhile, during a visit to Mr. Rushworth's ancestral estate in Sotherton, Henry Crawford deliberately plays with the affections of both Maria and Julia, finally driving them apart. Maria believes that Henry is falling in love with her and treats Mr. Rushworth dismissively which provokes his jealousy. Fanny, on the other hand, is highly observant and witnesses Maria and Henry in compromising situations.

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

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

Fanny's part, encourages Henry to persevere. To bring Fanny back to her senses, Sir Thomas sends her to Portsmouth, hoping that the lack of comforts at her original home will help her set a higher value on Henry's offer. At Portsmouth, she develops a firm bond with her younger sister Susan, but is taken aback by the contrast between her dissolute surroundings and the environment at Mansfield. Henry visits her to try to convince her that he has changed and is worthy of her affection. Although Fanny still maintains that she cannot marry him, her attitude begins to soften, as Edmund and Mary seem to be moving toward an engagement.

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

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

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

where she is joined by her aunt Norris. Finally, Fanny becomes the mistress of Mansfield Park.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

7.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF AUSTEN

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

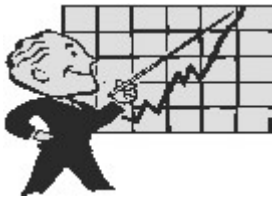
Until the late 19th century, Jane Austen was not widely read, especially compared to her contemporary like Walter Scott. Her readership was largely confined to some among the titled gentry, and upper-middle classes and to a few discerning literary people. For example Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth B.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

remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.

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

Another recent trend in Austen studies is the particular focus on one area of interest alone, such as her reception in anon-European context, her relationship to Romanticism or the Enlightenment, religion, education, the theatre, or food. One significant study, John Wiltshire's *Jane Austen and the Body* (1992), reflects a contemporary interest in the gendered and sexualised body, and its ability to manifest cultural constructions physiologically. As a result of all this activity, now in the 21st century, Austen's critical reputation has never stood higher. Her popularity

outside the academy of course derives in large part from adaptations, especially of *Pride and Prejudice*: the BBC's 1995 and Hollywood's 2005 versions and the Bollywood-inspired *Bride and Prejudice* of 2004.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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



7.6 LET US SUM UP

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

remarked, the public found 'our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purposes'.



7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

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

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

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

Ans to Q 6: The novelist contextualises the story of one family, i.e, of Bertram family with the social reality of the middle class during her time in England… …Themes such as love, matrimony, colony, and so on are gradually incorporated to the plot… …The nature of the characters and then their function lead to the climax into the plot.

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

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



7.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Reading the Novel

8.4 Major Themes

8.5 Austen's Art of Characterisation

8.6 Austen's Narrative Style

8.7 Let us Sum up

8.8 Further Reading

8.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

8.10 Possible Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to

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

8.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

8.3 READING THE NOVEL

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

8.4 MAJOR THEMES

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

Colonial Slave Trade:

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

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

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

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

Question of Morality and Active Principle:

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

Proper Education:

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

Love and Matrimony:

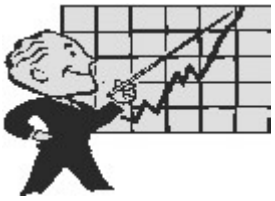
Like her other novels, love is very crucial in *Mansfield Park*. Her interest in young people and in their love and courtship, in fact, is a major subject in *Mansfield Park.* In the novel, the novelist is preoccupied with the responsibility of making matches for her heroes and heroines. Somehow, the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



LET US KNOW

What contributes most to Jane Austen's universal popularity?

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

8.5 AUSTEN'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

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

Fanny Price:

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

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

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



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

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

Thomas Bertram:

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

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

Tom Bertram:

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

Edmund Bertram:

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

Maria Bertram:

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

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

Julia Bertram:

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

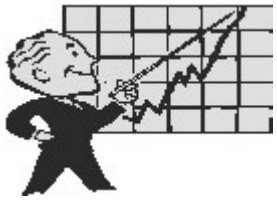
Henry Crawford:

Henry has an estate at Everingham in Norfolk and is very flirtatious with sophisticated manners and taste. Forever playing a part, acting, performing, he seems to wish his own self, his own personality and

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

Mary Crawford:

