UNIT 10: THE ROMANTIC AGE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives
10.2 Introduction
10.3 Major Writers
10.4 Let us Sum up
10.5 Further Reading
10.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will able to:

- gain an idea about the major writers of the Romantic period and their works
- gain a better perspective on the cultural history of the age
- appreciate the contributions of the age to the history of English Literature

10.2 INTRODUCTION

The Romantic Age is considered as **a literary, intellectual and an artistic movement which had spread across Europe at the end of the 18th century**. The historical context of the revolutionary period is closely related to the rich body of Romantic literature and hence, cannot be studied in isolation. The learner will be interested to know that until the mid-nineteenth century, neither the radically different period itself nor the writers of the age, was referred to or even knew themselves as 'Romantic' as we do today. It was only in the late 19th century that the words 'romantic' or 'romanticism' were used to refer to the period. The essence of romanticism is that **"literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man, and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way"**.

In emphasising 'imagination' over 'rational thought', the Romantic age proved to be a major reaction against the ideals of the Enlightenment Age. The romantic imagination dealt with the individual, subjective experience, the irrational, the supernatural, mystical and the spiritual elements. The present unit introduces you to some of the major writers of the **Romantic Age** in the history of English literature namely William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, John Keats, P.B. Shelley, Lord Byron and Charles Lamb.

10.3 MAJOR WRITERS

It may be noted that it is not possible to cover all the writers of the Romantic Age as it is an exhaustive exercise. Yet, you will be curious to learn about the major Romantic writers whose literary works represent the Romantic literary fervour. Thus, the section will acquaint you with the major Romantic poets and writers who are considered to represent the spirit of the age.

William Blake:

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was a 'prophetic' poet, a skilled painter and engraver. He was brought up in London and was mostly tutored at home by his mother. As a young boy, he attended a drawing school and later went on to engage in seven years of training and apprenticeship with an engraver, at the young age of 21. Blake took to engraving as his chosen profession and blended this art along with his writings.

The Bible was a major influence throughout Blake's life and is reflected in most of his works as well. He is considered as a **'visionary'** or a **'prophetic' poet** due to the visions he was often subject to; at the age of four he had a frightful vision of God peering through a window. He often confided in his parents about seeing 'angels' while strolling in the fields and even meeting prophet Ezekiel under a tree. Blake illustrated several of his works with what he called as **'illuminated printing'** or **'relief etching'** by using copper plates to etch every single design on paper, in keeping with the theme of the respective poems.

Among his major literary works are his volumes of poetry including epic or narrative poems like ***Songs of Innocence and of Experience***, ***Poetical Sketches***, ***Tiriel***, ***The Book of Thel***, ***The Song of Los***, ***Jerusalem***, ***Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Milton: A Poem*** and ***Song of Liberty***. His prophetic books include: ***America: A Prophecy, Europe: A Prophecy, Continental Prophecies***, ***The Four Zoas*** (unfinished), ***The Book of Urizen The Book of Ahania*** and in parts ***The Marriage of Heaven and Hell***. Blake illustrated most of these works and received much inspiration from his loving wife Catherine, who being trained by him in the art of engraving also helped him in his illustrations.

William Wordsworth:

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850) was born in a small town of Cockermouth in the northwest district of the Lake District. He spent his childhood reading books from his father's library and acquired his love for poetry from two his teachers who were recent graduates from Cambridge and loved contemporary poetry. Along with his four siblings he was left orphaned after his father's death at the age of 13, which put them under the care of relatives. It was with the good will of his teachers and school friends, that he found much comfort. He started writing poetry at the age of 15 and his first published sonnet in the *European Magazine* was at the age of 16, when he had just graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge.

His connection with France began when he had set out on a walking tour to France which was on the verge of beginning a Revolution. It was there that he fell in love with a French woman who gave birth to their daughter. Although, later Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, he provided well for them too. He had begun by supporting the French Revolution and at another time, Godwin's radically political philosophy but was gradually disillusioned by both.

It is important to note, that the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* is called the "manifesto" of English Romantic criticism. It is in the preface that he writes that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." In 1796, he started to reside

with his sister at Dorset in the Lake District, with whom he was very close to. Among the volumes of his works are: ***Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems*** (1798), ***Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*** (1800), ***Poems, in Two Volumes, Guide to The Lakes***, ***The Excursion***, ***Laodamia*** and ***The Prelude***. In the first volume the well read poems are "Simon Lee", "Lines Written in Early Spring", "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey". The second volume contains the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads,* 'Lucy Gray", and "Michael". The third volume *Poems, in Two Volumes* contains the poems: "Daffodils", "The Solitary Reaper", "Ode on Intimations of Immortality", "London, 1802", "Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" and "The World is Too Much With Us". Also he wrote the only play of his literary career which was titled ***The Borderers***, a verse play.

Apart from other honorary degrees from Durham and Oxford University, Wordsworth was appointed the **Poet Laureate** after the demise of Robert Southey in 1843.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

S.T. Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who built an association with the Lake Poets and most importantly with William Wordsworth in founding the Romantic Movement in England. He belonged to a privileged family and as a Vicar's son received a good education. During his childhood years, he read classics which stirred his imagination and wrote poetry and it was in his school years that he came to be acquainted with his lifelong friend Charles Lamb. He went on to matriculate from Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791 where he was inclined towards political and philosophical ideas along with Robert Southey.

The three poems that are considered as masterpieces are- **"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"**, **"Christabel"** and **"Kubla Khan"**. His works create an atmosphere of what he called "the willing suspension of belief" with the elements of the mysterious and the supernatural and he is considered to have reignited the craze for gothic romance and to have had subsequent influence on writers such as Mary Shelley who wrote *Frankenstein*. "The Ancient Mariner" is one of the most well read poem

which counts on the symbolic and the supernatural to create an engrossed reading of suspense. In the poem, the mariner recounts his old tale of his sea voyage and compels a man who is a wedding guest be a listener. In the poem, the sea adventure and the albatross, the south winds and the compelling curse, the enchanted waters and the ghostly vessel, the sea creatures and the spirits and the hermit and the pilot-boy at the end of the sea voyage add elements of mystery and suspense. He had also significantly collaborated with Wordsworth in the ***Lyrical Ballads*** and "The Ancient Mariner" had appeared in the first edition.

