PGEG S2 01

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

SEMESTER 2

ENGLISH

BLOCK 3: NOVELS: THE BRONTËS TO HARDY

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
11	Dr. Prasenjit Das
12	Dalim Ch. Das, IDOL, Gauhati University
13	Maitraeye Das Former Senior Lecturer, Bongaigaon College, Bongaigaon
14-15	Dr. Nijara Hazarika Sonapur College, Sonapur

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 3: NOVELS: THE BRONTËS TO HARDY

DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 11: Emily and Charlotte Brontë: Life and Works 201-212

Charlotte Brontë: The Novelist, Emily Brontë: The Novelist, Anne Brontë: The Novelist, Critical Reception of the Brontë Sisters

Unit 12: Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre* 213-234

The Story of the Novel, Major Themes, Charlotte Brontë's Art of Characterisation, Charlotte Brontë's Narrative Style

Unit 13: Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* 235-259

The Story of the Novel, The genesis of *Wuthering Heights,* Major Themes, Emile Brontë's Art of Characterization, Emile Brontë's Narrative Style

Unit 14: Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Part I) 260-278

Thomas Hardy: The Novelist, His Life & Works, The Story of the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* Critical Reception of Hardy

Unit 15: Thomas Hardy: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Part II) 279-293

Reading the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* Major Themes, Hardy's Art of Characterization Hardy's Narrative Style

BLOCK 3: INTRODUCTION

Block 3 of the Course 18th and 19th Century Fiction provides a discussion of a three other important novels namely *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, and *The Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas hardy. By the time you finish reading this unit, you should be in a position to apply the different aspects of narrative fiction that you have read in Block 1, to your discussion of the novels prescribed. This Block comprises 5 units, which are as the following.

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

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

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

Unit 14 & 15 shall help you to discuss the novel *The Tess of the d'Urbervilles* written by Thomas Hardy. The late 19th century Victorian Era, in which Hardy lived, was a time of great change and Hardy stands at this transitional period to reflect on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and the rise of modernity. Published in 1891 *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has been regarded as the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. Like in his other novels, in this novel too, Hardy has shown his deep sympathy towards the lower classes of England, especially the women.

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

UNIT 11: EMILY AND CHARLOTTE BRONTË: LIFE AND WORKS

UNIT STRUCTURE:

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Charlotte Brontë: The Novelist

11.4 Emily Brontë: The Novelist

11.5 Anne Brontë: The Novelist

11.6 Critical Reception of the Brontë Sisters

11.7 Let us Sum up

11.8 Further Reading

11.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.10 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

11.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

11.3 CHARLOTTE BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

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

You should note that before turning to fiction, the Brontë sisters wrote poems. Like her contemporary Elizabeth Barett Browning, Charlotte experimented with the form of long narrative poems and dramatic monologue, both characterise Victorian poetry. She decided later to abandon poetry in favour of the most popular genre of the period the novel. It is important to note that this shift in her mode of writing indicated an overall shift in the literary taste in 1830s and 1840s. The

Brontë sisters lived in the gloomy landscape of the Northern moors and shared a life of fantasy and retreat from the ordinary world. However, through journals and newspapers, they also got access to the contemporary political and ideological debates neither were they aloof from the wind of European Romanticism. On the Brontë sisters' imaginative engagements, Richards Church writes in *The Growth of the English Novel*:

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

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

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

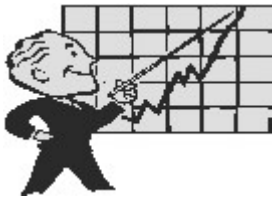
The seclusion of the Haworth parsonage had a strong bearing on the works of Charlotte Brontë. Not only Charlotte, this isolated situation of their home had a potent influence on the creative endeavours of all the Brontë sisters. They were, however, not detached from the contemporary social and political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

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

Jane Eyre was published in 1847, under the pen name Cureer Bell and it achieved immediate success. Apart from the social issues it deals with, the narrative by itself was fascinating with its remarkable power to provoke and surprise. The writer's own passion, dreams, frustration are all imaginatively transmuted into fictional incidents, but the novel obviously transcends the autobiographical into a kind of fictional wish-fulfilment. The narrative is characterised by a sustained emotional temperament as well as its many moments of revelation. *Shirley* (1849)

is a "Condition of England Novel" set at the time of Napoleonic wars and is concerned with labour relations. In the novel, Robert Gerard Moore is a mill owner and he introduces a labour-saving machinery in the mill. The labourers turn against him and attempt to destroy the mill and to take his life. In order to raise funds, Robert proposes to Shirley Keeldar, an heiress, but she refuses, and marries his brother, Louis. One notable aspect of the story is its portrayal of a distinctive woman character. The character of Shirley Keeldar was affirmed by Elizabeth Gaskell as a representation of Emily Brontë. The novel raises question of woman and how she is confined to limited opportunity.

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

Q 2: Why did the Brontë sisters adopt pseudonyms?

Q 3: How would you justify the presence of Gothicism and Romanticism in the works of the Brontë sisters?

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

11.4 EMILY BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

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

In September 1821, her mother died and her aunt Elizabeth Branwell came over to look after the family. The Brontë girls were initially educated at home by their aunt and later the two elder ones were sent away to Crofton Hall near Wakefield. Then, in 1824, they were sent to the School for Daughters of Poorer Clergymen at Cowan Bridge near Turnstall. The school was a bad experience as the students were neglected if not ill-treated. So much so that the very next year saw the elder Brontë girls come home to die and Charlotte and Emily leave the school for good. Their pathetic experience there has been immortalised in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* which also gives us, like Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, a glimpse of the terrible conditions prevailing in some schools of England during the first half of the 19th century. The three sisters and Branwell were then left to lead a lonely life in Haworth dominated by their eccentric father. Aside from the village being in the remote wilderness of Yorkshire, the Brontë family also had an isolated position in society. They belonged neither to the landed gentry nor to the common village folk.

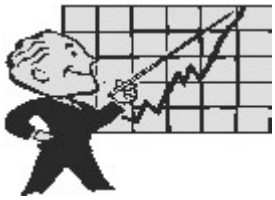
Both Emily and Anne were so engrossed in the world of their making that they did not abandon it with age. Their creative imagination blossomed within its ambit and this resulted in the *Gondal Stories and Poems*. None of the prose is extant but the Gondal Poems gave us an idea of the powerful imaginative faculty of the Brontë sisters. Though the stories are not based on the real-life activities of the girls, the features of the Yorkshire country side where they lived are reflected in the Gondal terrain. The wildness of the moors together with the serene beauty of the hills is also the recurring theme of *Wuthering Heights*. In May 1846, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* was published under the Brontës' masculine pseudonyms mainly through the initiative of Charlotte Brontë.

Emily and Anne contributed twenty-one poems each and Charlotte twenty. The book, especially Emily's poems, received good reviews but did not sell well.

In December 1847, *Wuthering Heights* was published, again under Emily's pseudonym Ellis Bell, and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* under the name of Acton Bell. The three sisters believed, perhaps rightly, that their books would receive scathing reviews if these were known to be written by women. There was wide speculation in English literary circles as to who these mysterious Bell brothers could be. The majority of the readers were also horrified by the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine whose lack of morals and use of profane language offended their Victorian sensibilities. They were repelled by and skeptical of the sadistic "monster" Heathcliff. Thus, Emily's one and only work of fiction was torn apart by critics during her lifetime. It survived initially because of the attempts of her more famous sister to explain the novel to a hostile reading public. Charlotte Brontë's *Biographical Notice* of Ellis and Acton Bell and Editor's Preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* written after Emily's death went a long way towards softening the perception of fierceness and nihilism that critics thought they detected in the author. In September 1848, Branwell who, in addition to his heavy drinking had also become addicted to opium, died suddenly. Emily had looked after him and had continued to hope for his recovery. At his funeral she caught a cold, which was to prove fatal. She refused to see a doctor and accept medication. Three months later she died at the age of thirty, to be followed in another few months by Anne. Charlotte lived for some more years, had a short married life and died in 1855. Their eccentric, violent, near-blind father survived them all.

Readers and critics still feel themselves bewildered to think of the literary significance of a novel like *Wuthering Heights.* It is as far removed from the worlds of Dickens, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell as the lonely windswept moors from crowded bustling London. However, some critics point out that the works of the women novelists, Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot have some traits in common. These can be cited as an intimate portrayal of English life and an increasing capacity to delve into moral and emotional nuances. In their hands the novel

acquires the power and artistry of poetry, thus eliciting in the reader a total involvement as in a poetic drama. This is true of the *Mill on the Floss* as of the *Wuthering Heights*. These writers also succeed in portraying life in an England of various regions, social strata and times.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Point out the significance of the Gondal world?

Q 6: What kind of family life did Emily Brontë have?

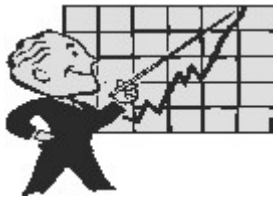
Q 7: How would you like to judge the literary worth of *Wuthering Heights*?

11.5 ANNE BRONTË: THE NOVELIST

Like her elder sisters, Anne Brontë was educated largely at home, where, as the youngest of the motherless family, she may have fallen under the Wesleyan influence of her Aunt Branwell, who is thought to have encouraged her tendency to religious melancholy. As a child, she was particularly close to Emily; and as you have read in the previous section, together they invented the imaginary world of Gondal, the setting of many of their poems. Anne accompanied Charlotte to Roe Head in 1836-7, and became governess to the Ingham family at Blake Hall in 1839; from 1840 to 1845, she was governess to the Robinson family at Thorp Green Hall, near York. Her brother Branwell joined her there as tutor in 1843, and became disastrously involved with Mrs Robinson. Anne's recollections of her experiences with the over-indulged young children and the worldly older children of these two households are vividly portrayed in *Agnes Grey* (1847). The novel appeared under the pseudonym Acton Bell, like in case of her poems, published in 1846 with those of her sisters. Her poems, which show the influence of Cowper and Wesley, explore religious doubt and confront Calvinist despair: among the most moving are 'To Cowper', 'My God (oh let me call thee mine)' and a Gondal lyric, 'Song: We know where deepest lies the snow'. Her second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), portrays in Arthur Huntingdon a violent, infantile, but sexually attractive drunkard clearly to some extent drawn from Branwell; Charlotte, in her 'Biographical Notice'

(1850), felt obliged to comment that 'the choice of subject was an entire mistake', and insists that her sister's nature was 'naturally sensitive, reserved and dejected'. The novel may be read as a scathing indictment of sexual double standards enshrined in marriage law and the educational system.

Anne died at Scarborough, where she was buried.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Point out the autobiographical elements in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 9: What do you understand by Social Problem novel? Can you read *Jane Eyre* as a social problem novel?

11.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE BRONTË SISTERS [Adapted from Margaret Drabble]

In her lifetime, Charlotte was the most admired of the Brontë sisters, although she was criticised on the grounds of alleged 'grossness' and emotionalism, considered particularly unbecoming in a clergyman's daughter: Matthew Arnold wrote in a letter (1853) that her mind contained 'nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage', and H. Martineau offended her by claiming that *Villette* dealt excessively with 'the need of being loved', and was passionately anti-Catholic. More widespread, however, was praise for her depth of feeling and her courageous realism, and her works continue to hold high popularity and critical esteem. The standard biographies are E. Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), and W. Gérin, *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius* (1967).

Unlike Charlotte, Emily had no close friends, wrote few letters, and had few but strong loyalties; the vein of violence (exemplified in the story of her subduing the dog Keeper with her bare hands), of stoicism, and of mysticism in her personality have given rise to many legends but few certainties. She is now established as one of the most original poets of the century, remembered for her lyrics (e.g. 'The night is darkening round me'), for her passionate invocations from the world of Gondal ('Remembrance', 'he Prisoner'), and her apparently more personal visionary moments ('No coward soul is mine').

Wuthering Heights, which was at first regarded by many as excessively morbid and violent, was gradually reassessed, and by 1899 Mrs H. Ward was praising Emily's masterly fusion of romance and realism at the expense of Charlotte's shrill didacticism. The 20th century, produced a great deal of critical and biographical commentary: C. P. Sanger analysed her careful plotting in *The Structure of Wuthering Heights* (1926): Frank Kermode proposed a variety of readings in *The Classic* (1975): Terry Eagleton proposed a Marxist reading in *Myths of Power* (1975); and J. Hillis Miller explored the complex narrative structure of *Wuthering Heights* in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982).



11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this introductory unit, you have read about the Brontë sisters and their works. Charlotte Brontë was the eldest of the three sisters. She had been a novelist and poet and is best known for her novel *Jane Eyre.* Emily Brontë was also a novelist and poet. She is famous for her only novel *Wuthering Heights.* Anne Brontë was the youngest of the sisters. She also wrote two novels namely *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. You have learnt that all of them wrote under masculine pseudonyms, as publishing by a woman in their times was a very difficult issue.



11.8 FURTHER READING

Allen, Walter (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.

Entry on the Brontë sisters in Drabble, Margaret. (ed). (2000). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.* (6th edition). OUP.

Ford, Boris (ed.) (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol. 6 From Dickens to Hardy.* Great Britain: Penguin Books.

Sanders, Andrew. (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* London: OUP.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Before turning to fiction, the Brontë sisters wrote poems… …but Charlotte decided to write novels the most popular genre of the period… …the gloomy landscape of the northern moors where she lived enabled them to imaginatively retreat from the ordinary world… …again through journals and newspapers, they got access to the contemporary political and ideological debates, as well as European Romanticism… …Subsequently, they produced Gondal stories and poems.

Ans to Q 2: It was done to avoid a strong gender prejudice prevalent during that time… …since writing was supposedly a male enterprise a male pseudonym would have ensured acceptability of the work among the literary circles… …Emily Brontë adopted the pseudonym Ellis Bell, Anne Brontë Acton Bell and Charlotte Brontë Currer Bell… …It was because they believed that their books would receive scathing reviews if these were known to be written not by men.

Ans to Q 3: The seclusion of the Haworth parsonage had a strong bearing on the works of Charlotte Brontë sisters… …despite that, they were not detached from the contemporary social and political atmosphere… …they evolved in their early stage an elaborate fiction about the fantasy kingdoms of Angria and Gondal… …however Gothicism and Romanticism of that kind did not remain an exclusive trait in their works.

Ans to Q 4: Charlotte's own passion, dreams, frustration etc. are all imaginatively transmuted into fictional incidents… … the novel transcends the autobiographical into a kind of fictional wish-fulfilment… …the narrative of the novel is characterised by a sustained emotional temperament as well as its many moments of revelation.

Ans to Q 5: Emily and Anne Brontë were engrossed in the world of their own making… …for this they imaginatively created the Gondal terrain… …the result was the composition of Gondal Stories and Poems… …however, none of the prose is extant but the Gondal Poems gave us an idea of the powerful imaginative faculty of the Brontë sisters.

Ans to Q 6: Emily had a very sad family life… …two of her elder sisters died in childhood and the only son Branwell was to waste away his talents and drink himself to death in the prime of youth… …moreover, she had to live a lonely life dominated by their eccentric father.

Ans to Q 7: *Wuthering Heights* as a novel is far removed from the worlds of Dickens, Thackeray, and Mrs. Gaskell… …however, it seems to have certain points common with the works of Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot… …the worth of this novel lies in its intimate portrayal of English life and in its capacity to penetrate deep into the moral and emotional nuances.

Ans to Q 8: Parallel between Charlotte's real experience as a governess and Jane's… …similarities between Cowan Bridge and Lowood… …ravages of death in the author's private life and death as a theme in the novel.

Ans to Q 9: It means novels focusing the social questions… …it is a fixed historical category… …although it discusses social issues, *Jane Eyre* is not a typical social problem novel… …it is about an isolated individual whose course of life does not reflect the ebb and flow of social and communal life.



11.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the major preoccupations of the Brontë sisters as novelists? Discuss with reference to some of the important works.

Q 2: Why was it difficult for the Brontës to publish during their times? Point out the autobiographical elements in the novels of the Brontë sisters.

Q 3: Do you think that the morbid and secluded atmosphere at home in turn contributed to the making of the Brontë sisters' as writers? Illustrate.

Q 4: What according to you is the significance of the Brontë sisters in the context of English fiction? How did they write their fiction against a masculine milieu of the early 19th century? Discuss.

Q 5: Write a note on the condition of the novel in the beginning of the 19th century.

* * *

UNIT 12: CHARLOTTE BRONTË: *JANE EYRE*

UNIT STRUCTURE:

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 The Story of the Novel

12.4 Major Themes

12.5 Charlotte Brontë's Art of Characterisation

12.6 Charlotte Brontë's Narrative Style

12.7 Let us Sum up

12.8 Further Reading

12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.10 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- read *Jane Eyre* as an outstanding fictional work produced in the Victorian age
- discuss the novel in relation to the dominant issues and ideas prevalent during the Victorian times
- relate the text to the facts of the author's life as well as to some aspects of the age in which the author lived.
- examine the dominant issues of gender and a female author's treatment of the same
- discuss how *Jane Eyre* employs a particular narrative style and draws on different genres of fictional writing

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* which has been regarded as one of the classic texts of Victorian literature. Of the four novels written by Charlotte Brontë, namely, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, *Jane Eyre* stands out as the most powerful

fictional works of the author and when it first appeared it was praised by critics for its freshness and vigour. The novel is autobiographical in the sense that we find close resemblance between some of the facts of the life of the protagonist and that of the author. We also find how the world of the writer's personal life is, in some ways, related to the world of the novel. As you go on reading the unit, you will soon discover that it is indeed a powerful narrative with a series of discoveries, which are surprising, shocking and horrible at times, and, of course, can, in the words of one of the earliest reviewers, "make the pulses gallop and the heart beat, and feel the eyes with tears."