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

8.6 AUSTEN'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Jane Austen uses third person omniscient narration to tell the story. The instances of 'telling' and 'showing' (these terms are borrowed from Waine C. Booth) are evident in the narrative. For example 'telling' is a chief mode of narration right from chapter I in the novel. In certain cases, however, 'showing' is also used by the narrator. The conversation between Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris in the first chapter, thus, exemplifies the mode of 'showing'. It is a common feature in the novels of Jane Austen that her women characters must marry. For this, they must meet men in socially permitted ways, at balls or during visits, where they must get to know one another through conversation. This is why, though Fanny is quite silent throughout the novel, conversation becomes a part of the narrative. Another important aspect is her use of long sentences in the novel. The sentences in the narrative are often long with various syntactical parts. Minute details of the characters and of the settings are expressed through a coherent narrative technique. The novelist does not experiment with varied styles or she does not have the element of 'play' throughout the narrative yet the narrative is striking in the novel. The reader may not be fascinated with the style of the narrative, yet the novelist is able to keep the reader moving along with the story through a plain narrative style.

Jane Austen is perhaps one of the first authors 'to grasp fully the technique of using free indirect discourse to represent the *lived* self in the moment'. Free indirect speech is a technique of using speech and narratorial discourse. It is employed in passages usually without quotation marks which are not delivered as direct speech but which

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

LET US KNOW



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

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

characters in Mansfield Park stage an 'anarchic' play *Lover's Vows* incidentally written by Elizabeth Inchbald, and portrays an older order of values that is changing, at a time when the gap between the gentry and the poor is widening.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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



8.7 LET US SUM UP

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



8.8 FURTHER READING

Baker, William. (2008). *Critical Companion to Jane Austen: A Literary Reference to her Life and Works.* New York: Facts On File, Inc.

Bhattacharji, S. (ed.) (2006). *Mansfield Park*. Delhi: Pearson Longman.

Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (1987). *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park.* Modern Critical Interpretations. Langhorne, P.A: Chelsea House Press.

Bush, Douglas. (1975). Jane Austen. In *Masters of World Literature*. London : Macmillan Press.

Carter, Ronald & John McRae. (1997). *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Britain and Ireland. London: Routledge

Copeland, Edward & Juliet McMaster. (eds.) (1997). The *Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Todd, Janet. (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen.* UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tomalin, Claire. (1997). *Jane Austen: A Life*. London: Viking.

Trilling, Lionel. (1965). 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park'. In *From Blake to Byron. The Pelican Guide to Literature*: Ed. Boris Ford. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Web Resource:

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



8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: She employs incidents of love and matrimony among the characters… … most of these affairs become unsuccessful because of the error in the attitudes of the characters… …Fanny's love for Edmund, however, is an exception in the novel… …through her character, Austen criticises the hollowness in the attitudes of the 'rich' people.

Ans to Q 2: Education is important not necessarily as an academic exercise but as the adaptation of just values based on experience

and atmosphere… …because of education, the characters either acquire high social status due to their principled education or are doomed to suffer throughout due to their faulty education… …in the end of the novel, Sir Thomas realises the inadequacies of his faulty education of his children.

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

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

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

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

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



8.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Charles Dickens: The Novelist

9.3.1 His Life

9.3.2 His Works

9.4 Story of the Novel

9.5 Critical Reception of Dickens

9.6 Let us Sum up

9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

9.8 Possible Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

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

9.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

9.3 CHARLES DICKENS: THE NOVELIST

9.3.1 His Life

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



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What, according to you, basically accounts for Charles Dickens' popularity as a novelist?

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

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

9.3.2 His Works

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

With literary success assured, Dickens worked with greater intensity and overlapping with *Pickwick Papers* serialised first *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), then *Nicholas Nickleby* (1938-9) and then *Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41). *Oliver Twist* is the first of Dickens' novels to deal with specific social ills like criminal gangs of London while his *Nicholas Nickleby* is based on the centrality

of human fate. *Old Curiosity Shop,* on the other hand, turns out to be an excellent example of Dickensian sentimentality. His next novel *Barnby Rudge* (1841) presents a contrastive analysis of individual eccentricities against a general atmosphere. But, it was with *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44) that Dickens first presents his real stature as a novelist. It is a novel based on the ironical study of the effects of greed on the characters of the novel. For the first time in this work, Dickens took a moral situation rather than a group of picaresque characters and incidents.

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

You will find it interesting to note that with a new set of novels like *Little Dorrit* (1855), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Dickens achieves almost full maturity as a novelist. *Little Dorrit* presents the paradox of fate and fortune, *A Tale of Two Cities,* offers a parallel but historical study of two cities, Paris and London during the French Revolution; *Great*

Expectations explores, more than anything else, the relation between gentility and morality, and *Our Mutual Friend* provides a convincing picture of the effects of financial and social ambitions on the characters. His *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is a high-powered thriller but it remained unfinished due to Dickens' death in June 1870.