Among what is termed as his **'Conversation' poems** are the eight poems namely: "The Eolian Harp", "Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement', "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison", "Frost at Midnight", 'Fears in Solitude', "The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem", "Dejection: An Ode" and "To William Wordsworth". The term was first used by George McLean Harper in 1928, who borrowed it from the subtitle of Coleridge's "The Nightingale". His contribution to literary criticism was the ***Biographia Literaria*** **or** ***Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*** which was an autobiographical discourse on his philosophical and literary views. He was also inclined towards German philosophy and studied German language as well as translated from German to English.

His unhappy domestic life, frequent frustration and illness (he suffered from neuralgia), opium addiction (from dependence on laudanum for his illness) also strained his friendship with Wordsworth. During his later years under the care of his doctor and his wife, an improvement in his health enabled him to dictate his work to amanuenses (a literary assistant who notes down whatever is dictated) and with their help had his prose works penned such as ***The Statesman Manual***, ***Aids to Reflection***, ***On the Constitution and Church*** and **a series of lectures** on philosophy and the writers Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Spenser, Aristo and Cervantes.



LET US KNOW

Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan" was influenced after his reading of an ideal place called 'Xanadu' in Samuel Purchas' book titled, *Purchas, his Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and Religions Observed in All Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation to the Present*. Having read it and fallen asleep under the influence of opium, he dreamt and wrote the poem. The poem which remained a fragment or incomplete is about a pleasure dome in the ethereal Xanadu and refers to figure of the singing Abyssinian maid and the Mongol emperor Kubla Khan. Another of his fragmented poem is "Christabel" based on the female character by the same name and her meeting with an abducted woman named Geraldine.

John Keats:

John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821) was one of the finest English poets. He belonged to a fairly well-to-do family of London but was orphaned at an early age. It was at the school library at the Enfield school run by Rev. John Clarke where he developed an early interest in the Classics, history and Renaissance literature were to influence him throughout his life. Keats knew that he was destined to be a poet from the time he learnt to speak.

Keats penned a series of his famous odes titled **"Ode to a Nightingale"**, **"Ode on a Grecian Urn"**, **"Ode to Psyche"**, "**Ode on Melancholy**", "**Ode on Indolence**" and "**Ode on Fancy**". Among his much read poems and ballads are **"The Eve of St. Agnes"** and **"La Belle Dame sans Merci"** and sonnets like **"On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"**. His other major works include a poetic romance ***Endymion***, an abandoned epic poem ***Hyperion***, a narrative poem ***Lamia*** and the drama ***Otho*** which was not dramatised until 1950. Also Keats penned several epistles mostly to his bother George and his life long friend Charles Cowden Clarke which were later published in 1848 and 1878 which also poetic and reflected his literary ideas. It was in his correspondences that he first used

the term **"negative capability"**. His poetry had a characteristic sensual imagery and one of his famous reflections on beauty appeared in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" which is **"'beauty is truth, truth beauty,' – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know"**. Based on his reflection on imagination and who is a poet, Keats had said **"My Imagination is a Monastery and I am its Monk"**.

Among the Romantic poets, **"Keats was the last to be born and the first to die at the age of 25"**. His works were published only four years prior to his death but by the end of the 19th century his works made him a much beloved English poet.



LET US KNOW

Negative Capability: John Keats first used the term **"negative capability"** in one of his **written correspondences with his brothers George and Tom** on **21 December 1817**, to describe the artist's experience of nature and the outer world without formulating or imposing theories of knowledge on them. Keats stated that an artist, who in the creation of something negated himself, was "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason".

Percy Byssche Shelley:

Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was one of the finest **lyric** poets and was radical in his socio-political beliefs. Being born into a noble ancestry, he was brought up in West Sussex, London and had spent a carefree childhood, fishing and hunting. He was tutored early at home by Reverend Evan Edwards and went on to matriculate from University College, Oxford but later was also expelled from there for his refusal to accept the authorship of his radical pamphlet ***The Necessity of Atheism*** in front of the administration. He had eloped with his mentor, William Godwin's daughter Mary Shelley who had famously authored the novel *Frankenstein*. Mary's mother, the radical feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had passed away after having given birth to her.

Shelley's poetry had two different strains or distinct moods of which one was that of a violent reformer and the other imbued with an appealing spirit of nature. He is remembered for his classic poems such as ***Ozymandias***, ***Ode to the West Wind***, ***To a Skylark***, ***When Soft Voices Die***, ***The Cloud***, ***Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude, The Masque of Anarchy*** and ***Adonaïs*** (a threnody or song of grief which is based on Keats' death). His long, visionary poems such as ***Queen Mab***, ***Alastor***, ***Hellas***, ***The Revolt of Islam*** and ***The Witch of Atlas*** are also considered as revolutionary works. ***The Cenci*** based on an Italian story and ***Prometheus Unbound***, based on the Greek myth of Prometheus are among his visionary verse dramas.

In his *Defense of Poetry* Shelley likened prophets to poets and declared that **"poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"**. It is considered as one of the major work of literary criticism which reflects Shelley's philosophical ideas of poetry and the role of poets. According to him, poetry inspired moral good and improved man and his society.



LET US KNOW

You will be interested to know, that the figure of **'Prometheus'** is a figure of Greek mythology and in his works symbolically stood for political defiance. Prometheus who was the son of Iapetus and Asia had stolen and gifted mankind with 'fire' by defying the Gods. When Jupiter took fire away from earth; he again stole it from the chariot of the sun. Thus an angry Jupiter punished immortal Prometheus by nailing him to the rock of Caucasus for 3,000 years, with his eagle devouring his regenerating liver everyday, until Hercules slaughtered the bird and unbound him. Shelley had obviously added his own twists to the same theme in his *Prometheus Unbound*.