12.3 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL

Jane Eyre was published in London in 1847 by Smith, Elder & Co. under the pseudonym Cureer Bell. Charlotte Brontë completed writing the novel by August, 1847. By then, her first novel *The Professor* failed to gain literary success. She accepted the criticism of the novel by W. S. Williams, reader for the firm of Smith & Elder, of the "want of varied interest in the tale", and offered the same firm her second novel with the conviction that the novel would avoid the weakness of the first one. The author considered the suggestion of the publisher regarding the title of the work, and finalised it as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. It was printed and published by 19th October 1847. A second edition, containing some corrections made by Brontë and a preface dedicating the novel to Thackeray, was published in 1848. Her communications with the publisher of the novel provide useful information as to the literary taste of the time and how the writer negotiated the issue. As Charlotte Brontë writes:

"Perhaps, too, the first part of *Jane Eyre* may suit the public taste better than you anticipate, for it is true and truth has a severe charm of its own. Had I told all the truth, I might indeed have made it far more exquisitely painful– but I deemed it advisable to soften and retrench many particulars lest the narrative should rather displease than attract."

Jane Eyre, a ten year old orphan, has a miserable life at Gateshead Hall, oppressed and tormented by Mrs. Reed and her

children. Jane's father and mother had died when she was a baby. Mr. Reed took the responsibility of bringing her up. He had been the brother of Jane's mother. On his deathbed he directed Mrs Reed to look after the girl and treat her as her own child. After the death of Mr. Reed, Mrs. Reed considered Jane a nuisance, and oppressed and tormented the little girl. Thus, Jane spent her years of neglect, abuse and physical and mental torture at Gateshead. One day Jane's cousin knocked her down and when she retaliated, Mrs. Reed punished her by sending her to Red Room-a gloomy chamber where Mr. Reed had died, and which therefore was rumoured to be haunted. It was a horrible experience for the ten year old girl, who lost her consciousness as she stayed in the room. She was freed later but she devolved dangerous illness. However, she regained normalcy slowly with the care of the sympathetic family apothecary Mr. Llyold and the loving ways of Bessie, the sharp-tonged nurse at Gateshead Hall.

Mrs Reed continued to despise Jane and felt that she could no longer take charge of the girl. She made arrangement for sending Jane to Lowood School. She consulted the proprietor of Lowood School, Mr. Brocklehurst for getting the little girl vigorously trained in the institution. One morning Jane left Gateshead Hall and rode 50 miles by stage to Lowood. Jane studied diligently at Lowood and was liked by her superiors. During her stay at Lowood, an epidemic of fever broke out, causing many deaths. Sickness and semi-starvation prevailed in Lowood. Mr. Brocklehurst strictly ensured this condition of starvation among its inmates, prescribing it as a condition for Christian way of life. The investigation of the epidemic finally helped in improving the atmosphere. After Jane completed her study at Lowood she was retained as a teacher. However, she grew weary of her life at Lowood, and advertised for a position as governess. Finally, she was engaged by Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield near Millcote. Jane had one pupil to teach at Thornfield– Adele Varens-a ward of Mr. Edward Rochester. In contrast to life at Gateshead Hall and Lowood School, she was pleased with the quiet country life, the beautiful old house and her own comfortable room.

When Jane entered the house as governess Mr. Rochester, her master, was not there. From Mrs. Fairfax She came to know that the master seldom came to Thornfield and travelled much. For the first time, she met Mr. Rochester while she was out walking, went to his aid after he fell off his horse. Her employer was a sober and moody man. He confided to her that the girl Adele was the daughter of a French dancer, who not just deceived him but also deserted her daughter. One night Jane was alarmed by a strange noise and found that Mr. Rochester's room was open and his bed was set ablaze. When she attempted to arouse all the inhabitants in the house, Mr. Rochester commanded her to keep quiet about the whole affair. The mystery did not unfold at that time, but she learned that Thornfield had a strange tenant who laughed like a maniac; she believed it to be Grace Poole, seamstress employed by Mr. Rochester.

Mr. Rochester had the habit of attending parties. One day he informed the people of Thornfield that he was soon bringing a party of guests home. Miss Ingram, the daughter of Lady Ingram, was the centre of attraction in the party. Mr Rochester was known to have paid court to Miss Ingram. During the party the guests treated Jane with disdain, which, they thought, her humble position deserved. In the mean time, Jane fell in love with Mr. Rochester, but she saw that he was only interested in Miss Ingram. One evening, when Mr. Rochester was away, the guests played charades. Here a gypsy fortune teller appeared to read the palm of the lady guests. When it was Jane's turn to see the fortune teller, she was reluctant, yet somewhat inwardly excited as to the fortune teller's predictions with regard to her link with Mr. Rochester. To her utter dismay, her relation with the gypsy turned out to be much revealing. The fortuneteller exactly articulated her feeling and it was discovered afterwards that the fortuneteller was Mr. Rochester himself.

A stranger named Mason arrived at Thornfield to see Mr. Rochester on business. That night the person was mysteriously wounded supposedly by the inhabitant of the third floor– Grace Poole. It was another mystery to Jane.

One day, news came from Gateshead that Mrs. Reed was on her deathbed and that she was willing to see Jane. Jane returned to Gateshead Hall. Mrs. Reed handed a letter to Jane saying that her uncle John Eyre had asked her to send Jane to him for adoption. But, Mrs. Reeds then sent him false information that Jane had died at Lowood. Now on her death bed, Mrs. Reeds was haunted by a sense of guilt that she kept from Jane that information which would have led to her adoption by Mr. Eyre and inheritance. After the death of Mrs. Reed, Jane came back to Thornfield which, to her, was like her own home. One night in the garden, Jane was embraced by Mr. Rochester, and he proposes to marry her. Jane was first hesitant, given the fact that Mr Rochester's romantic link with Miss Ingram was very much in the air. Mr. Rochester then revealed that he had forsaken Miss Ingram after having a test on her love for him in order to find out how much she cared for him and not for his wealth. Rochester told Ingram that he was to be destitute soon. On hearing this, she chose to avoid and Rochester came to know that her real interest was in his money. Finally, Jane accepted the proposal. They planned for a quiet ceremony at the village church. She wrote to her uncle in Madeira about Mrs. Reed's deception and about her prospective marriage with Mr. Rochester.

Before wedding, Jane had another harrowing and mysterious experience. She saw a repulsive looking woman in her room ripping her wedding veil to shred. Mr. Rochester tried to convince her that the whole thing was nothing but a figment of imagination whereas next morning she found the torn veil in her room. Anyway, at the church during the pronouncement of the vows, a stranger declares that there was an impediment to the marriage. He presented a document, which stated that Mr. Rochester had married Bertha Mason, Mr. Mason's sister in Spanish town, Jamaica fifteen years ago. Mr. Rochester admitted the fact and he conducted the party to the third storey chamber, where they found Grace Poole, the attendant, and Bertha Mason, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester. It was this mad wife who injured her own brother Mr. Mason, set ablaze Mr Rochester's bed and tore apart Jane's wedding veil.

Fearing that she might have to live as Rochester's mistress, and not his wife, Jane decides to leave Thornfield despite much exhortation by Mr. Rochester to the contrary. Two days later she found herself utterly desolate on the moors of a north Midland shire. She did not have a penny, slept in the open field, starving and actually had to begg for food. Finally, she got shelter in the house of St. John Rivers and befriended his sisters Mary and Dian, who nursed her back to health. In the new household, she assumed the name of Jane Elliot and refused to divulge anything about her past, except her link with Lowood School. Eventually Mr. Rivers found her a place as mistress in a girl's school. It was through Mr. Rivers that much to her surprise, she came to know about the death of her uncle at Madeira, leaving for Jane an inheritance of twenty thousand pounds to her. She learned that St. John and his sisters are in fact her own cousins. Jane was utterly happy and jubilant at such a pleasant discovery of her relations. She promptly offers to divide the inheritance with her cousins.

During this time, St. John was about to go to India as a missionary; he offered her a proposal of marriage. He plainly admits that he does not love her; he admires her for her qualities and thought her to be a deserving companion for his prospective missionary works. Jane refused the proposal. She was indebted to his kindness, but she could not become his wife. Initially though Jane agreed to go to India, she however, rejected the marriage proposal because she could not forget her first love Rochester. So, she returned to Thornfield. The whole mansion was now in ruins. From the neighbours she learned that one stormy night, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester set the whole mansion on fire, as a result of which she died. Mr. Rochester was trying to rescue her from the roof, but his hand had been badly injured and also lost his eyesight. Now he lives at Ferndean, a lovely farm some miles away from Thornfield. Jane went to the farm, and saw from a distance how the blind Rochester was trying to walk. Jane told him about St. Joan and how his marriage proposal was rejected by her. Jane and Rochester then got married; after two years Jane regained his eyesight and could see their first child.



LET US KNOW

You should note that the form of the novel *Jane Eyre* is that of Bildungsroman which is basically a story of a child's growth and maturity into adulthood. Jane, the protagonist, is a thinking and sensitive woman who is individualistic without being morally insensitive. The novel also offers social criticism and, among other things, it deeply grapples with important moral issues. The moral aspect of the novel is intimately related to the portrayal of a protagonist who is contemplative, keenly observant and, many a time, unyielding with respect to the pressures of external circumstances. Besides, Gothic fiction, which enjoyed vogue and popularity right from the Romantic period well into the mid-Victorian times, also has a considerable impact on *Jane Eyre*. The legacy of the Gothic fiction can be felt in the novel's creation of a solitary, brooding atmosphere, and the air of fearsome mystery, as well as in some crucial incidents in the story.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is Jane Eyre?

Q 2: Mention the names of the male characters in the novel.

12.4 MAJOR THEMES

In the previous section, you must have gained some general information regarding the probable themes and issues raised in the novel *Jane Eyre.* Ever since its first appearance, Jane Eyre has been a popular novel, highly commended by its earliest reviewers. Its popularity could be attributed to the portrayal of the character of Jane but the other aspects of the novel, notably the themes, must also be taken into account.

Country Life and the Seasons:

The novel opens with the mention of cold winter wind and rain,

which disrupt the evening walk of the Gateshead people that day. Winter brings coldness, despair and glooms. The narrator says in chapter 1:

"I studied the aspects of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast."

Description of the seasons and the landscape also occurs when it comes to having casual outing. Going for long evening walks forms part of Jane's routine at Gateshead Hall, but no such outing is allowed in Lowood, except going to Church on Sundays. Attending the Church was an important aspect of the country life. Despite the new religious skepticism promoted by the scientific discoveries, the Church still played an important role in Victorian society. However, to Jane, church going, especially in winter Sundays, was a kind of torture. "We set out cold, we arrived at church colder; during the morning service we became almost paralysed."

The seasons, thus, provide an apt décor for human drama to take place; the changing seasons corresponds to the changing situations and shifting moods of the protagonist. When Jane is cleared of the false charge against her at Lowood, and she got inner strength to improve herself academically, there is the beautiful description of the 'onset of summer'. In the same vein, the description of nature is equally picturesque in Jane's first encounter with Mr. Rochester: "something of daylight still lingered and the moon was waxing bright; I could see him plainly. Later, it is the 'splendid summer' and a beautiful natural settingwith 'sweet briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink and rose' that provide a background for Jane's romantic engagement with Mr. Rochester.

Confrontation of the Social Classes:

The novel's first confrontation, which is between Jane and the Reeds, can be seen as confrontation of two different social classes. Mrs Reeds obviously belongs to higher stratum, and Jane represents the poor class. Mrs. Reed's aversion of Jane is not just rooted in the girl's unyielding and observing, unsubmissive nature. It has a history, in the

act of transgression of social decorum befitting a class. Her husband's sister had a low marriage, of which Jane is the outcome. Towards the end of her life, Mrs. Reed called for Jane, and while finding her near her bed, she still retains her old class prejudice: "Mrs. Reed took her hand away, and turning her face toward me, she remarked that the night was warm." There is no trace of repentance, except of the fact of her deliberate misinformation to Jane's uncle; but, rather there is the renewed expression of her former class prejudice:

"…Are you Jane Eyre?"

"I am Jane Eyre."

"I have had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Such a burden to be left on my hands- and so much annoyance she caused me, daily and hourly, with her incomprehensible disposition…''

The most vivid confrontation of class can be seen in the Gateshead Hall episode. Jane is repressed and tortured physically and emotionally, and what is sought from her is that she understands the limits of her ways in accordance with her class. This lesson of class norms Mr. Brocklehurst tried to imbibe in Jane not as a common sense, but in a huge theological framework, as he presents contrasting version of heaven and hell as the only options lying before Jane.

Another important issue associated with class is property and inheritance. The novel shows Jane the protagonist's passage through different material atmospheres, which are also different stages of her intellectual, moral and emotional development. She starts as a poor girl, and could at best expect to become a governess; but towards the end, sudden endowment of inheritance from her uncle of Madeira at once raises her social status. Therefore, in terms of class status she is finally at par with Mr. Rochester. It is therefore interesting to see how the novel, among other things, also unwittingly maintains equilibrium with respect to class when there is the question of two people's emotional bonding.

Redemption and Forgiveness:

The first encounter between Jane and Mr. Rochester is significant, because it symbolically enacts another important theme of the novel: an

individual's moral and ethical 'fall' and the need of rescue through redemption and forgiveness. Mr. Rochester falls off his horse when Jane was out walking and she offers him helping hand. Mr. Rochester is not a righteous person; he is vulnerable to temptations and adventurous in a perverse way particularly in relation to women. First, it was Bertha whose dark sensuality appealed to him. Then there was the French dancer Celine Varens by whom he had a daughter. Then he approaches Miss Ingram, daughter of Lady Ingram. Mr. Rochester himself was aware of his transgressions, and he sought to atone for them; an instance of his atonement is the bringing up of Adele. The theme of sin and redemption as related to Rochester's conduct is present in the novel. Rochester asked Jane to be his mistress but Jane's pure love for him showed him the path of redemption, which came much later after his going through a huge punishment. Thornfield Hall was burnt; he was crippled and blind. This enormous loss was a necessary aftermath of his earlier misdeeds, as well as a prelude to the marital bliss as he and Jane were re-united at the end of the novel.

Domination and Dissidence:

Jane Eyre is about domination, repression, imprisonment or loss of freedom and at the same time, it is also a tale of opposition, dissidence, or search for identity and freedom. Through different stages of the protagonist's passage into an independent womanhood, the narrative offers different images and instances of domination, subjugation and imprisonment. To Jane, Gateshead Hall becomes a sort of prison so that when there is the talk of sending her to Lowood, Jane is anxious to shift to that place, as it would at least relieve her of the compulsion of having to endure oppression and humiliation at Gateshead Hall. However, it is soon noticed that Lowood School offers another kind of imprisonment.

Jane is a great rebel throughout the novel, though the nature of her dissidence markedly changed in later life. At Gateshead, when John Reed, her cousin, knocked her down on the floor and injured her, she fought back rather than withdrawing from the confrontation and this led

to her imprisonment in the red room. The novel offers a telling account of Jane's suffering inside the gothic chamber. This literal imprisonment of Jane can be related, from a much later moment in the narrative, to the long-term imprisonment of Bertha Mason in the attic at Thornfield Hall.

Language can also be a vehicle of dissidence. There is a passage in the Gateshead Hall episode where Jane speaks to her aunt with utmost freedom and courage, revealing Mrs. Reed's torturous ways and giving vent to her own emotion: ''I will never call you aunt again as long as I live …if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty." It was such a powerful discourse that it compels Mrs. Reed to soften her tongue, as she said: "Is there anything you wish for, Jane? I assure you, I desire to be your friend."

The most vivid and significant image of imprisonment and dissidence can be seen in Bertha Mason's case. Mr. Rochester marries Bertha, brings her home and discovering that she is mad; he imprisons her in the attic, under the care of Grace Poole. Bertha tries to come out whenever Grace Poole is drunk, and attempts to kill her husband. Finally, she puts the entire mansion at Thornfield into flames and kills herself.

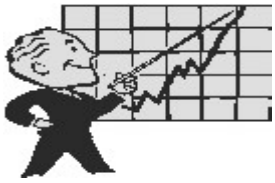
Search for Home and Family:

At Gateshead, we have Jane as a child of ten who has lost her parents and thus, a family and a home. Gateshead Hall is not her home in its proper sense, because no offer of truly humane and emotionally intimate bonding was extended to her. In another way, in case of Mr. Rochester too, the terms—home and family—lost all its positive import. In the final moments of the novel, however, we have him finding a true home and making a true family after marrying Jane.

If loss of home and family has a tragic aspect, it also moulds Jane's nature in a positive way. She has nothing to fall back upon; she was compelled to struggle with circumstances and situations and to make significant decisions of life; and thus she establishes herself as an independent and self-reliant individual. When Jane arrives at Thornfield Hall, she is uncertain as to the nature of its air, and was a little

apprehensive. But after a disturbing phase spent at Thornfield and revelations about Mr. Rochester's wife, she leaves the place, becomes destitute, and is literally reduced to begging until she is accommodated in the Moor House by St. John. St John's sisters Maria and Diana had a sisterly relation with her. Jane comes of a poor family; yet she has much less craving for riches than for a real home and relations. Her uncle of Madeira bestows upon her an inheritance of twenty thousand pounds. However, she resolves to divide equally the money with her cousins. Rather than the matter of inheritance, it is the 'discovery' of her cousins that truly delighted her.

When somebody is in need of the shelter of home and comforting presence of a family, any human intervention to such a quest is seen as an ethical blunder. Mrs. Reed in her last days could not bear the pangs of conscience because she supplied to Jane's uncle misinformation about Jane when he had offered to adopt the girl. Jane's uncle's initial offer of adoption is significant; it could have meant for her home and family– a possibility, which Mrs. Reed averted.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Mention some of the important themes of the novel.

Q 4: Mention what Charlotte Brontë wrote in her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* regarding morality and religion.

Q 5: What role does Seasons play in the novel?

Q 6: What thematic purpose does the confrontation between Jane and Mr. Reeds serve in the narrative of the novel *Jane Eyre*?

12.5 CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Charlotte Brontë's strength as a novelist lies more on her creative imagination, a vitality that every page of the novel 'burns and breathes with', to borrow from David Cecil than on characterisation. Her major

characters such as Jane Eyre, Lucie Snowe, Caroline Holstone, Shirley Keeder are all fully drawn and elaborately furnished but the secondary characters are mostly seen through the narrow prison of the heroine's temperament and therefore, they exist, in so far as they relate to her. Another weakness of her characterisation is that she is rather ineffective in the portrayal of the male characters. They are conceived as rather too feminine or too full of masculine vanity. However, she is particularly successful in portraying the character of Jane Eyre who has few parallels in English fiction in terms of possessing a dynamic personality.