LET US KNOW

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

9.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL

The novel begins in the year 1775 with Lucie Manette journeying to Paris to meet her father who has recently been released from the Bastille. Helpless and now mentally unbalanced, he is taken care of by Ernest Defarge, his sometime servant. Lucie and Mr. Jarvis Lorry take him back to London after he regains his balance after meeting his daughter. Five years later in London, Lucie makes the acquaintance of Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay (a French nobleman of the Evrémonde family who has repudiated his title), both of whom fall in love with her. However, Lucie prefers Darnay and subsequently marries him. Sometime later, in France, Darnay's uncle the Marquis de St. Evrémonde is killed on the orders of the Defarges due to his atrocities against the common people. When Darnay returns to Paris, he is captured too and sentenced to death at the guillotine. Doctor Manette, Lucie (accompanied by her child), and Miss Pross reach Paris, where the Doctor attempts to persuade the revolutionaries to release Darnay. This attempt is, however, unsuccessful. The reason behind this is that the Defarges learn of Doctor Manette's imprisonment by the Evrémondes after he witnessed the rape of a peasant girl and the murder of her brother by the members of this family. In the meantime, Sydney Carton also travels to Paris with a resolve to rescue Darnay. He enlists for this purpose the aid of John Barsad who is revealed to be Miss Pross's brother, Solomon Pross. The sense of urgency is heightened by the discovery by Carton of the

Defarges's plan to kill Lucie and her child as well. It is, moreover, learnt that Madame Defarge is the sister of the murdered peasant girl and her brother. Sydney plans to evacuate the Manettes safely from Paris and is able to make an entry to Darnay's cell through Barsad's help. He drugs Darney and sends him to London with the Manettes, substituting himself for Charles. Madame Defarges dies when Miss Pross accidentally shoots her in an attempt to ward her off, while Sydney Carton is executed by the revolutionaries. The novel ends with the voice of Carton articulating his sense of satisfaction at having been able to reclaim some purpose in his life through his sacrifice.

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

9.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF DICKENS

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

A Tale of Two Cities was in a sense uncharacteristic of Dickens in that it referred to a period some seventy years earlier from the Victorian society in which he lived. Many of the contemporary critics such as Sir James Fitzjames Stephen condemned the novel as clumsy, disjointed, mechanical and formulaic, showing an appalling grotesqueness and want of sensibility. Dickens' disparagement of 18th

century England in relation to the present, and his hostile portrayal of the French aristocracy of the same period also came under attack. Even in the late 19th and early 20th century, critics, including the important Dickens scholar George Gissing and Dickens' fellow-journalist and novelist G. K. Chesterton, criticised the novel for its emotional approach to the Revolution at the cost of a more intellectual engagement with it, as well as its perceived constrained structure. At the same time, Dickens' contemporary writers such as John Forster, Thomas Carlyle, Wilkie Collins, and Mark Twain also praised the novel. So, we find that the novel was immensely popular with the reading public on its original serialisation in 1859. But, its critical reception till today is marked by somewhat mixed response from the reading public as well as the critics.



9.6 LET US SUM UP

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



9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

Ans to Q 3: Dickens began his literary career in 1833 by contributing stories and essays to periodicals like the *Monthly Magazine*… …while still a newspaper reporter he published in 1836 *Sketches by Boz* a short story collection… …it is through his *Pickwick Papers* (published monthly from 1836-1837) that he first emerged as a novelist of the future.

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

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

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



9.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

Q 3: **"**The portrayal of common ordinary life against the dramatic changes brought to society by the Industrial Revolution marks much of his creative writings." Elaborate this statement.

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

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

* * *

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

UNIT STRUCTURE:

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Reading the Novel

10.4 Major Themes

10.5 Dickens' Art of Characterisation

10.6 Dickens' Narrative Style

10.7 Let us Sum up

10.8 Further Reading

10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

10.10 Possible Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

10.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

10.3 READING THE NOVEL

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

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

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

10.4 MAJOR THEMES

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

Theme of Resurrection or Regeneration:

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

the peace, calm and security of his imaginary but ideal life earlier cannot ever be fully recreated in real life, especially in the turbulent times that Dickens portrays. Consequently, we see the Doctor suffering from a relapse in Book Three Chapter XII after he fails to convince the Defarges to use their influence to release his son-in-law Charles Darnay. Doctor Manette feels especially guilty since it is his own prison journal that has led to the re-imprisonment of and the death sentence for Charles. This chapter is aptly titled “Darkness” in this context since it signifies a return to the darkness of unreason. At the same time, the restoration of Doctor Manette earlier in the novel implies the restoration of Lucie to a family and a vast improvement to her relatively more marginalised status as an orphan. Again, Lucie herself is to be an agent of restoration for her father, as is advised by Jarvis Lorry in Book One Chapter IV, asking her to “to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort”.