Lord Byron:

George Gordon Byron (22 January 1788 – 19 April 1824), 6th Baron Byron also commonly known as Lord Byron was an influential English poet

who was born in London. After his mother Catharine Gordon, was abandoned by her husband she took him away to her native place in Aberdeenshire, Scotland where the young Byron grew up in the Scottish countryside. When his great-uncle passed away, Byron inherited the title of the sixth Baron in the English Barony, at the tender age of 10. He was an avid reader and so much so, that by the age of 19, he had read about four thousand books and went on to attend Trinity College, Cambridge.

You will be interested, to know that at Cambridge, keeping of dogs was prohibited but Byron went a step further and kept a tamed bear. Byron suffered from a deformed "club foot" right from his birth and he was so conscious it that he called himself the "limping devil'. Yet, he was a good boxer, swimmer, athlete and a horse-rider.

Among, his popular work is ***Child Harold's Pilgrimage*** which was a semi-autobiographical narrative poem about a young man ("childe") who is tired of worldly pleasures and travels to unknown lands reflecting on his life. Also his ***Don Juan*** is a widely read poem or what Byron called an "epic-poem", which is based on Don Juan the Spanish legend who was notorious because of his casual ways with women but Byron presents him as a man who is rather seduced by woman. Some of his other works include his satire ***English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*** to his critics and his early collection of poetry titled, among a few others. He joined the fight and spent much of his money for Greek Independence while living in Genoa but passed away due to severe illness at the young age of 37.



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Byronic Hero: The Byronic hero appeared in Byron's *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, as the ideal hero but with his certain inherent flaws. Perhaps, the Byronic hero was named after Byron's surname as it characterised Byron's own life and persona.

Charles Lamb:

Born in London, the writer and essayist, Charles Lamb (10 February 1775 – 27 December 1834) had a carefree childhood, often visiting his

grand mother who was a house keeper to a family with a large country-house at Blakesware, Hertforshire. He shared a close relation with her and also with his sister Mary Lamb, who was ten years elder to him. His years in London captured his interests in books and the theatre and he came to be acquainted with Hazlitt, Hunt and Shelley. He remained a bachelor for life due to the commitments he had towards his family. He took it upon himself to take care of his sister until his last. She was affected with mental illness and had stabbed her mother in a fit of mania. After their father passed away suffering from prolonged mental illness and a heart stroke, Charles moved in a new home at Mitre Court Buildings in the Temple, with Mary where they resided together for nine long years. Their home was a meeting place for their literary friends and Lamb was particularly close to Coleridge who was his schoolmate. Both the friends were devout believers and friends for life.

You will be interested, to know that he wrote under the **pen name of 'Elia'** while writing for the *London Magazine* and his popular collection of personal essays are titled as ***Essays of Elia***. His works include ***Rosamund Gray***, a tragic play ***John Woodvil*** and the ***Last Essays of Elia***. He had collaborated with Mary and together they wrote three books, of which *Tales from Shakespeare* was most well received. His reflective essays endear him to the readers and thus he is considered as one of the major English essayist. Lamb passed away after catching an infection at the age of 59. His sister Mary outlived him but both brother and sister were buried beside each other.

Finally, while going through books on the History of English Literature it is important to note, the subtle differences in the treatment and emphasis of the poetic perceptions of the major Romantic poets. To the visionary in Blake, the 'imagination' was equated with a divine, the spiritual and a transcendental experience. For the philosophically inclined Coleridge, the power of the imagination is likened to the 'creative activity' of God. Both of them rejected the sensational experience of the outer world and instead, emphasised on the transforming spiritual power of the inner world.

Wordsworth and Keats through their poetry celebrated the 'sensory' experience of the visible and the outer world i.e., in which the live senses were perceptive of the outer world. Wordsworth shared common ideas with Coleridge on imagination and the difference between fancy and imagination. Shelley in his essay *Defense of Poetry* asserted the moral and hence social role of poetry and declared that **"poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"**.



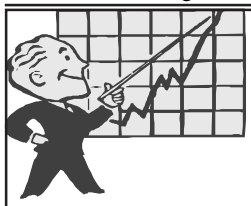
LET US KNOW

Fancy and Imagination:

In his *Biographia Litereria*, Coleridge pointed out the distinction between the two faculties of the mind that is 'fancy' and 'imagination'. **Imagination** is the vital source of creation. Coleridge divided imagination into **primary imagination** which "automatically balances and fuses the innate capacities and powers of the mind with the external presence of the objective world that the mind receives through the senses" and the **secondary imagination** or the free will that **"dissolves, dissipates in order to recreate."** The **fancy** associated with the memory, accumulates all that is seen but the imagination recreates and transforms it anew and therefore, the role of the former is passive while that of the latter is active.

List of Some Other Important Writers Associated With This Period are:

William Hazlitt, Dorothy Wordsworth, Robert Southey, James Henry Leigh Hunt, Thomas De Quincey, Benjamin Robert Haydon, Mary Wollstonecraft, Felicia Dorothea Hemans, Laetitia Elizabeth Landon and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Which significant work is known as the "manifesto" of English Romantic criticism?

Q 2: Name Coleridge's three poems which are considered as his masterpieces.

Q 3: Who first used the term 'negative capability'? What does it mean?

Q4: In which major work of criticism did Shelley declare that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"?

Q 5: Who wrote under the pen name of 'Elia'? Name the popular collection of his personal essays published first in the *London Magazine*.

Q 6: Briefly state the difference between imagination and fancy.



10.4 LET US SUM UP

The present unit discusses some of the prominent writers of the period and briefly about their life and works in order to provide you an idea of the time and context in which they wrote. A brief sketch of the various literary forms along with the 'dominant' forms has been discussed to provide the learner with a broader view of the prevalent literary practices and popular readership. Thus, the unit will provide you with a better perspective on the cultural history of the Romantic Age, as well as, enable you to appreciate the contributions of the Romantic Age to English Literature.