Some of the important characters of the novel are discussed with more detail in the following sections.

Jane Eyre:

Jane Eyre, the principal character of the novel, is one of the most talked about characters in Victorian fiction. In fact, the story of the novel is inseparable from her own story and, therefore, the novel charts her own growth from being a child, a young girl, to a mature woman. However, she has been shown as dependent on others— first on Mrs. Reed, then on Mr. Brocklehurst, then on Mr. Rochester and St. John. This dependence, though circumstantial, helps her to move on. As a poor little orphan, she was materially bound to Gateshead Hall. In fact, from Gateshead Hall through Thornfield Hall, she was in some way or the other made to feel that she is at the mercy of others. Initially this 'other' was Mrs. Reed, then Mr. Brocklehurst, and then Mr. Rochester. After Mrs. Reed's punishment of Jane at red room, it was Brocklehurst who offers to hone her personality as a passive, receptive and suffering individual by offering contrasting the images of heaven and hell as Jane's only alternative. At Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst's dismissive ways and pronouncements of inhuman and harsh norms find a certain Christian vocabulary. When, for instance, he inquired about twice serving a lunch against the norms of the institution, Miss Temple confessed to it, and he retorted: "you are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying." The awareness of being dependent is

something that Mr. Rochester too gives Jane from time to time.But right from her childhood Jane had a bit of mental independence or self respect. Her little act of rebelliousness against her cousin after he hit her is a manifestation of her self esteem. When Mrs. Reed commands her children not to mix up with Jane who, to her, is 'not worthy of notice', her reply was straightforward: 'they are not fit to associate with me.'

The Lowood School episode is significant if we look at the moral and intellectual development of Jane. After a terribly secluded life at Gateshead Hall, it was at Lowood that she comes to terms with some good people, like Helen Burns and Miss Temple. Helen Burns was a senior student at Lowood. She was disgracefully flogged and was sent to stand in the middle of a room full of people by a teacher named Miss Scatcherd. She was an embodiment of endurance and restraint. She talks to Jane about the New Testament lesson to love one's enemy and this lesson of Christian forgiveness Jane imbibed later in her life, as, in Mrs. Reed's final days she accompanies her aunt. However, the latter fails to do away with her earlier class prejudice against Jane. In fact, it was her closeness with Helen Burns and Miss Temple that it prepared the ground for Jane to enter a wider realm of experience and it gave her a sense of her worth.

At Thornfield Hall, independence of mind and self-reliance was essential to Jane as, among other things, she is to make a crucial choice: whether she would stay with Mr. Rochester or leave him after she learns about his past life. He implores her to stay with him with a heart full of repentance and with utmost sincerity. Of course, she decides to leave, implying a troublesome aftermath for Mr. Rochester and an uncertain future for herself. What is important however is how Mr. Rochester is made dependent on Jane's verdict. In the Moor House episode, she consents to accompany St. John to India on missionary work, but she is also unambiguous in articulating her refusal of his proposal for marriage. This very act of refusal once again establishes her integrated and independent selfhood.

Many critics feel that the character of Jane Eyre is a self portrait of Charlotte Brontë although the author herself is has denied it. One critic

Laura Hinkley, finds a parallel in Jane's love for a married man and Charlotte's love for M. Heger. Jane's love is passionate but she would put her feelings aside to live a life of struggle. On the whole, despite the affinities between Jane and her creator, what is important to remember is that in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë has presented a complete person and a woman of moral superiority.

Mr. Rochester:

Mr. Rochester is a complex character. His actions and ways actually pave the way for a number of interpretations. As the owner of Thornfield house, he entrusts upon Jane the task of teaching Adele, daughter of a French opera dancer Celine Varens. As affirmed by the child's mother, Edele was his own daughter. But he did not give the small child his love as father. Rather, he seeks to discharge his duties impassionately. It was the bitterness arising from Celine Varens' breach of trust with him that lends him this coldness towards Adele.

Mr. Rochester appears to enjoy travelling abroad, and as Jane has been informed by Mrs. Fairfax, he is seldom seen at Thornfield Hall. He loves to enjoy party and the company of woman. He is somewhat sadistic with respect to his ways to Jane. He is aware of how Jane loves him still he talks to her about his prospective marriage with Miss Ingram. He is well aware of how Jane is attuned to his home; yet he commands her to leave Thornfield Hall, something that aggrieved her. He reminds her that she is a dependent being, and that once Miss Ingram becomes his wife she should shift elsewhere. What is more, he even commands her to go to Ireland and find a new situation at a specified household. Though afterwards he confesses that he sought to arouse Jealousy in the mind of Jane, his ways nevertheless has caused her emotional disturbance.

Mr. Rochester has some qualities that can be called anti-heroic. He is dark and ugly looking, his rough appearance and impulsive action make him singularly unsuitable for Jane's acceptance. Charlotte Brontë's account of Rochester's character is seen in her letter to her publisher: *"Mr. Rochester has a thoughtful nature and a very feeling heart; he is*

neither selfish nor self indulgent; he is ill educated, misguided; errors, when he does err, through rashness and inexperience: he lives for a time as too many other men live, but being radically better than most men, he does not like that degraded life, and is never happy in it…"

Bertha Mason:

Bertha is the mad wife of Mr. Rochester. He had married her in Jamaica, West Indies, fifteen years back, when he was quit a young man. According to him, however, it was a plotting designed by his brother and his father to get thirty thousand pounds, something of which he was completely unaware. Initially, Bertha's sensual beauty fascinated him, but after marriage he discovered that she was mad. As revealed by him to Jane, Bertha's mother was mad too. She was brought back to Thornfield Hall, and imprisoned in the third story attic. Grace Poole was engaged to keep a constant vigil on Bertha.

Bertha tried to come out of her chamber when Grace Poole was unaware, and once she set ablaze the bed of Mr. Rochester, and attempted murder of her brother Mr. Mason. Further, she tore the wedding veil of Jane. It indicates two things: Bertha has a certain murderous hatred against the male, and she senses Jane as her rival. It is significant that she is rather heard and sensed than seen. It is evident that it was not out of love but lust that propelled Mr. Rochester to marry Bertha. Paradoxically, however, Mr. Rochester's prime accusation against her was her coarseness; she is "at once intemperate and unchaste". On the other hand, he locks her up in a room and goes forth on a life of sexual adventure.

Bertha Mason, in many ways, stands as antithesis to Jane. Her sinister revenge motive stands opposite to Jane's composure and self-restraint. She is physically strong, violently willful, demonic– qualities which are not acceptable in a Victorian wife. Many feminist critics, however, see Bertha as Jane's alter ego, an embodiment of her repressed anger.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How would you like to judge the character of Mr. Rochester?

Q 8: Do you think Bertha is an antithesis to Jane?

12.6 CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S NARRATIVE STYLE

As has been indicated by the full title of the novel, it is a first person narrative. It is told from the viewpoint of the protagonist, Jane Eyre. Technically, in a narrative where the character presents his/her own story, we have to set apart the narrator and the character for the purpose of analysis. We shall have to discuss the relation between Jane the narrator and Jane the character in the world of the events narrated. An important fact about the narrative style of *Jane Eyre* is that the Narrator is aware that what he/she narrates is a written narrative. There are instances where the narrator directly addresses the reader with the word "reader" as the narrator declares at the end of the book: "reader, I married him." Because the novel is technically autobiographical, self-presence is an important criterion to assess the reliability of the narrative. The realism of the novel basically hinges on the 'presence' of Jane in a situation. This self-presence enables the narrator to describe things, even gives her the power to record, observe, assess and criticise the 'other', be it event, people or situation. Again, it also enables the narrator for self-presentation.

One interesting fallout of this first person viewpoint is that sometimes there is a rupture between Jane's self-presentation and her received image in other people's mind. For instance, Rochester describes his own impression of Jane when she comes to Thornfield: "I find you full of strange contrasts, your grab and manners were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, and altogether that of one refined by nature, but absolutely unused to society, and a good deal afraid of making herself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed, you lifted a keen, a daring, and a glowing eye to

your interlocutor's face; there was penetration and power in each glance you gave." He claims that Jane may be stern and repressed, but we cannot figure it out from Jane's self-presentation. Some crucial narrative information are not part of Jane's felt life; it has been supplied by other agency. There are occasions where Jane receives other's stories. It is Mr. Rochester who informs her facts of Adele's parentage, the deception of Celine Varens to him, and more importantly, the story of his past. And in all this, Mr. Rochester presents himself more as a victim than as a victimiser. Mr. Rochester narrates how he was fooled by his father into marrying a 'mad' woman for monetary gain. The way Mr. Rochester presents his story also carries an implicit justification for his act of imprisonment of his own wife. Bertha does not have a point of view, neither an intelligible voice which can only be heard from a distance.

Another aspect of the novel's narrative strategy is its retrospective nature. It is told from a much later point of time. Towards the end, the narrator says 'I have now been married ten years.' It is only at this point that the perspective of the narrative is defined as the voice of thirty-year-old Jane. In some points distance is perceived between Jane the narrator and Jane the character in the world of the events, as in chapter 2, the narrator contemplates on the turmoil in the mind of the young Jane: "what a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance was the mental battle fought!" However, there is also no obligation to maintain a narrative distance throughout the novel; there is in fact a flexible play with narrative distance, and you will see that it is necessary in the creation of an atmosphere of mystery and gothic horror in Thornfield Hall. This creation of the atmosphere of horror would not have been possible when the reader perceived a gap between the experienced narrator and the ignorant character. With regard to the mysterious events in Thornfield Hall, the reader is given as little narrative information as Jane herself knows. It leads to revelation: revelation to Jane as much as to the reader.

The abundant use of symbolism, imagery, and the supernatural elements adds to the stylistic mastery of Charlotte Brontë as a writer. If you read the text you will find that occasionally the narrative rises above the commonplace and receives an extra infusion of poetic flavour. The

splitting of the great chestnut after Rochester's false marriage proposal is clearly symbolic of a portent. Most interestingly, this is followed by the nightmarish visit of Bertha Rochester to Jane's bedroom two nights before the actual marriage, the tearing of the wedding veil that is planned from the upcoming ceremony that will certainly betray both the real wife and the girl falsely betrothed. It is extraordinary that the climax of the story hinges on the telepathic appeal Jane receives from Rochester just at a time when she was ready to submit to St. John.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What according to you is the important aspect of the narrative style used in the novel *Jane Eyre*?

Q 10: Why is it that the narrative strategy used in the novel is retrospective in nature?



12.7 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have learnt that this unit has dealt with Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* which has been regarded as one of the classic texts of Victorian literature. Of the four novels written by Charlotte Brontë, namely, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, *Jane Eyre* stands out as the most powerful fictional works of the author, and when it first appeared, it was praised by critics for its freshness and vigour. The novel is autobiographical. Moreover, from this unit, you must have also learnt that *Jane Eyre* is an outstanding fictional work produced in the Victorian age, and it makes lot of resemblance to the facts of the author's life as well as to some aspects of contemporary life such as issues of gender and the female author's treatment of it.



12.8 FURTHER READING

Abel, Elizabeth, Marriane Hirch & Elizabeth Langland (eds.) (1983). *The Voyage in Fiction of Female Developmen*t. Hanover: University Press of New England.

Alexander, Christine (1983). *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Allen, Walter (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.

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

Barker, Juliet (1975). *The Brontës*. London: Macmillan.

Beaty, Jerome (1996). *Misreading Jane Eyre: A Postformalist Paradigm*. Colombus: Ohio State University Press.

Brontë, Charlotte (2004). *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: Norton.

Ford, Boris (ed.) (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol. 6 From Dickens to Hardy.* Great Britain: Penguin Books.

Gilbert, Sandra & Susan, Gubar (1973). *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Glen, Heather (ed.) (1997).*Jane Eyre* (New Casebook Series). London: Macmillan.

Kettle, Arnold (1967). *An Introduction to the English NovelVol I.* Universal Book Stall, New Delhi.

Lodge, David (1966). "Fire and Eyre Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements" in *Language of Fiction.* London: Routlegde and Kegan Paul.

Sanders, Andrew (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* London: OUP.

Woolf, Virginia (1925). *The Common Reader*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co.



12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Jane Eyre is a ten year old orphan living at Gateshead Hall…
…she is oppressed and tormented by Mrs Reed and her children…
…she spends her years of neglect, abuse and physical and mental

torture at Gateshead… …she finds herself confined toa gloomy chamber where Mr Reed had died for no serious reason at all… …she loses her consciousness; with the care of the sympathetic family Mr. Llyold she gets well soon.

Ans to Q 2: Mr Reed… …Mr. Llyold… …Mr. Brocklehurst… …Mr. Rochester… …Mr. Rivers… …St. John etc.

Ans to Q 3: Country Life and the Seasons… …Confrontation of the Social Classes… …Redemption and Forgiveness… …Domination and Dissidence… …Search for Home and Family

Ans to Q 4: "Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion…There is a difference; and it is a good, and not a bad action, to mark broadly and clearly the line of separation between them."

Ans to Q 5: The seasons provide an apt décor for human drama to take place in the novel… …the changing seasons corresponds to the changing situations and shifting moods of the protagonist as well as the characters.

Ans to Q 6: It represents the confrontation of two different social classes… …Mrs. Reed's aversion of Jane is not just rooted in the girl's unsubmissive nature; it has a long history… …it has been seen by Reeds as the act of transgression of his social decorum… …this high class attitude of Reed towards Jane continues till the end of the novel.

Ans to Q 7: Mr. Rochester is a complex character… …he is the owner of Thornfield house and he entrusts upon Jane the task of teaching Adele… …Mr. Rochester appears to enjoy travelling abroad… …Mr. Rochester is dark and ugly looking, his rough appearance and impulsive action make him singularly unsuitable for Jane's acceptance.

Ans to Q 8: Yes… … Bertha Mason, in many ways, stands as antithesis to Jane. Her sinister revenge motive stands opposite to Jane's composure and self-restraint. She is physically strong, violently willful, demonic– qualities which are not acceptable in a Victorian wife. Many feminist critics, however, see Bertha as Jane's alter ego, an embodiment of her repressed anger.

Ans to Q 9: The narrator is aware that what he/she narrates is a written narrative… …there are instances where the narrator directly addresses the reader with the word "reader" as at the end of the book: "reader, I married him."… …self-presence is an important criterion to assess the reliability of the narrative because it is autobiographical.

Ans to Q 10: It is told from a much later point of time. Towards the end, the narrator says 'I have now been married ten years.' It is only at this point that the perspective of the narrative is defined as the voice of thirty-year-old Jane.



12.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a detailed sketch of the complex nature of relationships that helps in the development of the plot of the novel *Jane Eyre*.

Q 2: Trace the relationship between Jane and Rochester from the beginning to the finish.

Q 3: To what extent does Jane's life at Thornfield help her to grow as an individual? Explain with reference to the incidents in Thornfield.

Q 4: 'Self determination is the chief virtue in Jane's character'. Elaborate this statement.

Q 5: Why do you think Charlotte Brontë makes Rochester almost blind for some time and then allows him to recover some of his sight later?

Q 6: Compare the characters of Rochester and John Rivers in their dealing with the women in the novel including Jane Eyre.

Q 7: 'Jane Eyre is a declaration of feminine independence.' Discuss.

Q 8: Do you think that the *Jane Eyre* is an autobiographical fiction Charlotte Brontë had written?

Q 9: How does the loss of home and family make Jane a stronger character?

Q 10: In what way, do you feel, can the novel *Jane Eyre* be called a Buildugsroman? Explain.

* * *

UNIT 13: EMILY BRONTE: *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

UNIT STRUCTURE:

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 The Story of the Novel

13.4 The genesis of *Wuthering Heights*

13.5 Major Themes

13.6 Emile Brontë's Art of Characterization

13.7 Emile Brontë's Narrative Style

13.8 Let us Sum up

13.9 Further Reading

13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.11 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- trace the storyline of the novel *Wuthering Heights*
- identify the important themes that add to the significance of the novel
- discuss the narrative techniques and Brontë's art of characterisation
- appreciate the novel in totality as a work of one or more literary genres

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to *Wuthering Heights* a novel by Emily Brontë (1818–1848). The fifth daughter of an Irish clergyman, Emily wrote only one novel apart from a number of poems which were first published in 1846 along with those of her two sisters Charlotte and Anne. In order to understand the somewhat bewildering structure of the novel with its dark, gothic and supernatural elements, you will first have to understand

Emily Brontë's life history in some detail. Also after reading the novel, you might wonder why this talented writer did not pen any other work of fiction, which could probably have been of equal merit. (In fact, she and Anne together did write numerous prose pieces which were never published and are now lost.) Many readers and critics of *Wuthering Heights* ask the same question. The answer could lie in the quality of Emily Brontë's creative imagination as in the rather unusual circumstances of her life, or in the geographical location where she grew up. The story of the novel sets in the untamed countryside of 18th century Yorkshire and deals primarily with the violent passions of the main protagonists who held sway over the other dramatis personae. The theme and its treatment have little in common with the main body of Victorian novels, which were greatly influenced by the socio-political situation of the times. After reading this unit, you will finally understand that the far-reaching changes sweeping across England, and the world seemed to have had little impact on the private world of *Wuthering Heights*.

13.3 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL

Wuthering Heights is the story of two households and their occupants spanning two generations. Several people, dramatis personae and outsiders alike, take hold of the narration and the events unfold in different sequences of time. This is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the novel.

Lockwood, a tenant, who has rented Thrushcross Grange for a year in 1801, is the first narrator. He begins by telling us about the experiences of his visit to Wuthering Heights, the other country house, in the neighbourhood where his property owner Heathcliff resides. He does not get a warm welcome but returns the next day when he also meets young Cathy and Hareton Earnshaw. A snowstorm compels him to spend the night there even after Joseph, the surly old servant, sets the dogs on him. He is led to sleep in a room, which seems to be out of bounds for everybody. Here he finds a diary written by Catherine Earnshaw some

twenty-five years ago. At night he is awakened by a child's ghost who seizes his hand when he puts it out of the window. As he cries out in mortal fear, Heathcliff rushes in and is overcome with passion at the sight of the ghost.