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

However, it is in the character of Carton that the fuller, more religious and metaphorical aspect of resurrection is embodied. This is because of the associations established by the author between Christ and Carton (which is discussed later). Carton, at the beginning of the novel, is projected as someone who has lost interest in living a ‘fruitful’ life and so is not ambitious at all. In this, he is diametrically opposite to Stryver who is extremely (and sometimes obsessively) devoted to the goal of success in life. However, paradoxically, while Carton seems to adopt a life-denying attitude regarding himself, he is more interested and active with reference to others (such as to Charles and Lucie). This

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

Portrayal of Women:

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

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

In contrast, the character of Lucie Manette conforms to the image of the angel of the hearth that proved to be so popular in much of 19th century literature, especially that written by men. Lucie belongs to the middle class and so is expected to perform the role of an administering angel both for her immediate family and the larger circle of family friends, particularly Sydney Carton. She is passive and vulnerable and therefore

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

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

which the subversive forces of the revolution are sought to be contained in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The Theme of Doubling:

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

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

traitorous…In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night...prisoners in London gaols fought battles with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms; musketeers went into St. Giles's, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob, and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way." (Book One, Chapter 1)

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



LET US KNOW

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

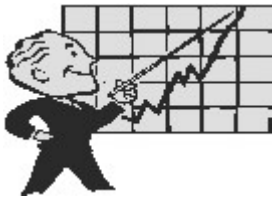
"Whenever any reference (however slight) is made here to the condition of the French people before or during the Revolution, it is truly made on the faith of the most trustworthy witnesses. It has been one of my hopes to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book."

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

Use of Memory:

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

the memories of Lucie and her child (more than in anyone else in that circle). In this sense, even if for him the action is soon to end, its repercussions will be felt for as long as the Darnay family continues.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

10.5 DICKENS' ART OF CHARACTERISATION

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

Doctor Manette:

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

Lucie Manette:

Doctor Manette's daughter and Charles Darnay's wife. She is kind, loving and beautiful, and liked by all for her innate capacity for love and

compassion. She bears an angelic nature. She rescues the Doctor from imprisonment and gives a healing touch to instil life into a broken man; she radiates the lives of those who come near her with her unceasing care and affection. Charles Darnay (who eventually marries her), Miss Pross and Sidney Carton, besides her father, are the people who preferred her love and attention in abundant measures. It is Sydney Carton in particular who is captivated by her charm, beauty and good nature and sacrifices his own life to keep Darnay, her husband, alive. In sum, Lucie is cast in the convention of the angel of the hearth.

Charles Darnay:

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

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

Sydney Carton:

A lawyer who takes Charles Darnay's place at the Guillotine. Carton is known as the "Lion" Mr. Stryver's less successful assistant, the "Jackal". He is crude but cunning, frequently drunk, and often melancholic, and feels resigned to aimless course his once-promising life has taken. However, he is capable of feeling deep, immense, and tragic love that nonetheless remains hidden from others, particularly Lucie, with whom he is deeply in love. He redeems himself and is thus 'recalled to life' through his final act of substituting himself for Darnay in prison and at the guillotine. He thus has Charles as his double, who, with

his social status and success as well as his more conformist role and a happier fate, provides a more positive yet more simplistic aspect to the darker aspect of Carlton. In the novel, Carton, more than any other character, is strongly equated with the figure of Christ.

Ernest Defarge:

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

Madame Defarge:

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

10.6 DICKENS' NARRATIVE STYLE

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

The narrative point of view refers to the perspective from which a story is told. It can therefore be a first person point of view (told in the narrator's own voice, using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"); second person point of view (rarely used and using "You" as the speaking voice);

and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually (but not always) uninvolved in the actions of the novel and in which the characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They". Authors frequently combine the first and third person points of view in literary works. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens mostly uses the third person point of view, but at significant points, like the shift introduced in the very first line of the novel, moves to the first person in order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections. Again, even within the third person point of view, the focalisation on many occasions is not of the narrator himself but that of another character.