10.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bowra, Maurice. (2009) *The Romantic Imagination* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2) Roe, Nicholas. (ed.) (2007) *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

3) Wu, Duncan. (ed.) (2006) *Romanticism: An Anthology.* Cowley Road, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

4) Website: http://www.bloomsburyacademic.com/

10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*

Ans to Q No 2: "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel", "Kubla Khan"

Ans to Q No 3: Keats in his letters referred to the artist's experience of nature and the outer world as negative capability

Ans to Q No 4: *Defense of Poetry*

Ans to Q No 5: Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia*

Ans to Q No 6: Imagination is a vital source of creation, recreates and transforms with an active role and fancy is a source of memory, accumulating all that is seen with a some what passive role



10.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What was distinct about Blake's representation of his literary works?

Q 2: Briefly describe the literary contributions of the two major Romantic poets, William Wordsworth and S.T Coleridge.

Q 3: Briefly explain the life and works of the following:

a. John Keats

b. Lord Byron

Q 4: Describe the significant literary output of P.B. Shelley and his ideas on the role of poetry.

Q 5: Describe the life and works of Charles Lamb as a major essayist

Q 6: Name the important writers associated with the Romantic Age.

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UNIT 11: THE VICTORIAN AGE I

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Features of the Age

11.4 Major Literary Forms and Writers

- 11.4.1 Novel
- 11.4.2 Poetry
- 11.4.3 Prose

11.5 Let us Sum up

11.6 Further Reading

11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.8 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the major literary features of the Victorian age
- classify the major literary forms that had evolved during the period
- appreciate the literary practices and the development of English literature in the age.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is based on the English literary history of the Victorian age. This age roughly started in 1830, or alternatively 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill), or 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria); and extends up to the death of Victoria in 1901. For the convenience of discussion, literary historians often subdivide the long period into three phases: Early Victorian (beginning to 1848), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901). You will see that much of the Victorian writing reflects the major social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems of the period.

The impact of the Industrial revolution on the lives of the common people, the struggle between religion and science, finds expression in the works of most of the writers of the period. The writers and thinkers of this age protested against traditions and conventions, the literary products were influenced by newer ideas borrowed from science, religion and politics, and the New Education Acts made education almost compulsory which produced a huge reading public.

In the following sections and subsections we will be discussing, in some greater detail, about the Victorian age, the major characteristics of the age and the major literary forms that had developed during the time.

11.3 FEATURES OF THE AGE

The following are some of the important features of the Victorian age. You should however note that all such features were clearly visible in many of the literary works of the age.

Material Developments:

The Victorian age is important for new activities. Another significant development of the period is the impact of the Industrial Revolution. The outcome of the Industrial Revolution was felt in all spheres of human activity as there was a growth of industrialisation and mechanisation which speeded up human life radically. With radical changes affecting the life and affairs of the Victorian period new ideas and concepts evolved in cultural, intellectual and social realm. There is revolution in commercial enterprise following the increase of available markets. The new commercial aspect of the age was first reflected in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which inaugurated a new era of prosperity. On the other side of this picture of commercial expansion we see the appalling social conditions of the new industrial cities, the squalid slums, and the exploitation of cheap labour (often of children), the painful fight by the enlightened few to introduce social legislation and the slow extension of the franchise. The evils of the Industrial Revolution were vividly painted by such writers as Dickens and Mrs Gaskell in their fictional works.

Intellectual Developments:

The literary works of the period was inevitably affected by the new ideas in science, religion and politics. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had a revolutionary impact on the contemporary world with its scientific thought. You can easily perceive the influence of Darwin's ideas in Tennyson's poem "In Memoriam". In the religious and ethical fields, the 'Oxford Movement,' needs mention. This movement had its source among the young and eager thinkers of the old university, and was headed by the Newman, who joined the Church of Rome. As a religious portent it marked the widespread discontent with the existing beliefs of the Church of England. There was also an immense outburst of social and political theorising represented mainly by thinkers like Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. This resulted in a great increase in the productions of the Press and of other more durable species of literature. The New Education Acts, made education compulsory which rapidly produced an enormous reading public. The cheapening of printing and paper increased the demand for books, so that the production was multiplied. The most popular form of literature was the novel, and the novelists responded with a will.

The Victorian Compromise:

The growth of London and of other major cities in Great Britain marked a final stage in the change from a way of life based on the land to a modern urban economy based on manufacturing, international trade and financial institutions. Great Britain was one of the first countries of the world to industrialise, to establish markets and to reinvest the profits in further manufacturing developments. Britain became the centre of the new philosophy of Free Trade, of new technology and of continuing industrial inventions. But the Victorian age is also one of faith and dilemma. 'The Victorian compromise' is one way of seeing this dilemma. It implies a kind of double standard between national success and the exploitation of lower-class workers at home and of colonies overseas; a compromise between philanthropy and tolerance (the abolition of slavery, 1833; tolerance for Catholics, 1829) and repression (the punishment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, 1834; the conditions of the poor).

The Revolt against Conventions:

Many writers of the Victorian age protested against the deadening effects of the conventions. Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, in their different accents, were loud in their denunciations. Thackeray was never tired of satirising the snobbery of the people of the age. In poetry the Pre-Raphaelites, led by Swinburne and William Morris, proclaimed no morality but that of the artist's regard for his art. By the vigour of his methods Swinburne horrified the timorous, and made himself rather ridiculous in the eyes of sensible people.

11.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS AND WRITERS

The Victorian age is important for the development of almost all the major literary forms namely Novels, Poetry and Prose. In the following subsections you will get to read about the different literary forms and the important writers of those forms in some greater detail.

11.4.1 Novel

Unlike in the previous ages, the Victorian age witnessed the flourish of fictional writings mainly the novel among other literary genres. The novel became the primary literary form in the great exponents ranging from Charles Dickens to Thomas Hardy. With the rise in the reading public, and writers consistently producing different types of fictional narratives, the novel became one of the most entertaining forms.