Next morning, Lockwood returns to the Thrushcross Grange where Nelly Dean, his housekeeper who had worked in Wuthering Heights in the past, begins to enlighten him about the place, the people and the happenings there. Her narrative goes back to 1771 when Catherine Earnshaw and her brother Hindley were children and a foundling was brought home by their father from a trip to Liverpool. This child of about seven who spoke *'gibberish'*, grew up to become Heathcliff. Nelly observes that the child brought about a division in the family as Catherine and her father grew attached to him and Hindley grew to hate him. There was such strife in the family that Hindley was sent away to college. After Mr. Earnshaw's death in 1777, Hindley, with his newly married wife Frances, returned home and began to wield his clout as the Master. He discontinued Heathcliff's education and set him to work as a farm hand. Catherine, however, remained his friend till an escapade with him introduced her to the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange. After spending five weeks there, she was transformed into an elegant young lady and her distance from the boorish Heathcliff grew. Yet the attraction between the two did not wane though Hindley continued to mistreat the latter. In 1778, Frances gave birth to a son Hareton but died later that year. Two years later Catherine turned fifteen and Edgar began courting her. She seemed to return his affections and this alienated Heathcliff further. In the meantime, Hindley grew addicted to liquor and began mistreating his infant son.

One night Heathcliff overhears Catherine telling Nelly that she is going to marry Edgar and he vanishes from home. Then the old Linton couple catch a fever and die. Three years later in 1783 Catherine marries Edgar and moves to the Grange taking Nelly with her. Heathcliff returns the same year having mysteriously become "quite the Christian" and rich. The marital harmony between Catherine and Edgar is shattered as her passion for the prodigal is rekindled. The disquieting atmosphere and the

latter's goading infuriates the mild Edgar. Things come to a head when Heathcliff seduces Isabella and she elopes with him. Catherine develops fever and delirium and in this state is remorseful at what she feels to be her betrayal of her true love. Heathcliff brings Isabella back to Wuthering Heights, which has become a dirty and neglected place. Hindley is a wreck and his son a violent little ruffian. In a reversal of circumstances, Heathcliff looks like a gentleman. Catherine does not quite recover from her illness and dies giving birth to a daughter. Before dying, she blames him and Edgar for her plight and tells him that he will suffer as she has. At her demise, Heathcliff falls apart completely and becomes a friend. After Catherine's funeral, all hell breaks loose. Hindley in a drunken rage tries to kill Heathcliff but fails and is almost beaten to death by the latter. Isabella flees to London where her son Linton is born. Six months after his sister's death, Hindley also dies. Soon it is discovered that all the Earnshaw property is mortgaged to Heathcliff and Hareton is a destitute.

Twelve years later Isabella, realising that she is dying begs her brother to take Linton away with him. Edgar does so but Heathcliff immediately claims his son and has him brought over to Wuthering Heights where he is a tyrant. When her father is away in London, Cathy goes on a clandestine visit to the other house and meets Hareton. On her 16th birthday, she meets him and Heathcliff out in the moors and is taken to Wuthering Heights for a visit. Here she meets Linton again and is told about the two families and their relationship by the new Master of the house. The man confides to Nelly his plan of marrying Cathy to his son, ostensibly for her security. Linton at first seems to be against it but terrorised by his father falls in with the latter's plan and woos Cathy. Initially Edgar too objects vehemently but gives in because a fever has debilitated him. We are already told how Hareton is deprived of education, and mistreated by Heathcliff and Joseph. He is often taunted by Linton and Cathy too for his ignorance. We also learn that the servants neglect Linton, and already of delicate health, the young man has bouts of cough and fever. Yet mortally afraid of Heathcliff, he helps the former trick Cathy and Nelly into coming to Wuthering Heights where both are made prisoners. Catherine's daughter resists fiercely but the

man who is obsessed by her mother beats her into submission. The next day she is married to Linton while Nelly is kept locked up. The housekeeper is eventually released but the young bride remains a prisoner held by her husband and his father. She is not allowed to visit her father who is dying but manages to escape and reach his death bed. After Edgar's funeral Cathy is taken back to Wuthering Heights. In an interesting aside Heathcliff confesses to Nelly that he had opened Catherine's grave to look at her face and has bribed the Sexton to bury him next to her. Very soon Linton also dies and his father gains full control over both the families and their properties. His motive of revenge is complete as he now tyrannises over the two children.

The story then moves ahead to 1802 when Lockwood returns to Thrushcross Grange after eight months. He visits the other house and finds some changes there. The young couple has become friends and Cathy has taken up the role of teaching Hareton. Nelly lives there now and tells the tenant that Heathcliff died three months ago. Towards the end he had difficulty in eating and breathing but was strangely excited. He also confessed to her that he no longer craved for revenge and was stirred by the resemblance both the children bore to Catherine. One morning Nelly found him dead beside the open window of Catherine's old room. He was buried next to Edgar and Catherine but the villagers maintain that they have seen him roaming the moors with his beloved. Cathy and Hareton are to be married on the New Year's Day of 1803 and will move to Thrushcross Grange with Nelly. Wuthering Heights will be shut and left in the care of Joseph. The story which began with Lockwood's first visit to the house ends as he leaves it for the last time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is Lockwood and how did he meet Heathcliff?

Q 2: Where did Heathcliff come from and what place did he have in the Earnshaw family?

Q 3: What role does Nelly Dean play in the novel?

13.4 THE GENESIS OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Unlike her sisters' works which contain fragments of their own experiences, Emily Brontë's novel does not give us a glimpse of her own life or her times. The Pennine highlands running past Cowan Bridge and the low-lying moors where Haworth Parsonage was located combine to form the setting of *Wuthering Heights*. Apart from this, the only verisimilitude consists of some realistic details of Yorkshire life like the dialect and interior decoration. The theme and treatment of the novel is far removed from the conventions that shaped the writing of the Victorian novelists. Where then do we look for and find the source of this work which stands out starkly against the large body of the 19th century English Fiction?

We can say with a fair degree of certainty that the novel had its genesis in the tales of Angria and Gondal which the Brontë children had created during their lonely childhood days. These tales evolved into the poems the sisters wrote when they grew up. A poem of Emily's written when she was about eighteen which began: "I am the only being whose doom/No tongue would ask, no eye would mourn..." is highly reminiscent of Heathcliff. That the novel departs from the Victorian norms of realism can be appreciated if we recognise its emergence out of a deeply private and long extended meditation on the world of Gondal. This would also explain how Emily Brontë could compose a work so elaborately and chronologically complex, as well as meticulously plotted over three generations, within a nine month period (between sometime in 1845 and July 1846). She had ,over time, so completely internalised the characters, action and stylistic devices of the Gondal saga that she was able to give the early collaborative narrative the shape and tone of a conventional novel in a relatively short time. The witty urbanities of Thackeray, the domestic bliss of Mrs. Gaskell or the social criticism and humour of Dickens, which the readers delighted in, were conspicuous by their absence in *Wuthering Heights*. Instead, we have the incest motif, the macabre opening of graves, raging passions, storms and howling winds, the ghost of Catherine, the darkly irresistible Heathcliff—all staple

fares of the Gothic literature so popular during Emily's girlhood. The Romantic Poets seemed to have taken precedence over Jane Austen, Dickens, or George Eliot as far as her reading was concerned because elements of their poetry are dominant motifs in the novel. The protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* still had the groans of the Byronic hero when the characters of the contemporary novels had become immersed in the struggle of the individual within a rapidly industrialised and complex society. In a word the Victorian novel had started documenting the ascendancy of the Superego over the Ego while *Wuthering Heights* was exploring the private world, the id of its Heathcliff and Catherine.



LET US KNOW

Id: That part of the unconscious mind consisting of a person's basic inherited instinct, needs, feelings and desire.

Ego: That part of the mind that is responsible for the interpretation of reality and a sense of personal identity.

Superego: That part of the mind that acts as a conscience and makes one aware of right or wrong.

Another interesting source may be found in the Brontë family's forebears in Ireland. As garnered from the account of William Wright in "The Brontës in Ireland" (1893), Patrick Brontë's father Hugh Brunty was adopted at a young age by a cruel and vengeful uncle named Welsh. This story became folklore in the Brontë household as the Reverend told his children many times about their grandfather's virtual kidnapping and childhood abuse by the uncle. Welsh himself was a central figure in the legend. An orphan found on a boat going from Liverpool to Drogheda, he was adopted by Hugh's grandfather. Like Heathcliff, Welsh was eventually able to drive away and disinherit all the legitimate heirs of the family. He also fell in love with the daughter of the house but was unable to marry her. This ruthless ancestor bears some resemblance to the hero of Bartholmew Simmon's Gothic story 'The Bridegroom of Barna', which was set in Ireland. This tale was published in 1840 in *Blackwood's*

Edinburgh Magazine, a leading journal regularly read by the Brontë family. The story tells of disinheritance, revenge, and an unconsummated marriage between a woman of high birth and a man from a lower class. Although we do not know for certain, the two narratives, one real and the other fictional, could have struck a chord in Emily Brontë and given birth to the novel in general and the character of Heathcliff in particular.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Can you trace the sources of *Wuthering Heights*?

Q 5: How did the great Romantic poets influence Emily Brontë in the writing of her novel?

13.5 MAJOR THEMES

Wuthering Heights is a complex mosaic where the themes of love, jealousy, alienation and revenge are woven around untamed nature and social conventions. Here the supernatural acquires the stature of a spiritual harmony which defies the grave or earthly separation. Though death and misery are recurring motifs, the book ends with the promise of regeneration, continuity and happiness.

Theme of Love and Revenge:

The theme of the deep and almost unearthly intensity of Heathcliff and Catherine's love is paramount in the novel. The quality of this passion is emphasised by her marriage with Edgar Linton which is the result of romantic conventions accepted and blessed by society. After she tells Nelly about her decision to marry Edgar, the housekeeper asks her:

> "Why do you love him Miss Cathy?"
> Catherine replies:
> "Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with."
> "And because he is young and cheerful."

She further confesses to Nelly about her passion for Heathcliff:

"my great thought of living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage of the woods. Time will change it…my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath…Nelly, I am Heathcliff…" (Chapter IX)

Nothing could be more in contrast than the emotions she exhibits for the two men. Catherine's marriage to Edgar finds only a brief mention in the novel as if that period is unimportant. Heathcliff's ardour is expressed through his anguish at her death: Oh God!" he cries out, *"It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"(Chapter XVI)When he beholds Catherine's ghost out of the window, he bursts "into an uncontrollable passion of tears."* His urging:*" Come in! Come in!.../Oh my heart's darling, hear me this time…"* is the exhortation of a soul desperately craving to be united with his beloved who is no more of this earth but whom he wants more than any living being. A few days before his death in Chapter XXIX he tells Nelly: "I have nearly attained my heaven." The thought of his imminent union with Catherine has purged him of every evil intent and has ended his will to live.

Among the less important characters, Hindley's love for Francis resembles a little the ardour of Heathcliff and Catherine.As for Edgar and Catherine and later in the case of Linton and Cathy it is love thwarted rather than passion consummated. The end sees the redemption of Heathcliff through love and in the union of Hareton and Cathy the unrealised desires of an earlier generation find fulfilment.

You will also notice that a sense of physical love, whether consummated or not, is powerful throughout the novel, beginning with the initial couple Hindley and Francis who are described as openly "kissing and talking nonsense by the hour." Isabella's attraction to the swarthy Heathcliff is overtly physical, and all the Heathcliff imagery is passionate and sensuous. It is now widely acknowledged that childhood is not asexual, and the descriptions of childhood embraces, kisses and caresses of Heathcliff and Catherine remind us more of the Romantic fascination for the quasi-incestuous brother-sister bond than of childhood

innocence. Only against the force of their powerful physical and emotional need for each other does the separation of Catherine and Heathcliff, first by society and then by death, have its enduring power to move us.

Another important theme woven with the love motif is revenge. Hindley hates Heathcliff because the latter has come between him and his father. He banishes the interloper from the household and starts mistreating him as soon as old Mr. Earnshaw dies. Heathcliff on his part is so vengeful towards Hindley that his very mission in life is to take control of the Earnshaw household and make every member suffer. Even the love of Catherine does not deter him from his chosen path. Her marriage to Edgar extends the scope of his revenge to the Linton family. So powerful is the revenge motive that it determines the action of the novel till its conclusion. Only in the end do we find love conquering hatred to make way for regeneration in the form of Cathy and Hareton's union.

The Romantic Legacy:

Emily Brontë's relation to the great Romantic Poets pertains to deep affinities in the creative spirit. The literal identification of the mind and nature, which is the essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality, is displayed to a certain extent by Emily Brontë most noticeably in Heathcliff and Catherine's out of the world interaction. As for Shelley, both the creator of 'Adonais' and Emily, in evolving their image of creativity, focus upon the conflict between sense and spirit and the quest for a real 'communication' with Spirit, or lost Beloved or dead Poet. They have a similar disdain for worldly doctrines and canonical religion, a pique against worldly injustice. In *Adonais* Shelley evokes the image of a kind of dream more real than life, while the climax of *Wuthering Heights* focuses on Heathcliff's struggle with the reality of spirit. Again, Emily Brontë found in Byron's work, a poetic legitimacy for the unbridled passions of her protagonists. Heathcliff is the archetypal 'Byronic' hero with his mysterious origins, lawlessness, fatal love and self-induced death. However, *Wuthering Heights* goes far beyond the ethos of the Gondal world that permeates a poem like 'The Prisoner of Chillon' in

terms metaphysical significance. A parallel can also be drawn between the poetic-philosophical quest of the mature Coleridge, as in his 'The Ancient Mariner' and that of Emily Brontë in her poetic novel.

Theme of the Supernatural:

Reading *Wuthering Heights* can be both intense and engaging if we are willing to suspend our disbelief long enough to immerse ourselves in the remote Yorkshire countryside at the end of the 18th century as Emily Brontë's imagination recreated it. Realistic themes like family feuds traversing generations and class prejudices are set against the Gothic motifs of dark, stormy weather and supernatural intervention. The last mentioned feature is reminiscent of the transcendental and mystic notes that constitute the essence of Romantic poetry. In fact *Wuthering Heights* has been called 'a poem of a novel' because appreciation of it involves a complex emotional response as in poetry. The Supernatural is not an extraneous element but, as in the poetry of the great Romantics, integral to the theme and treatment. This is also made possible by the fact that the spiritual note underlying the love and revenge themes seems to culminate in the supernatural encounters between Heathcliff and Catherine. The reader is less offended by the lack of verisimilitude and more satisfied that the lovers come together after their separation on earth. The Supernatural is not imposed on an unsuspecting audience as the author has prepared us for something beyond the physical.

Complicated Nature of Family Relations:

In *Wuthering Heights,* the perverse and complicated nature of family relations acts as a severe indictment of patriarchy on several levels. Catherine, as the Gothic Female heroine, shows her mettle from her childhood when she departs from the Victorian norms of behaviour, and is described as a "wild, wicked slip". Heathcliff is essential in the story for understanding her personality and dilemma. He represents a force of nature, the embodiment of pure, unrestrained, sexual energy. The Gothic reading approximates Freudian construct as it often depicts among other things, a quasi-incestuous attraction between pseudo siblings. The early relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is meant

to suggest a primitive pseudo marriage, a union of soul mates who do not engage in a sexual relationship but who act and think of themselves as a dyadic, androgynous unit. This pseudo marriage is a denial of the traditional, patriarchal family where she is not defined by her father or his status because she has entered it on her own volition without the mediation of a male member of her family. Her union with the nameless entity Heathcliff is a repudiation of patriarchal values and social conventions. However, these norms prove too strong for Catherine, and her civilizing process begins with the courtship of Edgar. With it comes the realization that in the present world order a woman cannot exist apart from the men who provide them with name and status. Her marriage to Edgar is a vindication of the status quo but the Gothic heroine must suffer for her betrayal. To Heathcliff's final indictment: "Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy?...What right did you have to leave me?", she replies, "I have done wrong, I'm dying for it." Death is the only release for Catherine, her only possible return to childhood and the free innocence she experienced with Heathcliff in a sort of perverse realm of infantile sexuality.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What affinities did Charlotte Brontë share with the Romantics?

Q 7: Do you think that Charlotte Brontë succeeds in her use of the supernatural?

Q 8: How is the complicated nature of family relations portrayed in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?

13.6 EMILE BRONTË'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

The timeless appeal of *Wuthering Heights* comes as much from its style and language as from its characters and plot. The last two features are entwined in a way so as to imbue the story with a fairy tale element. This is true of the two protagonists around whom the other

characters function. Emily Brontë's novel is, after all, remembered as the story of Heathcliff and Catherine.

Heathcliff:

All through the novel, the character of Heathcliff remains an enigma. Largely the mystery of *Wuthering Heights* has its source in his unknown ancestry and his strange relationship with Catherine. When he is brought home by old Mr. Earnshaw, he is a dark-skinned child speaking "gibberish" and Nelly refers to him as "it". There is a sense of mystery about his disappearance as a youth and till the end about his death. His demeanour and attributes are likened to the devil's by Nelly. Hindley as a boy also calls him an "imp of Satan" (Chapter IV). It would, however, be too simplistic to explain his sadism and vengefulness as the working of a possessed soul. Critics point out that his cruel streak was, perhaps, the result of an infancy spent on the streets of Liverpool as an abandoned child and the subsequent ill-treatment by Hindley. Yet another interpretation of Heathcliff's character is likening him to the natural forces. He has variously been identified with the wild, lonely moorland, the raging storm and the beast within us. Another interpretation following the Jungian paradigm positions him as the destructive animus of a woman who has been taken over by the Shadow.



LET US KNOW

The Animus as a Hero:

Wuthering Heights, one of the best known classics in English and also very widely read, is open to a large number of analyses. One school of criticism uses the Jungian paradigm and looks at Heathcliff as the destructive animus of a woman. This school sees his demonic attributes making sense only if one takes him to be a figure in Emily Brontë's psyche that it was necessary for her to create. This psychoanalytic approach traces his creation to Emily losing her mother in her childhood and her sisters' death during her adolescence. The isolated existence in the remote

moorland only worsened her situation. According to this theory the condition of serious stress she went through could kindle the animus or the underlying masculinity in a woman. There is nothing admirable or acceptable about Heathcliff's ruthlessness or sadism on the 'real' plane. It is difficult to see him as a lover, even a demon lover. Hence, the Jungians take him to be the embodiment of the animus that developed out of Emily Brontë's uncompleted mourning to protect her from collapse. But, the animus does not consist of fiendish and brutal qualities alone. So, Heathcliff is the agent of torture as well as creative development in his author moving her towards the happy and the regenerative ending of the novel. In this sense he can be accepted as a hero or even as an idol.