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

The novel proceeds largely in a linear fashion but Dickens frequently complicates this scheme through flashbacks and other devices, such as letters. The novel begins in the year 1775 then jumps to 1762 in the second book. From then on, we are constantly reminded of the passing of time. At times the narrative also unfolds itself through the human cycle of courtship, marriage, and the arrival of children (centring on the character of Lucie). Again in Book Two Chapter 21 the year is July 1789 and the event is the fall of the Bastille; however, then the events shift to August 1792. Even in Book Three, the events taking

place during the period from 1792 to 1794 are interrupted by Doctor Manette's reminiscences regarding his imprisonment which take the reader back to December 1767.

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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



10.7 LET US SUM UP

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

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



10.8 FURTHER READING

Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (2008). *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities*. Daryaganj: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.

Daiches, David (2007). *A Critical History of English Literature* (Vol II). Random House, India.

Glancy, Ruth F. (ed.) (2006). *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Newlin, George (1998). *Understanding A Tale of Two Cities: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Petch, Simon (2002). "The Business of the Barrister" in *A Tale of Two Cities* in *Criticism.* Volume: 44, Issue: 1.

Robson, Lisa (2008). "The 'Angels' in Dickens's House: Representation of Women in A Tale of Two Cities" (*Dalhousie Review* 72, no. 3, Fall 1992; pp. 311-333, reprinted in Bloom).

Tysdahl, Bjørn (2008). "Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*" (Dickens Quarterly 15, no. 2, June 1998, reprinted in Bloom).

Web Resource:

www.victorianweb.org

10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

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

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

Ans to Q 5: First person point of view told in the narrator's own voice using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"… …second person point of view rarely used and using "You" and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually not involved in the actions of the novel and characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They"… …in this novel, Dickens mostly uses the third person point of view but moves to the first person in

order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections.

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



10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

REFERENCE LIST (FOR ALL UNITS)

Alter, Robert. (1968). *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Amigoni, David. (2000). *The English Novel and Prose Narrative*. Edinburgh University Press.

Baker, William. (2008). *Critical Companion to Jane Austen: A Literary Reference to her Life and Works.* New York: Facts On File, Inc.

Bhattacharji, S. (ed.) (2006). *Mansfield Park*. Delhi: Pearson Longman.

Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (1987). *Jane Austen's Mansfield Park.* Modern Critical Interpretations. Langhorne, P.A: Chelsea House Press.

Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (2008). *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities*. Daryaganj: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd.

Bush, Douglas. (1975). Jane Austen. In *Masters of World Literature*. London : Macmillan Press.

Carter, Ronald, & John McRae. (1997). *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Britain and Ireland. London: Routledge

Coles Editorial Board. (1996). *Fielding Tom Jones Notes.* New Delhi: Rama Brothers.

Compton, Neil. (ed.) (1970). *Henry Fielding Tom Jones: A Casebook*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Copeland, Edward & Juliet McMaster. (eds.) (1997). The *Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Daiches, David (2007). *A Critical History of English Literature* (Vol II). Random House, India.

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

Drew, Elizabeth. (1995). *A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces*. Radha Publishing House: Calcutta.

Ehrenpreis, Irving. (1964). *Fielding: Tom Jones.* London: Edward Arnold Ltd.

Fielding, Henry. (1994). *Tom Jones.* Norton Critical Editions.

Glancy, Ruth F. (ed.) (2006). *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Nandwani, Aditya. (2009). *Henry Fielding Tom Jones.* New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Newlin, George. (1998). *Understanding A Tale of Two Cities: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

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

Paulson, Ronald. (1962). *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays (20th Century Views)*. Prentice Hall.

Petch, Simon. (2002). "The Business of the Barrister" in *A Tale of Two Cities* in *Criticism.* Volume: 44, Issue: 1.

Robson, Lisa. (2008). "The 'Angels' in Dickens's House: Representation of Women in A Tale of Two Cities" (*Dalhousie Review* 72, no. 3, Fall 1992; pp. 311-333, reprinted in Bloom).

Todd, Janet. (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Jane Austen.* UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tomalin, Claire. (1997). *Jane Austen: A Life*. London: Viking.

Trilling, Lionel. (1965). 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park'. In *From Blake to Byron. The Pelican Guide to Literature*: Ed. Boris Ford. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Tysdahl, Bjørn. (2008). "Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*" (Dickens Quarterly 15, no. 2, June 1998, reprinted in Bloom).

Watt, Ian. (1957). *The Rise of the Novel.* Berkley: University of California Press.

Websites Resources:

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

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

www.victorianweb.org