The popularity of the novel rested mainly on the realistic mode that enabled the reading public to identify themselves with the narratives and to relate them to the stories of real life. At the same time, Victorian novel also became the mirror of the radical changes in transport and communication, railways, industrialisation,growth of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation, and rise in educational opportunities. Another significant aspect of the Victorian novel was the emergence of women writers who enriched the genre by depicting women's lives and

issues like domesticity, family structures, marriage and morals of the times. Thus, women during the Victorian age occupied prominence not only as producers and readers of novels but also as the subjects of the novel around whose lives the narratives were woven. During this period various categories of novels were being produced during the period which included the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among others. The following is a list of some of the renowned Victorian novelists and their works.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) One of the significant developments of the Victorian period is the impact of Industrial Revolution. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Critically analyse the development of novel during the Victorian Age.

11.4.2 Poetry

Poetry of the Victorian age, unlike that of the preceding Romantic age displayed an intense sense of anxiety and crisis. This was an outcome of the upheavals changes brought by rapid urbanisation, mechanised lives, changes in men and morals and the repeated tussle between faith and doubt, hope and despair. The ideas evinced from Darwinian philosophy challenged the existing morals while creating a value system that afflicted that society with a feeling of crisis and anxiety. Poetry of the age therefore, reveals the poet's persistent efforts to come to terms with the visible changes happening in every sphere of life. There were a variety of poetic forms that emerged ranging from elegy to dramatic monologue, from lyric to narrative poetry. In the poetic works of **Alfred Tennyson**, **Robert Browning**, **Matthew Arnold** and **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** among many others, one can clearly see the Victorian ethos.

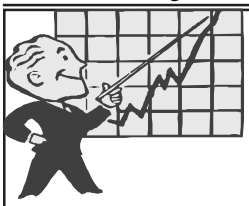
Dramatic monologue is a poem in which there is one imaginary speaker addressing an imaginary audience. This was the form effectively

created by Tennyson and Browning. However, during the Victorian period a large number of poets re-established the sonnet form, and in particular the sonnet sequence about love. The major works that are worth mentioning are: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Robert Bridges' *The Groanh of Loae* (1876), Christina Rossetti's *Monna Innominata* (188) and her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The House of Life* (1881).But the real innovator in Victorian times was Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose poems were not published until 1918.

11.4.3 Prose

Victorian Prose is marked by a variety of prose writings on the 'Condition of England', debates on religion, scientific writing and philosophical writings. Among the most prominent prose writers of the age are Thomas Babington Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, and Matthew Arnold. One of the monumental works of the age is the compilation of the Oxford English Dictionary. Some of the important works that characterised the Victorian temperament were Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Friedrich Engels' *Condition of the Working Classes in England*, Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, Mathew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism,* and John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.

'Victorian individualism' and a remarkable variety of style characterised the prose of the age. Victorian criticism also took into account the debates and advocacies on liberty and the rights of women. Works like John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* had stirred up the Victorian consciousness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Write short note on the following:

a. Victorian poetry

b. Victorian prose



11.5 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, you will learn that the term 'Victorian age' is often used to cover the entire nineteenth century starting with Queen Victoria ascending the throne of England in 1837 till her demise in 1901. A history of the Victorian age records a period of economic expansion and rapid socio-economic change. The changes taking place in the society get reflected in the various literary forms like novel, poetry and prose. The unit provides the learner with a broad view on how the Victorian literature is characterised by loss of faith and religious doubts and is marked by an intellectual transformation. The complex Victorian society and its ideals came to be mirrored in the corresponding literature of the age. Thus, after a thorough study of the unit, you will be able to classify the different literary forms and features of the Victorian literature.



11.6 FURTHER READING

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

2) Peck, John and Martin Coyle. (1984). *Literary Terms and Criticism.* New York: Palgrave.

3) Ousby, Ian. (ed). (1988). *Companion to Literature in English*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

4) Thornley G. C. and Gwyneth Roberts. (1991). *An Outline of English Literature.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

Ans to Q No 2: The Victorian age witnessed the flourish of fictional writings mainly the novel. The popularity of the novel rested mainly on the realistic mode that enabled the reading public to identify themselves with the narratives and to relate them to the stories of real life. A significant aspect of the Victorian novel was the emergence of women writers. There were also various categories of novels like the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among others. Some of the important Victorian novelists are Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Bronte Sisters, etc.

Ans to Q No 3: a. and b. Refer to 11.4.2 and 11.4.3



11.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the characteristics of Victorian poetry?

Q 2: a. Assess the importance of Victorian prose literatures.

b. What were the different types of prose works?

Q3: a. Give an explanation on the development of Victorian prose and poetry.

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UNIT 12: THE VICTORIAN AGE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Major Writers
12.4 Let us Sum up
12.5 Further Reading
12.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.7 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- list some of the great writers whose contributions enriched different types of literature in the Victorian age
- discuss some of the important works of Victorian literature
- explain the overall impact of the Victorian age on the subsequent development of English Literature

12.2 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age, famous mostly for the development of both prosaic and poetic works was marked by poets like Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, and Gerard Manley Hopkins; essayists like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Arnold, and Walter Pater; and novelists like Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, George Meredith, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, and Samuel Butler and so on. The present unit in continuation of its discussion on the Victorian age will take up some of the major writers of the period and examine their literary contributions to the literary practices of the Victorian age.

12.3 MAJOR WRITERS

In the following subsections you will get to read about the different writers and their literary contributions to the major literary practices of the age in some greater detail.

Some of the major Victorian novelists were:

Charles Dickens:

One of the most prominent novelists representing the Victorian Age is Charles Dickens (1812-1870) who had achieved remarkable success during his lifetime through his novels like *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times* among others. Even at the tender age of 26, Dickens became popular as a writer. His works embody the picture of Dickens as a social reformer. You will find it interesting to know that his novels aroused public interest in many of the evils of his day like the conditions of boarding schools in *Nicholas Nickleby,* the workhouses in *Oliver Twist,* the new manufacturing system in *Hard Times,* and the Court of Chancery in *Bleak House.* It is very likely that the reputation of Dickens will be maintained chiefly as a humourist. Dickens is famed for his caricatures which he accomplishes with an unparalleled expertise that enabled him to bring his caricatures alive and closer to real life. His *Pickwick Papers* shall remain an illustration of Victorianism in its best while the characters come alive with their identifiable attitudes and manners.