Catherine:

The other protagonist of the novel is the girl for whom Heathcliff lived. The characterisation is such that one is woven into the other. The temperament and conduct of one can be understood in conjunction with that of the other. Catherine's nature is very different from the maidenly subservience consonant with the Victorian model. She is not the obedient daughter and displays an unruly streak. Her enduring spontaneity gives way to arrogance and selfishness as she grows up and Nelly is irritated by her behaviour (Chapter VIII). She is partial to the foundling Heathcliff her father had brought home and is a more than willing partner in his escapades. The childhood kinship takes on a passionate overtone as they become adults and not even her marriage to Edgar can change the intensity of their feelings for each other. Her marriage spurs Heathcliff on to extend his cruelty to the Linton family but she is deliriously happy at his return. At one point, she even tells her husband, "I don't want you, Edgar; I'm past wanting you" (Chapter XII) but she wants him to go on loving her. Even in death she remains the self-absorbed being and tells Heathcliff, "You have killed me_ and thriven on it…I care nothing for your sufferings. Why

shouldn't you suffer? I do!" (Chapter XV). Her sufferings do not end with death as we know from the little ghost, which Lockwood sees. In conjunction with Heathcliff, we see the mystic side of Catherine. She makes us aware of her presence even after her death through the mysterious relationship she continues to have with him. Heathcliff and Catherine occupy the unique position of being inseparable in many ways. Critics suggest that they together are Emily Brontë's approximation of energies for which description and interpretation can only be limited. Whether they represent nature, primitive urges unregulated by social order, or an unorthodox moral code, they together pose a threat to the social, sexual or cultural status quo.

Hindley, Edgar, and Isabella:

They occupy the roles of minor figures whose attributes and conduct are again seen in the light of the protagonists' actions and measured accordingly. For example, Edgar appears gentle, refined but also delicate and weak by the side of Heathcliff and his love also pales in comparison. However, as the story progresses, he gains in stature while the latter grows more villainous. Hindley too is measured by the reader in terms of his relationship with Heathcliff. His temperament and behaviour are shaped early in the novel by the advent of the foundling and his subsequent position in the family. Isabella, with her refined, Victorian traits, acts as a foil to the unruly, tempestuous Catherine.



LET US KNOW

The Second Generation:

The author does not delineate the children as comprehensively as the parents. Again, their action and personalities are seen only in the context of the latter. Cathy is as headstrong as her mother but is more caring. She is also capable of standing up to Heathcliff. Her marriage to Linton can be seen in the general scheme of things as reparation for her mother's

rejection of Heathcliff and her loveless wedlock with Edgar. Hareton is a mere sketch, a rough, unlettered bumpkin reformed into a good soul. It is as if this ploy is necessary for the resolution, that is Heathcliff and Catherine finding happiness through their progeny, to assert the philosophy that there is meaning in existence after all.

Lockwood:

Lockwood is regarded by many critics as the surrogate reader in *Wuthering Heights*. Although his first visit to the house is described as an unwelcome intrusion, he is drawn to the place. His second visit and the encounter with Catherine's ghost serve to build up the atmosphere and whet the curiosity of the reader. He also introduces us to Nelly Dean, through whom the story unravels. Lockwood, who has come to the remote countryside to recover from an unhappy love-interlude, prefers to be a recluse. To a lesser degree he is a misanthrope just like Heathcliff but minus the latter's viciousness. On this level, a parallel can be drawn between the two.

Nelly Dean:

Nelly Dean is a well-drawn character who comes across as a credible narrator. She, a "poor man's daughter," has been brought up with the Earnshaw children and thus has their confidence. By her own admission, she is self-educated and not a coarse, illiterate servant. Yet, as has been observed earlier, her role as a narrator is conditioned by her beliefs and outlook and hence it varies in sympathy. For example, she is hard on Catherine and Heathcliff but indulgent towards the younger members. She serves her purpose in the novel well because, apart from being familiar with the actual events, she can also divine the reasons behind the actions according to her own code of ethics. Her commentaries enlighten us about both the generations of Lintons and Earnshaws and give us an insider's perspective from the novel's inception till it is wrapped up with her being a part of the story almost all the time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: How does Emily Brontë conceive the character of Heathcliff in this novel?

Q 10: How could you understand the idea of the 'Animus as Hero' in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?

Q 11: Narrate briefly the significance of Lockwood as a character in the novel.

Q 12: What role does Nelly Dean play as a character in the plot of the novel?

13.7 EMILE BRONTË'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Multiple Narrations:

Wuthering Heights is one of the most carefully plotted and constructed novels in English. It is a double generation story spanning some thirty years where the author uses the device of multiple narrations. The story is begun in medias res i.e. in the middle. The first two chapters make it look like a straightforward first person narration in diary form with Lockwood and Heathcliff being the main characters. However, as the story progresses, multiple narrators come into play and several voices jostling for attention gives rise to the concept of the polyphonic effect. The idea behind this kind of recital is to acquaint the reader with several viewpoints within a first person account.

The problem of subjectivity that this kind of account involves is surmounted by introducing sundry narrators whose relationship to the events narrated is varied. Some of them, like Lockwood, are strangers to the households while others like Nelly Dean, Zillah and Catherine's diary occupy the positions of familiarity in various degrees. Moreover, the incidents, which are recounted to Nelly by others, are given to us in the words of those directly involved. Therefore, we have, at various points of the novel, the narratives of Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella and Cathy. The multiple narrative technique is highlighted by the fact that you have the

delineation from the perspective of those who are intimately involved as well as those who, like Lockwood, are late entrants and hence are only casually associated with the story. Therefore, a fair degree of objectivity is infused into the narrative. Pursuing this line of thinking, we can also say that Lockwood, the outsider, applies certain prescriptive social norms to an environment that resists them. Therefore, his interpretation of the behaviour and incidents is far from accurate. Here, we can cite the example of his comparison of himself to Heathcliff. Nelly's recounting is also subject to her interpretation, which is conditioned by her values and expectations. Her reliability is likewise affected.

Therefore, multiple narration is one of the important aspects of the novel. The principal narrator is Ellan Dean, the secondary one Mr Lockwood– one being a native, the other a foreigner'. But, the story is also told by several other characters like Nelly Dean who are important in the plot. Among these, Isabella is probably the most important, being the source of much graphic details about Hindley and Heathcliff. Heathcliff himself narrates the Thrushcross Grange adventure. In fact, there are so many narrators that we are never quite sure who is speaking. But you should pay attention to the different versions of the same Heathcliff-Catherine story narrated by the different characters. Lockwood starts the narration in the middle, or rather chronologically speaking, towards the end. The past is unfolded by actual participants of the drama and the resolution is brought about by Nelly enlightening him about the occurrences during his absence. It is, however, Lockwood who takes up the story again and brings it to a close with an interloper's musings about the graves on the silent heath and those in eternal sleep underneath.

The Use of Time:

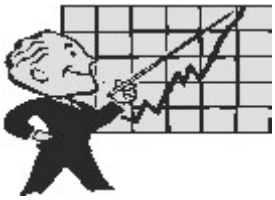
One of the notable literary devices that set *Wuthering Heights* apart is the handling of time. Emily Brontë uses her narrators in a very skillful manner to go back and forth in time so that the story unfolds at a natural pace. Despite the fact that the events are not recounted chronologically there is no jarring effect at the shift. You marvel at the

smooth passage of time though the narrative goes back from the present to thirty years earlier in Chapter VII, then jumps back to the present and again goes back to Hareton's birth. This back and forth technique is repeated several times in Chapters IX, XIV and XXIX but each time the transition is excellently carried out. Indeed, all these interruptions serve to infuse into the recital a soothing tone of normalcy, represented by the present, after high points of drama have been reached in the turbulent past. Lockwood is brought back to the narrative sequence time and again in order to remind the reader that it is a tale told to a visitor standing outside the convoluted world of the Earnshaws and the Lintons which is unfolding through the narratives of participant-raconteurs.

As we have noted earlier, one of the most meticulously constructed of novels, *Wuthering Heights* gives us a clear idea of the date of every important occasion though only three dates (November 1801, September 1802 and 1778) are specifically mentioned. The perfect control that the author maintains over the chronology of events only emphasises her superior artistic skills particularly as the novel was written within the space of a year.

As has been mentioned earlier, *Wuthering Heights* has the resonance of Romantic poetry, but in more ways than one. It is a poetic novel in both theme and technique. The use of linguistic devices like colloquial similes by Nelly and the evocative metaphors by Catherine and Heathcliff enhance the lyrical quality of the prose. The rich imageries drawn from nature are highly reminiscent of the Romantic poets, as are the simple phrases, which invoke the rhythm of country life. The other major stylistic device that endows the novel with its poetic character is the powerful use of sustained imagery. The two houses exhibit certain qualities which become highly symbolic. Wuthering Heights is home to people with primeval passions but it is also a place where food is plentiful and fires are blazing. Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, houses people who are refined, formal and undemonstrative. Meals are dainty or frugal, and Lockwood at times does not have a fire in his study. One conjures up the image of wild, uninhibited behaviour and life in the raw,

while the other stands for cold genteelness and a rarefied atmosphere. Doors, windows, locks and keys are the other components which are used throughout to depict certain emotional and physical predicament that the principals find themselves in. The other imagery used extensively has to do with animals. Dogs are presented as savage brutes to show the feral side of man. Besides this, eyes, teeth and blood are also important motifs. The weather as well as the elements 'hot' and 'cold' are used in an evocative manner in the novel. You, as the reader, can try to find other images which abound in the novel and heighten its poetic appeal. *Wuthering Heights*, after all, is a work where meaning is inseparable from form, where nothing is irrelevant, superfluous or accidental.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Do you think the author has made a good job of handling time in the novel?

Q 14: Briefly comment on the multiple narrative techniques in the novel *Wuthering Heights*?



13.8 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of the different sections of this unit, you must have understood that the novel *Wuthering Heights* is an original and enigmatic novel, and it is hardly surprising that there are many different views about its sources, themes and the issues raised by the story. One view is that since Heathcliff is the heart of the story, the theme is an examination of some aspects of evil. Another is the passionate love and equally violent hatred and revenge. Others seem to have suggested that the love of the two chief characters Heathcliff and Catherine is really mystical, metaphysical, a symbol of the desire for death; for survival after death; of the permanence of the non-human life of nature; of the spiritual craving of the individual for union with this universal 'soul', so on and so

forth. You have read that the story is set in rural Yorkshire in the last forty years of the 18th century and the first two of the 19th that is, in the period immediately before the author's own life and therefore similar to the author's own experiences. Perhaps, Emily Brontë's primary aim in this novel was to present an image of life as she understood it, a microcosm, in which the central figure at last regains innocence, his evil elements dissolving in his passionate longing for the spiritual union with his lost love. You have gone through important aspects of the novel like the major themes, narrative technique, characterisation and the style of Brontë's writing which simply add more impetus to the significance of the novel composed in a historically important period of the 18th century.



13.9 FURTHER READING

Berg, M. (1996). *Wuthering Heights: The Writing in the Margin*. Twayne Publishers.

Gilbert, Sandra & Susan, Gubar (2000). *The Mad Women in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the 19th Century Literary Imagination.* Yale University Press.

Hoeveler, D. L. (ed.) (2002). *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights*. Boston, MA, New York : Houghton Mifflin Company.

Holbrook, D. (1997). *Wuthering Heights: A Drama of Being*. Sheffield Academic Press.

Holderness, Graham (2003). *Wuthering Heights*. (Open Guides to Literature Series). New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt Ltd.

Kettle, Arnold (1967). *An Introduction to the English Novel. Vol I*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall.

March, Nicholas (1999). *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights.* Palgrave: Macmillan.

Stoneman, Patsy (1993). *Wuthering Heights: A New Casebook*. London: Macmillan.

Visick, M. (1980). *The Genesis of Wuthering Heights*. Gloucester, England: Ian Hodgkins & Co. Ltd.



13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Lockwood is a foreigner who has rented Thrushcross Grange for a year in 1801… …he meets Heathcliff during his visit to Wuthering Heights, a country house in the neighbourhood.

Ans to Q 2: Heathcliff is a foundling… …he was brought to the Earnshaw family by Mr Earnshaw from a trip to Liverpool… …he did not enjoy much favour from the family as he spoke 'gibberish,'… …also he brought about a division in the family as Catherine and her father grew attached to him and Hindley started disliking him… ….this was to cause a lot of troubles in the lives of the characters of the novel.

Ans to Q 3: Nelly provides some important information on the character to Heathcliff… …when in 1802 Lockwood returns to Thrushcross Grange after eight months and meets Nelly… …Nelly who now lives there informs that Heathcliff confessed to her that he no longer craved for revenge… …one morning Nelly found him dead beside the open window of Catherine's old room.

Ans to Q 4: We can say with a fair degree of certainty that the novel had its genesis in the tales of Angria and Gondal which the Brontë children had created during their lonely childhood days… … the Romantic Poets seemed to have taken precedence over Emily's imaginative mind… ...another interesting source may be found in the Brontë family's forebears in Ireland.

Ans to Q 5: Emily Brontë's relation to the great Romantic Poets pertains to deep affinities in the creative spirit… …the protagonist of *Wuthering Heights* seems to have had the groans of the Byronic hero… …the literal identification of the mind and nature which is the essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality is displayed to a great extent… …moreover, Shelley's *Adonais* evokes the image of a kind of dream more real than life.

Ans to Q 6: The essence of Wordsworth's poetic originality is displayed Emily Brontë most noticeably in Heathcliff and Catherine's out of

the world interaction… …like Shelley Emily seemed to focus upon the conflict between sense and spirit… …again, Heathcliff may be seen as the archetypal 'Byronic' hero with his mysterious origins, lawlessness, fatal love and self-induced death.

Ans to Q 7: Realistic themes like family feuds traversing generations and class prejudices are set against the Gothic motifs of dark, stormy weather and supernatural intervention… …the Supernatural is not an extraneous element but integral to the theme and treatment like in case of the Romantics.

Ans to Q 8: In *Wuthering Heights,* the perverse and complicated nature of family relations acts as a severe indictment of patriarchy on several levels… …Catherine, as the Gothic Female heroine, shows her mettle from her childhood… …Heathcliff is essential in the story for understanding her personality and dilemma… …the early relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine is meant to suggest a primitive pseudo marriage, a union of soul mates.

Ans to Q 9: Heathcliff remains an enigma… …he had been a dark-skinned child speaking "gibberish"… …his demeanour and attributes are likened to the devil's by Nelly… … Hindley as a boy also calls him an "imp of Satan"… …critics point out that his cruel streak was, perhaps, the result of an infancy spent on the streets of Liverpool as an abandoned child and the subsequent ill-treatment by Hindley… …some likens his character to the forces of nature.

Ans to Q 10: In the context of Carl J Jung's criticism, Heathcliff is seen as the destructive animus of a woman… …this school sees his demonic attributes making sense only if one takes him to be a figure in Emily Brontë's psyche… … the condition of serious stress she went through could kindle the animus or the underlying masculinity in a woman.

Ans to Q 11: Lockwood is both a narrator and a surrogate reader in *Wuthering Heights*.… … although his first visit to the house is described as an unwelcome intrusion, he is once again drawn to the place by its mystery… …he also introduces us to Nelly Dean,

through whom the story unravels.

Ans to Q 12: Nelly Dean, a servant, is a well drawn character who also becomes an important narrator… …although poor, she has been brought up with the Earnshaw children and gains their confidence… …her own admission, she is self-educated and not a coarse, illiterate servant ... ... she is important as narrator as her commentaries enlighten us about both the generations of Lintons and Earnshaws and give us an insider's perspective on the characters.

Ans to Q 13: Yes… …despite the fact that the events are not recounted chronologically, there is no jarring effect at the shift… … the narrative goes back from the present to thirty years earlier in Chapter VII, then jumps back to the present and again goes back to Hareton's birth… … this back and forth technique is repeated several times in Chapters IX, XIV and XXIX but each time the transition is excellently carried out.

Ans to Q 14: Lockwood, Nelly Dean, Zillah and Catherine's diary play important role in the narrative of the novel… …the incidents which are recounted to Nelly by others are given to us in the words of those directly involved… …thus, we have, at various points of the novel, the narratives of Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella and Cathy… …the multiple narrative technique is highlighted by the fact that you have the delineation from the perspective of those who are intimately involved as well as those who, like Lockwood, are late entrants and hence are only casually associated with the story.



13.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: The characters of Catherine and Heathcliff are immortal creations in English literature. Analyse their relationship as portrayed in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 2: Comment on the narrative technique used by Emily Brontë in the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 3: What is the purpose served by the use of multiple narrators such as Nelly Dean, Lockwood or the diary in the story of *Wuthering Heights?*

Q 4: Make a comparison between the relationships of Catherine and Heathcliff and those of the second generation namely: younger Catherine and Hareton.

Q 5: There is a beautiful blending of realism and romance in the *Wuthering Heights*. Discuss the truth of this statement with reference to the specific events in the novel.

Q 6: Analyse the plot of *Wuthering Heights* with special attention to the beginning and the ending and the shifts in the narration.

Q 7: Compare and contrast the characters of Catherine and her daughter the younger Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*.

Q 8: Critically comment on the themes discussed in *Wuthering Heights*. Do you think that the supernatural accords plausibility in the structure of the novel?

Q 9: Mention some of the psychoanalytic approaches to the reading of *Wuthering Heights*. How do these readings interpret the characters and their relationships?

Q10: Discuss in detail how the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine sets the story of *Wuthering Heights* in motion.