Another feature of Dickensian art was his ability to bring out the horror of living in the Victorian times illustrated best through his novels such as *A Tale of Two Cities* or *Oliver Twist* where we have a world of pain,sorrow and evil which excite not humour but loathing. A third category of characterisation prevalent in his novels is the individual visualised as the victim of society, especially a child. In novels such as *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*, you will come across child characters who fall prey to the vicious social practices. Dickens will be remembered as an artist endowed with the unique capability of portraying a vast and fascinating canvas. His novels represent a world replete with

farcical characters, grotesque and terrible creatures and sensitive pictures of children.

William Makepeace Thackeray:

Thackeray (1811-1863) was born at Calcutta. He was another novelist who gained prominence during the Victorian age.His earliest literary work consisted of light and popular contributions to periodicals like *The Yellowplush Correspondence* (1837-38), *Fraser's Magazine.* His *The Book of Snobs* (1849), which originally appeared in *Punch* as *The Snobs of England.* Similarly, *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841), and *The Fitzboodle Papers* (1842-43) appeared first in *Fraser's Magazine.* They are deeply marked with his biting humour and observation of human weaknesses. However, he is perhaps renowned more for his *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), *The New-comers* (1853-55), *The Virginians* (1857-59) are some of his other great novels.

As a writer, Thackeray refused to bow to conventions. His novelistic art catered to a representation of the human life and nature of his time. The realistic narratives of Thackeray reveal that he was more often an observer than an analyst which consequently seemed to deprive a somewhat compact structure from his novels. His vision in his novels is that of a man who sees life through the wider prism of society and culture rather than studying characters as isolated, individual cases. His most famous example of this is *Vanity Fair* which represents the contemporary Victorian society. Crude materialism in the wake of an industrial and mechanised society and culture forms the object of satire in many of Thackeray's novels written in the genre of domestic fiction.

The Bronte Sisters:

You will be interested to know that among the women writers of the Victorian age, the Bronte sisters were very prominent. Charlotte (1816-55), Emily (1818-48), and Anne (1820-49) were the daughters of an Irish clergyman, Patrick Bronte, who held a living in Yorkshire. Charlotte Bronte stated her novelistic career with the novel *The Professor* although it was published much later in 1857.*Jane Eyre* (1847) is her greatest novel. Other

important novels include *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853), where Charlotte is largely restricted to her own experiences. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) captures the reader's imagination owing to the gothic atmosphere that it represents. This novel is regarded as one of the classics of English literature. While Anne Bronte wrote two novels, *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) which are relatively not as popular as her sisters. Their novels are primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world that was gendered. But in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey*, you will also come across the romantic imagination of the authors as they deal with issues pertaining to womanhood and femininity within the varied patriarchal culture and marital experience.

George Eliot:

George Eliot (1819-1880) is the other significant women novelist of the Victorian period. Mary Ann Evans is her actual name. The world of her novels reveals the author's intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world. Her first works were published in *Blackwood's Magazine* during 1857. Like her later novels they deal with the tragedy of ordinary lives, unfolded with an intense sympathy and deep insight into the truth of character. *Adam Bede* (1859) gives an excellent picture of English country life. Her next work, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is perhaps her best novel. Other novels like *Middlemarch, Silas Marner* have been regarded as examples of the realist novel which revolves around the theme of human action in relation to the context of imminent social change.

George Meredith:

Of the later Victorian novelists George Meredith (1828-1909) is the most noteworthy. His first novel is *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). His other novels include *Evan Harrington* (1861), which contains some details of Meredith's own family life,*Emilia in England* (1864), *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *The Egoist*(1879)and so on.

Benjamin Disraeli:

It was Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) whose novels provide realistic experience of the Victorian age. *The Two Nations* –the Rich and the Poor –

was the subtitle of his novel *Sybil* (1845). He began his literary career as a novelist with *Vivian Grey* (1826-27). His next effort was *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla* (1828), a modern *Gulliver's Travels, Contarini Fleming. A Psychological Autobiography* (1832), *Henrietta Temple* (1837), *Coningsby: or the New Generation* (1844), and *Tancred: or the New Crusade* (1847). It underlines the fact that social concern and reform were sympathetic subjects for a novel many years before Disraeli himself actually implemented some of the reforms described.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) The novel became the primary literary form during the Victorian age. **(true/false)**

b) The novels like *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Hard Times* were written by Thackery. **(true/false)**

c) Mary Ann Evans is the actual name of George Eliot. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The Victorian age roughly started in 1830, or alternatively 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill), or 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria); and extends up to the death of ……..in 1901.

b) As a religious portent 'The Oxford Movement' marked the widespread discontent with the existing beliefs of the …….. of England.

c) Charles Darwin's ……. had a revolutionary impact on the contemporary world with its scientific thought.

d) A *Tale of Two Cities* is written by……...

Some of the great Victorian poets were:

Alfred Tennyson:

Victorian poetry is probably best represented in the works of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) whose *In Memoriam*(1850) stands as the

mouthpiece of Victorian dilemma. It gave voice to the feeling of hope and despair which created a sense of crisis for the entire society. He was appointed Poet Laureate (1850) in succession to Wordsworth. Some of his important collections of poems from his early career are: *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827), *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), *Poems* (1833) that contains notable poems such as *The Lady of Shalott, Enone, The Lotos-Eaters,* and *The Palace of Art and so on.* The later stages of his career are marked chiefly by much longer poems like *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850) that caused a great stir when it first appeared. It is a very long series of meditations upon the death of Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's college friend, who died at Vienna in 1833. Similarly, his *Maud and Other Poems* (1855) was received with amazement by the public. *Enoch Arden* (1864), based on a supposedly drowned sea man, but who returns is another important poem. Subsequently, in 1859, 1869, and 1889, Tennyson issued a series of *Idylls of the King* which was an attempt to rewrite a poem on a great theme that Milton abandoned— that of King Arthur and the Round Table.

While discussing the characteristics of Tennyson's poetry, you will find that he took the legendary narratives as his principal themes. His method of writing poetry was to first evolve the lines in his mind, commit them to paper, and then to revise them till they were perfect. Consequently, you can see a high level of poetical artistry in Tennyson. The use of the pictorial details is another important feature of Tennyson's poetry. Nearly all of Tennyson's poems abound in ornate description of the natural and other scenes. Tennyson's *lyrical quality* was somewhat uneven. All such qualities made him a popular poet during his time. But his reputation suffered considerably in the subsequent periods.

Robert Browning:

Another most important poet of the Victorian age is Robert Browning (1812-1889). He was educated semi-privately, and from an early age he was free to follow his inclination toward studying unusual subjects. As a child he was precocious, and began to write poetry at the age of twelve. Since his childhood, he read widely in his father's library and started writing

verse from an early age taking the romantic poet Shelley as his literary hero. His first important work is *Pauline*(1833), which clearly shows the influence of Shelley. Browning also wrote some plays the important among which are *Strafford* (1837), S*ordello* (1840), *Pippa Passes* (1841), *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *The Return of the Druses* (1843), *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843), *Colombe's Birthday* and so on. But he lacked the fundamental qualities of the dramatist. Subsequently, he wrote *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) that clearly marks his entry into dramatic monologue. Browning produced some of his best poems in *Men and Women* (1855) which consists entirely of dramatic monologues. This volume contains poems like *Fra Lippo Lippi, An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Andrea del Sarto, Cleon* and so on. The year 1864 saw the publication of his last really great volume, *Dramatis Persona,* again acollection of dramatic monologues which contains works like *Caliban Upon Setebos, A Death in the Desert, Rabbi Ben Ezra,* and *Abt Vogler.*

You will find that Browning's themes were divided into three groups(philosophical or religious, love, and lighter themes). His philosophical poems, on which his reputation rested in his own day, all bear on his central beliefs that life must ever be astriving for something beyond our reach. His poems reflect the abundant vitality of his character. He is master of a surprising variety of metrical forms and excels in the manipulation of rhythmic effects. His fame now rests on the volumes of poetry, published between 1842 and 1864, which contain his love lyrics and dramatic monologues.

Matthew Arnold:

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was a writer of many activities, but it is chiefly as a poet and critic that he now holds his place in literature. *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* was published in 1849. Then followed *Poems*(1853), with its famous critical preface, and *New Poems* (1867). For the subject matter, Arnold went back to classical themes, to which he gives a meditative and even melancholy cast common in modern compositions. His meditative poems like *Dover Beach* and *A Summer Night,*

resembles that of Thomas Gray in its subdued melancholy resignation. In his poetry, Arnold presents himself as the apostle of sanity and culture. He advocates a broad, cosmopolitan view of European literature as a basis for comparative judgements, and attacks 'provincialism' and lack of real knowledge. His poetic style is lucid, easy and rhythmical.

In Matthew Arnold, another poet representing the Victorian ethos one shall notice a blend of classical and modern tendencies. Arnold's famous poem *Dover Beach* may be understood as his response to an age torn between numerous contradictions and dilemmas and the poet stands disillusioned at the radical upheavals in all spheres of human life. More often than not, Arnold's poetry is influenced by an overwhelming moral vision under which the poetic sensibility seems to be suppressed.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861) married to the poet Robert Browning, began to write poems at the age of eight. Her first published work was *An Essay on Mind; with Other Poems* (1826). She was a poet of acute sensibilities. Many of her important poems are available in *The Seraphim and Other Poems* (1838), *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1847), *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), *Aurora Leigh* (1857), and *Last Poems* (1862).

Gerald Manly Hopkins:

Hopkins (1844-1889) is a unique figure in the history of English poetry. His work was not generally available to the reading public until 1918. Although he lived and wrote through the Victorian age, but his use of poetic techniques like "sprung-rhythm, counterpoint rhythm, alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme etc. was much ahead of his time. Subsequently, he became the source of inspiration for modern poets and critics. A sensuous love of nature, based on a minute observation, is found in most of Hopkins's poetry, especially before about 1878. His vocabulary is drawn from many sources, archaic, colloquial, and dialect words all being used. "The Wreck of the Deutschland", "The Loss of the Eurydice", "God's Grandeur", "The Windhover", "Pied Beauty" are some of his important poems.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Choose the correct answer:

a) The themes of Browning's poems were divided into three types, namely :

i. Social, religious and satire

ii. Philosophical, love and lighter themes

iii. Religious, critical and heavy themes

Some of the great Victorian prose writers were:

Thomas Babington Macaulay:

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1830-1859) had been posted as legal adviser in India for four years under the British government. Before he left for India, Macaulay had written several essays for *The Edinburgh Review.* He also contributed five biographical pieces to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica.* He is however famous mainly as an essayist, and his essays are of two kinds— literary and historical. The success of his *History of England*(1849) lies in its narrative and the manner in which he imbues a sense of romance to the factual events of history. His essays were written chiefly during a time when England was witnessing various events of social, political and cultural significance such as the Reform Bill of 1832, and the industrial and commercial expansion of English lives and society which brought the middle class into power.

Thomas Carlyle:

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) is the other important prose writer of the Victorian age. In most of his essays, Carlyle reflects his disappointment and intense moral indignation against anything that he found was weak and superficial. Carlyle is best known for *Sartor Resartus* and *Hero and Hero Worship*. Through *Sartor Resartus,*he professed his indignation at the pretentiousness of the society and critiqued contemporary culture and social customs which very often act as the veil to the shortcomings of actual life. Carlyle then turned to historical writing, which he handled in his own unconventional fashion. His major historical works are *The French Revolution* (1837), *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845). His

works dealing with contemporary events are numerous, and include *Chartism* (1840), *Past and Present* (1843), and *Latter-day Pamphlets* (1850).