* * *

UNIT 14: THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE:

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Thomas Hardy: The Novelist

14.3.1 His Life

14.3.2 His Works

14.4 The Story of the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

14.5 Critical Reception of Hardy

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.8 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the life and works of Thomas Hardy the novelist
- make connections between the novel and the Victorian World
- discuss *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a Victorian novel
- discuss the importance of the world of Wessex in the novels of Hardy
- trace the storyline of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will read about the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* written by the famous novelist and poet Thomas Hardy who wrote at the end of 19th century. The Victorian Era, when Hardy lived, was a time of great change. His novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is about a young country girl, Tess, whose father discovers that their family descended from one of the oldest, most aristocratic families in England. However, the discovery has tragic consequences on Tess. She is sent off to the wealthy branch of

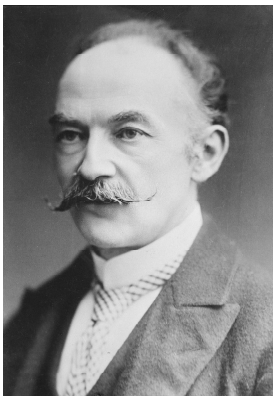
the family to "claim kin" (i.e., to borrow money), and ends up being raped by the son of that branch of the family. You should note how the social elites were endowed with the notion of 'new money' and how many of the old aristocratic families were gone into oblivion. Tess' family in the novel had gone through the same predicament as the whole Durbeyfield family loses itself in fantasising their belonging to the aristocratic family d'Urbervilles, which finally led them to the tragedy. The hardship and drudgery of the life style of the rural folk are explored most beautifully in the novel. Hardy has a dig at the religious orthodoxy as well as social values of the times. By the time, you finish reading this novel, you will learn about Hardy's philosophy of life and his concern about the changes that were taking place in his times, finding an important place in his great fictional works.

14.3 THOMAS HARDY: THE NOVELIST

This section will introduce you to some of the main facets of the life and works of Hardy as well as the main features of his novels.

14.3.1 His Life

Thomas Hardy was born on the 2nd June 1840 in Higher Bockhampton in Dorset, a rural region of southwestern England. His father was a master mason and his mother came from an established family of Dorset. He owed much to his parents for his love of music, love of reading and a strength of self that made him stand like a rock amidst all the changes that were taking place during his lifetime. Hardy first went to a village school and then he went to a school at Dorchester. At the age of sixteen Hardy was apprenticed to John Hicks, an ecclesiastical architect who lived in the city of Dorchester. In 1857, Hardy began to write verses and essays, but he decided not to leave his vocation as an architect. In 1862, he



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org

went to London to look for work and became an assistant to Arthur Blomfield. He was still not sure which vocation he should go for. In 1865, his first prose work was published in a journal, though he was much more interested in poetry. He had suffered from bouts of depression as he felt utterly lonely and finally he fell sick. In 1867, he returned to Dorset and started working for Hicks again. His architectural training at Dorchester lasted for six years but it had a decisive influence on him as a novelist because his novels show a careful planning and it is not without significance that *Tess of the Urbervilles* is divided into a meticulously worked out structure.

In 1870, Hardy took to writing novels by following Meredith's advice and published *Desperate Remedies* in 1871, *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1872 and *A Pair of Blue eyes* in 1873. In 1874, he produced the masterpiece *Far From the Madding Crowd* which brought him immense fame. He married Emma Lavinia Gifford the same year. After marriage, Hardy and his wife wandered about Europe and finally settled at Sturminster Newton, in a villa amidst calm and serene natural surroundings. In 1878, *The Return of the Natives* was published and after this Hardy decided to go back to London. In between 1878 and 1912, Hardy had contributed immensely in the genres of novels, poetry, and short stories. He was gradually getting recognition and became famous for his works. The Order of Merit was conferred upon him in 1910.

Hardy's marriage life with Emma was not a peaceful one. Neither of them sustained in matrimony the joys and affinities they had dreamed of in their courtship days. They did not have any kids. However, she encouraged him to pursue his literary career and shared a caring for their pets; yet their temperamental differences, domestic disagreements and Emma's feeling of being neglected by her husband made their relation bitter. His wife was never happy with him as she thought that she had married much below her parental status. She insulted Hardy publicly; yet Hardy never complained about it. In 1912, Mrs. Hardy passed away unexpectedly. After the death of his wife, Hardy made a trip to Cornwell to revive his memories of his courtship with his dead wife and his poems

1912-1913 portrays his feelings at her death. In 1914, Hardy married Florence Dugdale who was much younger to him. His domestic life with his second wife became peaceful. However, this new found peace was destroyed by the First World War as he visited the English and German soldiers lying in the hospitals in Dorchester. He was utterly disturbed at the sight of the destruction. However, he went on writing poems and enjoyed the poetry reading sessions of his wife. His death came in 1928, which had created a vacuum in the literary circle of England. He has been regarded as the last great Victorian for his immense contribution to the literary field.

Hardy showed a wide range in his novels. He delineated a perfect picture of the Victorian conflict between the rural surroundings and life and the newly emerging mechanical and materialistic urban life style. Most of his novels portray the village life and the complexities and intrigues that were seen in the rural societies of his times. Hardy felt that the conduct of the upper classes was screened by the conventions, and thus the real character was not easily seen. However, in case of the lower classes, conduct was a direct expression of the inner life and thus characters could be directly portrayed through the act. Thus, Hardy was more at ease in delineating the lower strata of life, the rural folks and the growing shift of the rural folk to the urban set up which had resulted in utter despair. Hardy believed that the novel should have a total effect like living organism, in which all the component parts like plot, character, dialogue, and scenery are set in such a way that it gives the impression of a harmonious whole. He was immensely successful in elevating fiction writing to a conscious art.



LET US KNOW

Wessex: *Wessex* was the name given by Hardy for a territory in the South-west of England. Hardy set most of his major novels in *Wessex, which* he named after the medieval Anglo- Saxon kingdom that existed in that part of the country prior to Norman Conquest. Hardy used "Wessex" in *Far From the Madding Crowd* for the first time and

in its preface, he described *Wessex* as "a merely realistic dream country". Gradually Hardy began to divide Wessex into different regions. In *The Return of the Native* (1878), he introduced South Wessex; in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) Upper- and Mid-Wessex and in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) he tells us about North, Nether and Outer Wessex. In the words of Lea Hermann—"We have it on his own assurance that the Wessex of the novels and poems is practically identical with the Wessex of history, and includes the counties of Berkshire, Wilts[hire], Somerset, Hampshire, Dorset, and Devon-either wholly or in part." (*Thomas Hardy's Wessex*, 1913: xvii) Wessex plays a crucial role in Hardy's works as it provided him with a space to present the significant issues like progress, religion, nature, sexuality, primitivism and so on in his works.

Hardy's philosophy of life was influenced by his age to a significant extent. The scientific and intellectual thought of the times had a great impact on the literature of the era. Naturalism, which advocated a frank and full portrayal of life, was in the air. It stressed the treatment of man as an ordinary component in the indomitable forces of Nature. Hardy too came under the influence of Naturalism and in his novels, we get in varying degrees the themes like the immutability of Nature and the transience of human being, the grandeur of Nature and the littleness of man, the justice of Nature and man's relentless struggle to evade Natural justice, which are so common in Hardy's works. His philosophy of life presupposes that there is an inherent cruelty in the pattern of the Universe and that human beings try to defy that until they are taken over by hostile destiny. Chance in its malevolent aspect is an important facet of his themes. A struggle between man and an omnipotent Fate interprets Hardy's notion of human situation. Fate manifests itself in different guises. Sometimes it appears as a Natural force, sometimes as an innate weakness of character. Chance exerts a conspicuous influence

in the course of events. Love is another incarnation of Fate in Hardy's novels. Destiny as an inscrutable force beyond human's comprehension is as constant a part of Hardy's vision as that of the Greeks. It is beyond man's power to rule his destiny—a fact so poignantly portrayed in Hardy's fictions that many critics call him a 'Fatalist'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What ideas of the lower class people can be derived from Hardy's novels?

Q 2: How does the term Wessex appear in Hardy's novels?

Q 3: Briefly state Hardy's philosophy of life.

14.3.2 His Works

In the section entitled "Early Life and Architecture" of the book *Life of Thomas Hardy* by Thomas and Florence Hardy, Hardy describes the three strands of his life— the professional life, the scholar's life, and the rustic life. In the scholar's life, he went through an intense programme of study to equip himself for a career in writing. Having failed to get any of his poetry published Hardy began to write novels and *Desperate Remedies* his first novel was published in 1871. The novel failed but the next one *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) achieved some success and the success of *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) heralded the arrival of a novelist of promise and he became a full time writer.

Hardy's literary career could be divided into three distinctive phases. The **first phase** was started with *Desperate Remedies* (1871), followed by the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and ended with *Jude the Obscure* (1895). He attained gradual recognition as a novelist who was concerned with themes like inscrutable fate, man in conflict with the world etc. Some of his famous

novels are *Under the Greenwood Trees* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Well Beloved* (1892). Let me tell you that Hardy had earned fame for his short stories also. We can even include the volumes of Short stories in this phase. His Short Story collection *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891) and *Life's Little Ironies* (1894) brought him recognition as one of the greatest short story writers of English literature.

The **second phase** is the phase when his epic poem *The Dynasts (1903-1908)* was published. Before that, in 1898, he published the first of the eight books of verse but until the publication of *The Dynasts*, his poetry was not taken seriously. However, critics opine that this poem is the single greatest achievement of his career. This poem represents in dramatic form the course of the Napoleonic Wars that took place from 1805 to 1815.

The **third phase** begins with the publication of his poetry collection *Time's Laughing Stocks* in 1909. This was followed by the publication of a few of other poetry collections, namely, *Satires of Circumstances* (1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), and *Human Shows, Far Phantasies* (1925).

Hardy had ranked his works in different orders. Critics observe that he used to arrange his works according to the responses of the public. For the Wessex edition, Hardy classified his works into three groups:

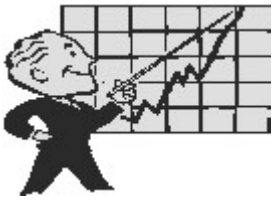
Novels of Character or Environment: *Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure, Wessex Tales* and *Life's Little Ironies.*

Romances and Fantasies: *A Pair of Blue Eyes, The Trumpet Major, Two on a Tower, The Well-Beloved* and *A Group of Noble Dames.*

Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment: *Desperate Remedies, The Hand of Ethelberta* and *A Laodicean.*

You should note that tragedy in Hardy's novels arises out of the influence of the modern competitive lifestyle over the simple old, rural life. The plots of the novels *Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are based on this conflict between old and the new world, between characters belonging to the countryside, and the characters coming to the countryside from the urban places. His novels portray the loss of rustic simplicity and innocence at the onslaught of the urban, capitalist world views. Another interesting fact is that Hardy was highly influenced by Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) which had a great impact on his thought.

As a novelist Hardy enjoyed his most popular period in the late Victorian era. His popularity rests more with his novels than his poetry. In his novels, he dealt with many complex issues like clash of principles and motives, right and wrong, courage and cowardice, duty and desire, free will and Chance or Fate. Virginia Woolf opines that Hardy's vision of the world is a vision of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul. However, the helpless condition of human beings in the hands of destiny leads to a state of pessimism that is present in Hardy's works. His pessimistic outlook of life was the result of his ill health, morbid temperament and the life experiences. He experienced and witnessed a bitter struggle for existence, thwarted desire, undeserved pain and suffering, disappointments and disillusionments, higher aspirations ending in utter failures and so on. All these made him highly pessimistic towards life and this pessimism was present in his works. He saw despair, dejection, failure, frustration and tragedy in the life of the rural folks of Wessex who were poor and dependent. He witnessed them undergoing all sorts of oppression and social exploitation and also the suffering due to the Immanent Will. All these made him view life with pessimism, which he presented in his novels.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Reflect on Hardy's portrayal of characters in his novels.

Q 5: Discuss briefly some of the core issues of Hardy's novels.

Q 6: What are the three strands in Hardy's life?

Q 7: Enlist the three phases in Hardy's writerly life.

Q 8: Briefly explain the three types of Hardy's works that express his interest in the Wessex?

14.4 THE STORY OF THE NOVEL *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

This section will help you to have some ideas regarding the story of the novel. However, it is insisted that you collect a standard text of the novel and start reading it to gain a better grasp of the issues raised in the text. *Tess of d'Urbervilles* is regarded as the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. Let me tell you that the novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* has seven phases; each phase presents a shift or new development in the plot. Critics have praised Hardy for the opening chapter which gives a comprehensive account of d'Urberville's descent, the racy humour of the dialogue, the picture of John Durbeyfield etc.

The novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* has seven phases and each phase presents one significant development in the storyline. **The first phase** is "The Maiden" where the novelist introduces us to Tess and her family. The opening chapter presents John Durbeyfield, who, on his way home to Marlott comes across an old Parson who addresses him as "Sir John". Then Mr. Durbeyfield comes to know from parson Tringham that Durbeyfield descends from a noble family, the d'Urbervilles. Knowing about this family history Durbeyfield feels self important and sends for a horse and a carriage on hire to carry him home. Then we are introduced to Tess and Angel. Tess takes part in a dancing procession in their village Marlott and their dancing is disturbed by the comic appearance of Mr. Durbeyfield. Angel Clare passes through the village and sees Tess amidst the dancing maidens. Both the

individuals have their wistful sight at one another. Then Hardy introduces us to the depressing picture of the sordid Durbeyfield household. The final blow comes with the death of Prince, the horse and this practically necessitated Tess to go for earning money. Tess is persuaded to apply for a work at their rich relation Mrs. d'Urbervilles, who lives with her son Alec in a big house the Slopes. Tess's mother puts in her mind the idea of marriage with Alec which Tess accepts with some kind of resentment. Tess starts working at the Slopes and looks after Mrs. d'Urbervilles' poultry and Alec follows her every now and then. One fine day, Tess joins a Saturday night excursion to Chaseborough and witnesses a vulgar fight in the course of which a girl called Car Darch attacks Tess. Alec rescues Tess and carries her off on horseback to the woods. Tess was exhausted and falls asleep. Alec takes the opportunity and seduces her. Hardy makes it clear that Tess is a little dazed at the seduction of Alec as she partially has a belief that Alec loves her. With this tragic act, the first Phase of the novel ends.

The second phase "Maiden No More" narrates Tess' condition post her seduction by Alec. She comes back home and narrates her condition to her mother. She is only seventeen and tells her mother that when she left her house she was only a child and that she didn't know about all these. However, Tess goes into depression as she feels that she cannot be a part of the normal gathering, even going to the church. She starts going to the woods and feels some kind of solace thereby being in solidarity with Nature. However, she is always disturbed by her guilty conscience. Tess delivers a baby and starts working in the field, as she wants to work and earn. Her baby boy falls sick and Tess realises that the boy has to be christened. She decides to christen him herself and gives the name Sorrow. When the next morning her baby dies, she talks to the parson and asks him if she can bury him in the churchyard. The Parson is moved and asks her to bury the child herself, as they cannot do so. That night Tess buries the child and makes a little cross for his grave. The whole winter she stays at her father's house and finally decides to take a job of milkmaid in a dairy farm many miles to the Southward.

The third Phase "The Rally" marks the new beginning of Tess's life at the Talbothays. When she reaches the dairy farm, she is warmly received

by the master of the dairy farm. Tess starts a new life full of zest. She makes friend with other milkmaids. There she meets Angel Clare who is an apprentice at the Dairy. Angel has resolved to open a farm of his own. Initially Angel could not recognise Tess, but gradually they develop some kind of affinity for one another. Though they share some kind of passionate feeling for each other, they try hard to keep themselves out of it. Tess comes to know that three of her milkmaid friends too love Angel and she tries to give a hint to Angel to choose one of them. All the episodes finally lead to Angel's declaration of love for Tess. Tess accepts his love without much reflection. Tess is blissfully happy when Angel embraces her.

In the fourth phase, "The Consequence", the love of Angel for Tess gets more intense and Tess persists with her reluctance to give any commitment. Angel's admirable intellectual qualities are highlighted here and we come to know about his family. She is disturbed by pangs of conscience and feels that she should tell Angel about her past. Many a time she tries but of no result. In the meantime, Angel keeps on telling her to marry him to which she finally gives in. Finally, the date has been fixed. However, Tess is still in a dilemma and writes a confessional note and slips it under his door, but it slides under the carpet and Angel never sees it. After the wedding, Angel confesses about a past relation with a woman and seeks Tess's forgiveness. Tess readily forgives him and confesses about her past relation with Alec.

The fifth phase "The Woman Pays", we find Tess falling in adverse situation again. Angel cannot accept Tess after learning about her past. He tells Tess that she is not the woman he loved. Therefore, they pass their wedding night in different rooms. Next morning Tess talks about divorce, but Angel tells her that divorce was not legally possible. Tess tells him of her thoughts of drowning herself, but Angel tells her that the thought of suicide is unworthy of her. So finally, they decided upon a separation. The last night which Angel and Tess lived together in the house at Wellbridge, Tess finds Angel sleepwalking when he lifts her and takes her to the graveyard adjoining to the nearby church. All along, he keeps murmuring "My poor, poor Tess– my dearest, darling Tess" and finally he puts her on the ground as if she is a dead body. However, in the morning he does not

even remember anything. Finally, they part their company and Angel gives money to Tess so that she does not face any financial hardship. Tess returns home and tells her parents about her broken marriage. Her mother scolds her for not following her advice. Her father asks her mother if this time she was married to Angel or like last time she was used by him and then discarded. Tess is heartbroken thinking that if her father does not believe her, how will other people do so. Angel decides to go to Brazil to seek some new job. Angel too goes back home but decides not to tell anything about Tess to his family. When he plans to go to Brazil, he meets Izz and asks her if she would like to go with him to Brazil. She accepts his proposal, but during their conversation, she tells him that no one can love him like Tess. This makes Angel drop the idea of taking Izz with him to Brazil. Eight months later, Tess starts feeling the financial crisis more acutely and decides to go in search of a job. Finally, she arrives at Flinscomb-Ash and gets employed as a Farm hand. Marian helps her in getting this job. Tess's new master is a hard task master and Tess has to really slog hard the whole day. Izz joins the farm as a worker and Tess comes to know about Angels' proposal to Izz. She is happy that Angel did not take her to Brazil, but feels sad also as Angel asked her to accompany him to Brazil. Tess waits for Angel's letter and is very sad as Angel has not written to her. So thinking of getting some information from Angel's parents, she decides to visit them. She visits the vicarage where Angel's father is the in charge. However, she reaches late and so fails to meet him. On her way, she finds two men who are Angel's brothers and Mercy Chant, the girl whom Angel's parents had chosen to be his wife, who speak ill of her. Therefore, she decides not to go to their house, returns to Flinscomb-Ash, and is surprised to see Alec d'Urberville, who is preaching sermon to a gathering in an earnest voice.

The sixth phase "The Convict", presents Alec D'Urbervilles once again. This time he is a preacher who keeps on persuading Tess to marry him and then to go with him with his missionary work. She comes to know that Angel's father has converted Alec without understanding his evil nature. Alec comes to her and proposes to her every now and then to marry her. Realising the danger in which she finds herself, Tess writes a letter to Angel to help her. On the other hand, Angel has a realisation that the conventional

moral beliefs made him accept Tess in that way and he decides to come back to Tess. One day Tess gets the news that her parents are very sick and she needs to go home. At this point also, Alec offers him money to help her out of her difficulties. However, Tess does not respond. Her father dies which makes them leave their cottage they have been occupying under a lease. The whole family is in utter difficulties. Alec keeps on extending his help to them and Tess keeps on refusing it. Finally, the Durbeyfield family shifts to Kingsbere and there too they don't find any accommodation. Even here, Alec offers to help them, which is thwarted by Tess. Seeing Tess and her family in trouble, Izz and Marian writes to Angel about Tess's difficulties.

The seventh phase "Fulfilment" presents Angels' return from Brazil and he gets the two letters of Tess and the one written by Marian and Izz. He broods over the matter and finally decides to accept Tess as his wife and goes out in search of her. Finally, when he meets her, it is too late because by then Tess has given in to Alec's persistent offer to help her brothers and sisters. Alec persuades her to believe that Angel would never come back to her. Tess goes back to her room and fights with Alec. Her landlady finds Tess go out after sometime and then discovers that Alec has been stabbed. On the other hand, Tess runs and meets Angel on the way. This time Angel accepts her in spite of hearing what she has done. He embraces Tess and tells her that he loves her. Tess is happy and satisfied. They begin to roam around the countryside and feel blissfully happy. They spend five days at Bramshurst Court. However, angel insists that they should move ahead or else they will be caught. Finally, they arrive at Stonehenge and spend a night there where Tess asks Angel to marry her sister Liza-Lu in case something happens to her. However, Angel is not ready to do that. The next morning they find themselves surrounded by policemen. Tess is arrested. On a July morning, Angel and Liza-Lu go to the city of Wintoncester because this is the day of Tess's execution. At eight o clock, Tess is executed. Both Angel and Liza-Lu bent down as if in prayer and remain there for a long time. Then they get up, join hands, and walk out.

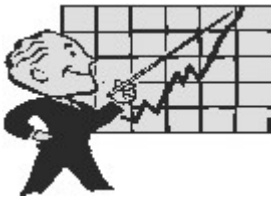
Therefore, you find that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the natural world is portrayed both as a representative habitat and a literary metaphor. Let

me tell you each phase has an excerpt about nature; the setting of each phase is always full of nature which symbolises the fact that nature is directly related to the emotions of Tess. In each location, from Talbothays to Flintscomb-Ash Tess's life is greatly influenced by the natural world. The external world and her inner consciousness reflect one another. Hardy believed that the constant shift of human feelings between pain and pleasure is also reflected in seasonal nature of life. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, let me tell you that Tess's life begins and ends in the spring, she falls in love during the summer months, and she marries in the dead of winter. Thus, all the phases of the novel cover the seasonal cycles of a year by including all of nature and its corresponding changes.



LET US KNOW

During Queen Victoria's reign from1837 to 1901, England became the most powerful and rich country in the world through its colonial expansion and the industrial revolution. The population in England doubled during Victoria's reign, and there could be seen a change in the country's economy because of the eruptions of industries. Along with the constant flow of people from the rural areas to the urban centres, there also emerged a transition from the conventional Victorian values to a less rigid modern worldview. Hardy stands at this transitional period and reflects on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and modern innovation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What are the incidents that led Tess to leave her house to work at the d'Urbervilles?

Q 10: Narrate in your own words Tess's experiences at the Talbothays farm.

Q 11: In what ways, is phase five "The Woman Pays" of the novel, significant?

14.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF HARDY

Thomas Hardy was a prolific writer with immense contribution to have enriched the literary world of late Victorian England. He started his literary career as a novelist though his early experiments in this genre were failures. George Meredith, his astute critic had severely criticised his early novels like, *Desperate Remedies* and *The Poor Man and Lady.* However, it was Meredith himself who had guided him to come up with better creation in the novelistic genre. He has been regarded as the last great Victorian, though his poetry and short stories cover a few years of the twentieth century. Hardy crafted artistically a link between the 19th and 20th century. Being born at time of transition, Hardy had witnessed the effects of the traditional values on the one hand and the emerging trends of a Capitalist society on the other. This conflict was evident in his writings. This remains one of the most significant traits of his career as a novelist.

When the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was published in three volumes in 1891, its improper 'exploitness' was criticised by many readers. "The Quarterly Review" called it a clumsy, sordid tale of boorish brutality and lust. "The Saturday Review" called it an 'unpleasant story' written in an 'unpleasant way.' A reviewer in "The Nation" dismissed Tess as 'a sensuous woman' as against Hardy himself calling her 'a pure woman.' However, favourable critical comments soon began to appear and the novel came to be taken as a classic of English fiction. Whatever unfavourable criticism was there, it was mostly about Hardy's pessimism and style rather than his views on Church and sexual morals. Clementina Black in 1892 wrote that in many respects Tess was Hardy's finest work and its superiority was largely due to a profound moral earnestness. Another critic Margaret Oliphant wrote in the same year that Tess is the history, as Hardy tells, par excellence, of a pure woman. However, you will find it interesting to see the diverse ways in which Hardy's novel has been received in the modern era. Irving Howe in 1967 praises Tess's character in very glowing way. He opines that Tess is one of the greater examples that we have in English Literature of how a writer can take hold of a cultural stereotype and, through the sheer

intensity of his affection, pare and purify it into something that is morally ennobling. Lionel Johnson observes a general trait in Hardy's novels that "they present either the resolution of a discord into a harmony or the breaking of a harmony by a discord" and mentions Tess as an example. D. H. Lawrence focuses on the tragedy of Tess as a result of a division between the bounds of the community and her natural, individual desire.

The novel has caught the attention of the feminist critics too. Rosemarie Morgan in her book *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* talks about the treatment of the protagonist Tess in the novel from a feminist perspective. She praises Hardy for retaining for Tess, with her emotional generosity, sexual vitality and moral strength, the capacity to rise above her fall and, ultimately to redeem the man who, bearing the values and sexual prejudices and double-standards of the society, fails to rise above them in the hour of need. Tess is not bereft of will, self-determination and courage at the last hours of her life. Thus, Morgan is highly appreciative about Hardy's treatment of Tess. However, another feminist critic Ellen Rooney argues that Tess was disempowered by Hardy's self-bowdlerising. Rooney argues that the very terms 'rape' and 'seduction', as the binaries for phallocentric discourse, collapse into one another, each supposing the female subject as victim barred from desire. She opines, "Hardy is unable to represent the meaning of the encounter in the Chase from Tess's point of view because to present Tess as a speaking subject is to risk the possibility that she may appear as the subject of desire. Yet a figure with no potential as a desiring subject can only formally be said to refuse desire, to testify to the absence of desire; the possibility of action lie elsewhere. Hardy is blocked in both directions. To preserve Tess's purity, he must insist on her passivity, situating her firmly in the problematic of consent: a 'subject' who does not speak her silence guarantees our sympathy." (Gribble,13) Thus, you can see that the novel has gained different perspectives as the time has passed by; but nobody can deny its important position in the history of English Literature as a masterpiece of Hardy.



14.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, you have learnt that Thomas Hardy is one of the most significant writers of The Victorian Era which had been the time of great changes. During Queen Victoria's reign from1837 to 1901, England became the most powerful and rich country in the world through its colonial expansion and the industrial revolution. The population in England doubled during Victoria's reign, and there could be seen a change in the country's economy because of the eruptions of industries. Hardy, in many of his works reflect on how with the constant flow of people from the rural areas to the urban centres, there also emerged a transition from the conventional Victorian values to a less rigid modern world view. Hardy stands at this transitional period and reflects on the conflicts between rigid Victorian tradition and modern innovation as one can find in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*



14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Hardy depicts the condition of the lower class people through their sense of despair… …the conflict of the rural surroundings with the newly emergent urban life style… …direct expression of the inner life of the poor rural folk against the hypocrisies of the upper class people etc.

Ans to Q 2: *Wessex* first appears as "a merely realistic dream country" in his novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*… …gradually in his other novels it appears in terms of different regions like South Wessex, Upper- and Mid-Wessex and Nether and Outer Wessex and so on… …it provided him with a literary space to present many significant issues.

Ans to Q 3: Hardy is often termed a fatalist… …his philosophy on life seems to be guided by Naturalism that portrayed man as ordinary components against the indomitable forces of Nature…. …he also

felt that there is an inherent cruelty in the pattern of the Universe and that human beings are bound by destiny.

Ans to Q 4: Portrayal of characters is the most striking feature of Hardy's novels... ...fixed characters, mostly belonging to Wessex countryside... ...rural folks like peasants, shepherds, labourers, singers etc.

Ans to Q 5: Fatalism and Pessimistic philosophy... ...conflict between rural and urban life... ...role of chance and coincidences... ...Naturalism... ...destruction of peasantry and impact of industrialisation... ...blend of tradition and modern... ...portrayal of Wessex life.

Ans to Q 6: The professional life, the scholar's life, and the rustic life... ...in the first he went through an intense programme of study to equip himself for a career in writing.

Ans to Q 7: Three phases... ...the first phase started with his great novels that won him recognition as a novelist concerned mostly with themes like inscrutable fate, man in conflict with the world etc... ...the second phase is the phase when his epic poem *The Dynasts* (1903-1908) was published... ...the third phase begins with the publication of his poetry collection *Time's Laughing Stocks* in 1909.

Ans to Q 8: Novels of Character or Environment... ...Romances and Fantasies... ... Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment.

Ans to Q 9: John Durbeyfield's tracing the roots of their family to aristocratic origin... ...Death of Prince... ...The haggling business of the family got disrupted and so Tess, though reluctant, had to go to the d'Urbervilles family to seek job and also to claim kinship.

Ans to Q 10: Tess was cordially welcomed by Richard Crick, the master of the Talbothays farm... ...Tess met a lot of other milkmaids who became her friends... ...Tess met Angel Clare, an apprentice at the Dairy farm... ... affinity develops between Tess and Angel... ...growing fondness leads to Angel's declaration of love for Tess.

Ans to Q 11: This phase shows how patriarchy works... ...Angel who had an early affair with a girl cannot accept Tess after learning about her past.... ...finally Angel decided upon a separation.



14.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Provide a detailed idea of Thomas Hardy's development as a Victorian novelist with particular reference to his fiction.

Q 2: What significance does the term 'Wessex' hold for Thomas Hardy? Write a note on hardy's Wessex novels.

Q 3: Discuss the critical reception of Thomas Hardy as a Victorian novelist with reference to his *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*

Q 4: Hardy is equally significant as a writer of tragedy? Do you think that Tess has a 'tragic flaw', or is she better understood as a victim of external circumstances? Elaborate.

* * *

UNIT 15: THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE:

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Reading the Novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

15.4 Major Themes

15.5 Hardy's Art of Characterization

15.6 Hardy's Narrative Style

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

15.10 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the important themes that add to the significance of the novel
- discuss the narrative techniques and Hardy's art of characterization
- relate the text with the issues of class conflict prevalent in Victorian society
- examine the position of women in the society of 19th century

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of this Block, and it is based on a detailed reading of Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented.* This novel has been the greatest of Hardy's Wessex novels. It was published in 1891, but Hardy had been working on it since 1887. The manuscript had gone through many different versions, and the controversy revolved around it made it difficult for Hardy to find a publisher. Hardy's willingness to describe the rape, and his defiant

insistence that Tess herself remains pure in spite of it, made the novel controversial. Like in his other novels, in this novel too Hardy has shown his deep sympathy towards the lower classes of England, especially the women. He had also shown his compassion for the victimised women who became the prey of the self-righteous rigid morality of English society of his times. This novel initially appeared in a censored and serialised version, published by the British illustrated newspaper The Graphic in 1891, and in book form in 1892. Though now considered one of the major 19th century English novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* received mixed reviews when it first appeared, in part because it challenged the sexual morals of the late Victorian period. In the following subsections, you will get an opportunity to read about the various important aspects of the novel.

15.3 READING THE NOVEL *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

15.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are some of the most important themes of the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*:

Wessex as the Locale:

The action of the novel is set at Wessex and it is a perfect specimen of Wessex novel modelled on greater Dorset, one of the maritime counties of southern England bordering the English Channel. Tess's village home is situated at Marlott close to the Vale of Blackmoor (sometimes Blackmore Vale), a pastoral valley that baffles one with tiny lanes and field pathways. The book provides enough details that record the local geography. In addition to this, the countryside and the rural folks who live in that area provide more than a mere backdrop upon which Hardy based his tale. Hardy makes full use of the diversity of his settings stressing Dorset's distinctive geological formations. The different locales have been presented as Tess moves from one locale to another and experiences with wonder the difference in the landscapes, bounty of

nature and so on. In the novel, Hardy portrays Wessex as a geographical locale that includes a variety of landscapes, from fertile valley to arid limestone beds, bordered by heaths, sands and the sea. The whole countryside acquires a life of its own and is almost like a character. The whole setting reflects the happenings in Tess's life. Marlott is a secure place for her where she feels the security of her mother's care. Talbothays is portrayed as a beautiful place, in a rich agricultural region where she meets Angel. The place is presented as fertile and expansive and is apt for any romance to develop. Likewise Flintscomb-Ash where she waits for her husband's return is presented as a desolate place, with mud, rocks, poor conditions everywhere which make it appear almost a wasteland.

Industrialisation and the Breakdown of Peasantry:

One of the major themes that Hardy addresses here is *industrialisation and the breakdown of peasantry*. Tess suffers a great deal from the unavoidable consequences of the rapid process of urbanization and modernisation in the Victorian society. The transformation from the rural to urban lifestyle brought in enormous social changes. Tess is a peasant girl and her struggles and misfortunes represent the sufferings of the peasantry. Again, Angel's act of leaving Tess behind represents the society's rigid and orthodox code of morality with a double standard– one for man and another for woman. Hardy has depicted the rural people's occupations, their problems, their trials and tribulations at the onset of the changing condition. Tess represents this class and through her life Hardy has portrayed the destruction of the peasant class. At the onslaught of industrialisation the old societal structure got changed. Workers were forced off their land and turned into proletarians, either industrial or agricultural. In the novel Hardy captures, the scenario just prior to Industrial Revolution, which transformed the English countryside, and in the novel he very poignantly depicts the inevitable consequences of rapidly changing society in the countryside of Wessex. Wessex represents the real social and economic disruption of the society of Hardy's times. However, in the novel fate is the thematic

basis for the failure of life Hardy projects alienation, isolation, estrangement of characters in the newly emerged impersonalised social bonds as the core motif for the tragedy that occurs.

Position of Women and Men's Domination:

Another recurrent theme is the position of women and men's domination. Women are shown as subjected to the dictates of men. At times even women are presented as passive and are responsible for their own subservience. Alec's seduction of Tess presents in a symbolic way the dominance of men over women. Again, Angel's seeking forgiveness from Tess for his past conduct is a taken for granted kind of a situation. However, he deserts Tess for the same mistake. Thus, society prescribes two different norms for man and woman. Tess accepts her fate passively. She suffers from the wrong doings of others. However, she does not protest or resents it. The conservative society of the Victorian period was patriarchal and so there was no voice of women. Women have to protect the honour and values of the society. However, if some wrong occurs without their being consciously involved, they have to face the opprobrium of the society as in the case of Tess.



LET US KNOW

Portrayal of the Priests:

Hardy in this novel has expressed in a subtle manner his disapproval of the orthodox Christian church. The portrayal of the priests that he presents in the novel is somewhat satirical and he digs at the religious functioning of the churches of that era. Parson Tringham, Felix, the Curate, the writer of the Biblical Text whom Tess meets, the Vicar at Mellstock, Angel's religious scepticism and Alec's conversion, all these hint at Hardy's attitude towards the Christian church. Moreover, Hardy mentions that even the rural folk throng at the church not for any religious purpose but because they regard it as a social duty and habit.

The Injustice of Existence and the Role of Chance:

This can be seen as one of the most prominent themes. Throughout the novel, we see injustice of existence. The death of the horse Prince, seduction of Tess and the slip of the letter under the carpet are all chances that were destined to happen and which had made the tragedy of Tess happen. Again the forces that govern human life are shown as absolutely unpredictable and not necessarily well disposed to us. Tess' life journey remind us of a world where the Gods are not just and fair and this made Hardy conclude the novel as *"Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in the Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess"*. You will find many such instances where chance and coincidences play a significant role in bringing about the tragedy of Tess.

Agrarian Order vs Industrial Order:

Tess's fate mirrors the destruction of the agricultural class in England. The novel is a potent document of the 19th century society where the capitalist form of life took over the old peasant's independence resulting in a huge transformation of the society. The difference between the upper class and lower class and the resulting exploitation of the latter in the hands of the former became a glaring aspect of the society. Tess's predicament is one example of such kind of tragedy. The proletariat kind of life at the farm at Flintscomb-Ash made Tess suffer a great deal. There she worked for meagre wages in the most degrading condition. The scene at the threshing is particularly significant as it symbolises the dehumanising relationship at the new capitalist farms. This situation was in stark contrast with the working atmosphere at the Talbothays where there was a feeling of cordiality and fellow feeling among the workers and also with the master dairyman. In a way, Tess represents the old agrarian order in conflict with the new industrial order which is represented by Alec. Alec can be seen as the representative of the newly emerged middle class rulers of Britain who have much money and power that comes from industry. As a symbol of new order, Alec is portrayed as having no communion with nature, irresponsible, unfocused and

insensitive to everyone around. Tess as the representative of the old agrarian order is seen as warm, charitable and always in harmony with nature. The seduction of Tess by Alec is seen as the forceful perpetration of the newly emerged industrial system over of the agrarian life order.

Pessimism:

Pessimism is a pervading note in Hardy's fiction. No other novelist of his times or before him was so acutely aware of the tragic fate of life. This makes his major fiction filled with a note of pessimism –a fact that entitles him to be placed along with Shakespeare and the Greek tragic dramatists. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was a great success, marred only by controversy raised over its frank treatment of sex and its pessimistic view of life. The conservative Victorian society was reluctant to accept it with all the details of Tess's sexual encounter with Alec. Moreover, the all-pervading pessimism in the novel has also raised some controversy. However, Hardy's pessimistic portrayal of life was a known fact by that time. Hardy's subtitle "A Pure Woman" caused enough controversy in his day, but it does succinctly convey the social commentary that is implicit in the novel: that Tess is a victim of circumstances and remains pure in heart and spirit if not in body.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you get a picture of Wessex in the novel?

Q 2: How does Hardy portray the position of women in the society?

Q 3: What is the role of chances and coincidences in the tragedy of Tess?

Q 4: Mention briefly how Hardy has portrayed the social issues in the novel.

15.5 HARDY'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Hardy's creative power is best exemplified in his character portrayal. The most striking feature of Hardy's character portrayal is that

his characters are fixed characters. His characters mostly belonged to the Wessex countryside. He convincingly portrays the characters of peasants, labourers, shepherds and singers with authentic details. But, he is not equally successful in portraying people from the aristocratic society. His characters in general are emotional rather than intellectual. The male characters as vivid, passionate, emotional and impulsive and very often they suffer from indecision. While in his portrayal of women, there can be seen a blend of cynicism and tenderness. Coventry Patmore talks about Hardy's portrayal of women characters: ''It is in his heroines, however, that Hardy is most original and delightful... ...each has the charm of the simplest and most familiar womanhood, and the only character they have in common is that of having each some serious defect, which only makes us like them more." (Cox, 1970:105) Thus, the women characters in Hardy's novels share some kind of commonality.



LET US KNOW

Henry Charles Duffin opines that Hardy's understanding of women characters is deep and absolute. He divides Hardy's women characters into three groups– the first group includes full length portraits of women who are in the higher order of personality, like Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane; the second group consists of full length study of women, but they have less personal significance, like, Ethelberta, Elfride, Grace, Mulberry, Viviette, and Anne; and the third group consists of women of much less significance, like, Lucetta, Arabella, Tamsie, Marty South, Paula and Fancy Picotel. Hardy's grasp of the human personality is not only extensive but also deep and this is very nicely reflected in his character portrayals.

The following are the three immortal characters in the novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles:*

Tess Durbeyfield:

Tess, the protagonist of the novel, is the daughter of Joan and John Durbeyfield and is the eldest of the seven children. She is a beautiful young woman living with her family. Her beauty is such that it attracts the attention of the opposite sex. Not only Alec but even Angel is attracted to her by her physical charms, her 'real vitality' and her 'real' warmth. Angel Clare finds something unearthly about her when on one occasion he finds a visionary essence of woman– a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He calls her Artemis, Demeter and so on. Tess has studied till Sixth standard and is considerably ahead of her mother as far as her beliefs and outlooks go. As you must have realised by now that hardships and injustices were heaped upon her, but she never wallows in self pity or gave up hope. She is a very selfless, honest and kind woman and has been presented as a 'pure woman' as the subtitle of the novel indicates. Her purity is part of the spirit and conscience. She has been praised by critics who admire her steadfast hope under adversity. The misfortunes that she faces come in a train. The death of the horse Prince, her seduction, the death of her baby "Sorrow", Angel's deserting her, her marriage with Alec, Angel's return and finally her own act of murdering Alec are a series of misfortunes which she suffers in her own quiet, stoical way. She fights against all the obstacles and fate to the end. In a way, she is stoical about her suffering. Tess endures her misfortunes with a rare fortitude and this makes her character tragic. The entire crisis leaves her crushed, but she moves on. After Alec's seduction, she is haunted by a sense of guilt. She refuses Angel's proposal only for this guilty conscience. She is a deeply moral person who cannot bring herself to hide the truth when Angel accepts her as a spotless woman. After her marriage, she confesses the truth, which is a sign of her sense of guilt. Angel's reaction comes as a big shock for her. Her attempt to meet Angel's parents proves to be futile. Throughout the novel, one observes her sacrificial nature and her concern about her family. When she marries Alec, it is only for the sake of her own siblings and not for herself. She cannot resist the pressure, as her siblings are homeless and her husband Angel does not reply to her letters. Therefore,

she has to succumb to Alec's pressure to marry him and in a vague manner, she starts believing him to be her husband. Finally, she redeems herself from this by killing Alec for deceiving her by telling that Angel will never come back again.



LET US KNOW

Tess is central to the novel and Hardy describes her with all the details needed to present her as physically attractive, emotionally balanced and morally strong. She is almost a human angel 'with a touch of the imperfect'. She has been created as both as an individual and a symbol. At the end of the novel when she lies on the sacrificial stone at Stonehenge she appears more a symbol than an individual. She dominates the novel to the extent that it is given her name as the title.

Alec D'Urbervilles:

Alec is regarded as the villain of the novel who has brought the tragedy in Tess's life. He is the handsome and amoral son of a wealthy merchant named Simon Stokes. He casts an evil eye on Tess the day she comes to work for his mother. He is manipulative and we know about his intentions towards Tess when he drives the carriage very fast to frighten Tess out of her wits and then forces her to kiss him. He is always in the look for an opportunity to get close to Tess. His villainy is revealed when taking opportunity of the situation he forces himself upon Tess and robs her of her virginity. He, however, has no knowledge about the damage that has been done to Tess. Then we hear about his misbehaviour to Mr. Clare, the Parson. Later we find him a transformed man who is converted and has become a priest. However, Tess is sceptical about his transformation which is confirmed when he asks Tess to swear that she will not tempt him by her beauty and charm. However, his conversion proves to be a temporary affair as his newly acquired religious faith begins to crumble. He begins to pester Tess to

marry him. He makes her believe that her husband Angel will never come back to her. He further helps her family to move on after the death of Tess's father. On another level, Alec provides Tess employment when asked for and treats her well to induce her to stay on at Trantridge for three months. His obsession for Tess makes him to go to any extent and he was happy to get her at the end though for a short span of time. He has to pay for his obsession with his life. It is worth noting that Alec is always associated with darkness by which, perhaps, hardy intends to make him a symbol of evil. "I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there is nobody to be responsible to" betray his absolute lack of scruple in contrast with Tess's fortitude and acceptance of her 'fate'. Alec is also presented as an outsider to the community of poor farmers to which Tess belongs. He is the son of a moneylender and believes that money can buy anything. In a way, he is the playboy of the world of Wessex and Tess's own attitude to him is more ambivalent than utterly critical and dismissive.

Angel Clare:

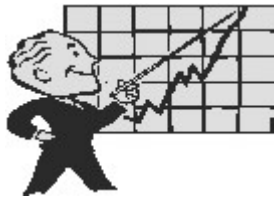
Hardy presents Angel Clare as a far more complex character than Alec. He is the son of a Parson, who wanted him to be a clergyman. Angel's father and two brothers are respected clergymen, but his religious doubts keep him away from joining the religious order. He is an intelligent man who decides to become a farmer to preserve his intellectual freedom from the pressures of city life. Unlike his father and brothers, Angel is free from religious dogmas and orthodoxy. He is a secularist who represents a rebel striving toward a personal vision of goodness. His disdain for tradition and the conservative ideologies of the times is evident in his love and marriage with Tess who is a milkmaid and his social inferior. He exhibits a poet's soul in his love for Tess. When he talks to his parents about Tess, he describes her in very practical and rational terms. He mentions about her being religious and her regular going to church, as he knows that these are the things that his parents would want to know. Angel's religious views are exactly those that Hardy is said to have held. However, his double standard nature becomes

evident when he rejects Tess after her confession. While he himself had a sexual encounter with a woman before he met Tess. He expects Tess to understand him and forgive him for his forty-eight hours dissipation with a woman in London where he was in his senses. However, Tess's forced seduction by Alec made him desert her and leave her. He keeps himself away from Tess for quite some time. However, his deep love for Tess is well understood. His sleep walking scene is enough proof of this love. He makes financial provision for Tess so that she does not have to face any financial crunch. Angel finally awakens to his real senses of real world morality when he failed in Brazil, which makes him realize that he has been unfair to Tess and he comes back to her. Their last stay together is very short and at the end, the final separation takes place. Critics opine that though there are several reasons for the tragedy of Tess, it is Angel's deserting her that brings the final blow to her life and the final tragedy. Thus, Hardy delineates Angel's character as a complex blend of good and bad, as one who is crucial enough to reject his newly married wife at the wedding night after hearing her confession and yet feels the pangs of separation and atones for his error by accepting her, albeit for a while only because Tess has become a fugitive after murdering Alec.

15.6 HARDY'S NARRATIVE STYLE

The narrative technique of a novel is a crucial aspect to guide the readers grasp the events as through it the author conveys the time, place and people in the society. In the novel Hardy uses a variety of narrative technique to portray the society in which he or Tess lived. Hardy uses a third person omniscient narrator to present the tragedy of Tess. In the course of the novel Hardy has offered his personal comments on the events of the novel and on the characters. This is done with a view to giving a direction to the events of the story. Again, Hardy has provided a more direct means of communication between the readers and the characters with dialogue, letter writing and songs and poetry. Through the

conversation between the characters and even through the letter writing the readers are in a position to judge the characters and the events directly without the intervention of the author. Hardy has presented religious and mythological allusions too to convey the religious and social environments of the Victorian society in which his characters lived. Through the characters from the religious sphere like Parson Tringham, the Vicar of Mellstock and the Vicar Clare Hardy presents the functioning of the religious institutions and the people involved with it.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss briefly the narrative technique that Hardy has used in the novel.



15.7 LET US SUM UP

From a reading of this unit, you have learnt how *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* on the basis of its various aspects, introduces you to the English society and culture of the Victorian era. Though technically it is a 19th century novel, this work anticipates the 20th century in regard to the nature and treatment of the subject matter. By now, you must have realised that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the plot is developed in seven parts and each part coincides with a new development in Tess' life. The plot of the novel moves on a succession of accidents and coincidences. Tess's tragic fate depends on some disastrous mischance over and over again. In Hardy's works, chance and coincidences always play a greater role in influencing the course of action. The novel also displays several significant contemporary issues of the times including the religious orthodoxy and the change in outlook of the people of the times. With the development of science and technology, men's religious faith had undergone a significant change as they began to question the conservative religious beliefs. This attitude is reflected in the character of Angel Clare who resists the conservative religious beliefs of his father and embraces a more secular outlook towards life. The novel also

reflects Hardy's preoccupation with the idea of class struggle, the destruction of the peasantry, and also the emergence of the urban middle class. The novel very clearly portrays Hardy's attack on the Victorian attitude towards premarital sex and woman's predicament in such situations. Hardy proves that Tess was a pure woman as she was a victim of Alec's clever design to take advantage of her innocence and her mother's selfish desire to get her married off to the rich family. Further, Hardy's pessimistic philosophy, which permeates the novel, has been mentioned along with his insistence on the role of destiny and chance.



15.8 FURTHER READING

Bloom, Harold (1987). *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* New York: Chelsea House.

Cox, R. G. (ed.) (1979). *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage.* London/ New York: Routledge.

Duffin, Henry Charles (1916). *Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, The Poem and The Dynasts.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Gribble, Jennifer (2008). "Postmodern Tess: Recent Readings of Tess of the d'Urbervilles." (http://ojs-prod.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/SSE/article/view/539/510)

Hardy, Thomas & Florence, Hardy (2007). *Thomas Hardy*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.

Laird, J. T. (1975). *The Shaping of Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lea, Hermann (1913). *Thomas Hardy's Wessex*. London: Macmillan, St. Martin's Press.

Mallett, Philip (ed.) (2002). *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Millgate, Michael (1994). *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Morgan, Rosemarie (1988). *Women and Sexuality in the novels of Thomas Hardy.* London/New York: Routledge.

Widdowson, Peter (ed.) (1993). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy.* Hampshire: Macmillan.

WEB RESOURCES:

http://escholarship.usyd.edu.au/journals/index.php/SSE/article/viewFile/539/510.



15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: The local geography of Wessex region… …the seasonal settings are carefully chosen… …the agricultural problems… …intrusion of machinery in the Victorian era at the advent of Industrialisation… …the rural folk mostly belonged to Wessex, their life style, their hardships, sufferings… …women's position in the society of that region has been presented through Tess and other characters.

Ans to Q 2: Women are shown as subjected to the dictates of men… …Tess, the protagonist, represents the rural women always at the receiving end in a male-dominated world… …double standard regarding the moral ethics of men and women… …victorian notion of honour, chastity, morality are presented through the women characters who are under the patriarchal dominance.

Ans to Q 3: The plot of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* turns on a succession of accidents and coincidences… …it begins with the death of the horse… …seduction of Tess and Tess's written confession to Angel going under the carpet… …Tess's chance encounter with Alec… …the death of Tess's father and its consequences… …the overall impact of those coincidences in the total effect of the novel.

Ans to Q 4: Changing notions of social classes in Victorian England… …clash between tradition and modernity, rural and urban life… …the hardships and drudgery of the rural folks… …impact of industrialisation… …Women's position in society… …attitude towards God and Religion… …rural orthodoxy and religious values are questioned.

Ans to Q 5: Hardy uses a variety of narrative techniques to portray the society in which he or Tess lived… …use of third person

omniscient narrator to present the tragedy of Tess. … …use of personal comments on the events of the novel and also on the characters… …use of direct means of communication between the readers and the characters through dialogue, letter writing and songs and poetry.



15.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Alec wrongs Tess through his lack of principles. Angel wrongs her with his excess of principles. Which do you see as the more unforgivable betrayal?

Q 2: What is the role of fate in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*? To what extent does Tess's tragedy hinge on improbable coincidence?

Q 3: The sub-title of Hardy's novel describes Tess as "a pure woman." Discuss the aptness of the subtitle with reference to Tess.

Q 4: Give your own idea of Hardy's philosophy of life as reflected in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.*

Q 5: Why does Hardy divide his novel into "Phases"? What apparent transformation separates each phase from the other? Discuss in the context of Tess's changing fortunes?

Q 6: Write a note on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as a Wessex novel presenting the significance of Wessex as the locale of the novel

Q 7: In what ways, according to you, does Tess' life embody the indomitable will to enjoy and the circumstantial forces against enjoyment?

Q 8: Chose one particular scene from the novel and explain how the author has presented it effectively?

Q 9: Discuss the role of Nature in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* Critically examine the influence of natural environment upon Tess in various phases of the novel.

* * *

REFERENCE LIST (FOR ALL UNITS)

Abel, Elizabeth, Marriane Hirch & Elizabeth Langland. (eds.) (1983). *The Voyage in Fiction of Female Developmen*t. Hanover: University Press of New England.

Alexander, Christine. (1983). *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Allen, Walter. (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.

Allen, Walter. (1958). *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Penguin Books.

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

Barker, Juliet. (1975). *The Brontës*. London: Macmillan.

Beaty, Jerome. (1996). *Misreading Jane Eyre: A Postformalist Paradigm*. Colombus: Ohio State University Press.

Berg, M. (1996). *Wuthering Heights: The Writing in the Margin*. Twayne Publishers.

Bloom, Harold. (1987). *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* New York: Chelsea House.

Brontë, Charlotte. (2004). *Jane Eyre.* Ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: Norton.

Cox, R. G. (ed.) (1979). *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage.* London/ New York: Routledge.

Duffin, Henry Charles (1916). *Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, The Poem and The Dynasts.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Entry on the Brontë sisters in Drabble, Margaret. (ed). (2000). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature.* (6th edition). OUP.

Ford, Boris. (ed.) (1982). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: Vol.6 From Dickens to Hardy.* Great Britain: Penguin Books.

Gilbert, Sandra & Susan, Gubar. (1973). *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Glen, Heather. (ed.) (1997).*Jane Eyre* (New Casebook Series). London: Macmillan.

Gribble, Jennifer. (2008). "Postmodern Tess: Recent Readings of Tess of the d'Urbervilles."

(http://ojs- prod.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/SSE/article/view/539/510)

Hardy, Thomas & Florence, Hardy. (2007). *Thomas Hardy*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.

Hoeveler, D. L. (ed.) (2002). *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights*. Boston, MA, New York : Houghton Mifflin Company.

Holbrook, D. (1997). *Wuthering Heights: A Drama of Being*. Sheffield Academic Press.

Holderness, Graham. (2003). *Wuthering Heights*. (Open Guides to Literature Series). New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt Ltd.

Kettle, Arnold. (1967). *An Introduction to the English Novel. Vol I*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall.

Laird, J. T. (1975). *The Shaping of Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lea, Hermann. (1913). *Thomas Hardy's Wessex*. London: Macmillan, St. Martin's Press.

Lodge, David. (1966). "Fire and Eyre Charlotte Brontë's War of Earthly Elements" in *Language of Fiction.* London: Routlegde and Kegan Paul.

Mallett, Philip. (ed.) (2002). *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

March, Nicholas. (1999). *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights.* Palgrave: Macmillan.

Millgate, Michael. (1994). *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

Morgan, Rosemarie. (1988). *Women and Sexuality in the novels of Thomas Hardy.* London/New York: Routledge.

Sanders, Andrew. (2004). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature.* London: OUP.

Stoneman, Patsy. (1993). *Wuthering Heights: A New Casebook*. London: Macmillan.

Visick, M. (1980). *The Genesis of Wuthering Heights*. Gloucester, England: Ian Hodgkins & Co. Ltd.

Widdowson, Peter. (ed.) (1993). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy.* Hampshire: Macmillan.

Woolf, Virginia. (1925). *The Common Reader*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Web Resources:

http://escholarship.usyd.edu.au/journals/index.php/SSE/article/viewFile/539/510.