Matthew Arnold:

You are already told in one of the previous sections that besides being a poet Arnold (1822-1888) was also recognised as a prose writer of his time and a critic of literature, culture and society. His work as a literary critic began with the 1853 "Preface to the Poems". In 1861, his lectures *On Translating Homer* were published. When you opt for higher studies in English literature, you will find that Arnold is famous for introducing a methodology of literary criticism. His *Essays in Criticism* (1865,1888), remains a significant influence on critics even today.

John Ruskin:

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was an important social thinker of the Victorian era.He wrote on subjects ranging from geology to architecture, myth to ornithology, literature to education, and botany to political economy. He penned essays and treatises, poetry and lectures, travel guides and manuals. He emphasised the connections between nature, art and society. Ruskin's works are of immense volume and complexity. His *Modern Painters* (1843-1860l is an important work. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851 -53), are considered to be his other important works.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4 a). He wrote on subjects ranging from geology to architecture, myth to ornithology, literature to education, and botany to political economy. Which prose writer is he?

i. John Ruskin
ii. Thomas Carlyle
iii. Mathew Arnold



12.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you will be well acquainted with the great writers of this age along with their literary contributions to Victorian literature. Also, the unit will give you a broad idea on the important literary works that defined the literary practices of the age and further enable you to gain a broad idea on the context of the Victorian age that shaped its literary characteristics, forms and practices.



12.5 FURTHER READING

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

2) Peck, John and Martin Coyle. (1984). *Literary Terms and Criticism.* New York: Palgrave.

3) Ousby, Ian. (ed). (1988). *Companion to Literature in English*. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

4) Thornley G. C. and Gwyneth Roberts. (1991). *An Outline of English Literature.* Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

12.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

a. True

b. False

c. True

Ans to Q No 2:

a. Victoria

b. Church

c. *On the Origin of Species*

d. Charles Dickens

Ans to Q No 3: a. Philosophical, love and lighter themes

Ans to Q No 4:. John Ruskin



12.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Who are the important novelists of the Victorian Age. Discuss with reference to their works.

Q 2: Write a short note on the following major writers of the Victorian age

a. The Bronte Sisters

b. Lord Alfred Tennyson

c. Robert Browning

d. Thomas Carlyle

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UNIT 13: IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Defining Imperialism and Colonialism
13.4 Imperialism and Colonialism in English Literature
13.5 Impact on Indian English Literature
13.6 Let us Sum up
13.7 Further Reading
13.8 Check Your Progress
13.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.10 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the historical roots and basic tenets of imperialism and colonialism
- frame the nature of imperialism and colonialism
- explain the accumulation of imperialism and colonialism in conditioning English literature
- trace their impact on Indian English literature
- further explore various aspects of imperialism and colonialism

13.2 INTRODUCTION

Imperialism and Colonialism constitute a major space in European history. Although their origin is conveniently traced to various European nations, they attained wide-spread popularity across the globe because of overseas application. Indeed the prime agenda operating behind the

developments had been the exploration of the 'unexplored'. The spirit of exploration apart, there were scores of potent factors marshalling the imperial and colonial principles of the European brigades. Of those factors, mention may be made of capitalist thrust upon profit-making, accommodation of over-population, scientific and technological interest, and quenching religious impulse. However, mercenary motif was of paramount importance for the imperial and colonial racket. It is worth remembering that most often imperialism and colonialism are used interchangeably in their discussion. But there are certain differences that have given distinctive identity to the terms. What is common to them is the idea of materialising stronghold on a given territory by a comparatively more powerful and technologically advanced agency, belonging to another territory. The mechanism involved in the process advanced in phased manner. Initially, mercantilism turned out a starting point, which was replaced consequently with free trade and bigger concerns of political and cultural spectra of society.

For simple understanding, we may approach imperialism and colonialism from the geographical and historical points of view. In geographical parlance, the idea of passing across time zones of the globe carries much logic. If we take a look at the European powers, their spread across the time zones specific to various geographical locations seems more redundant. Historically, the reign of imperialism and colonialism extends back five hundred years or so, most eminently to the days of European mercantilism, Christopher Columbus' mission in America, and the firm hold on Asia and the coast of Africa. From this, we may conceive the wide-ranging stay in most parts of the world. It is true that practice of colonialism and imperialism is primarily based on mercantile motif. But political concerns and sense of competitiveness among the power brigades also conditioned the expansionist ideology. For instance, the French materialised colonial machinery with a view to undoing the bitter memory that resulted in their defeat at the hands of Prussia. The late comers, Germany and Italy continued their mission that had much to do with keeping peace with older nations including Britain and France. However, the British Empire was the largest of all in history since the strategy the British adopted was far in advance in

comparison to the rest. Although colonial powers like the Portuguese, the Spanish, the French or the Dutch tried to consolidate their base, the British colonial policy surpassed them and reiterated supremacy in this direction. Hence, the British set up colonies in various places ranging from Canada to Australia and New Zealand, from Egypt to South Africa. Of course, India was regarded as the "jewel of the empire."

The overseas exploration had been a successful strategy made use of by the colonial powers. As it warranted sound leadership and shrewd administration, the colonisers did possess all this; there is no doubt about it. But the existing socio-political condition also proved handy in paving the way for foreign rulers. Internal rivalry, especially among various ethnic groups, or kings and emperors, turned out as weak point, and this was what the colonial machinery took advantage of. Sometimes they acted as mediators, while at times they stood in favour of a given side at the cost of the other. Initially, the image created by them was wholly acceptable for the natives or for the concerned. As time passed on, the natives realised the hidden, but powerful objective of the intruders. In fact, the realisation came too late, and by then they assumed such a stature that the natives found it hard to root out the practice. It does not mean that the colonial powers were ever-lasting. They too experienced resistance, usually resulting in deportation. But the process was not so easy since the natives had to face stiff challenge from the rulers.

With imperialism and colonialism certain new things, both good and bad, became apparent, but customarily bad connotation is ascribed. Indeed the accusation is not without valid ground. Large scale economic exploitation, subjugation to the foreigners' rule, crisis in indigenous culture, racial discrimination, among a host of others, vitiated the image of colonial rule. As found, the natives had to live in constant fear because mass violation of human rights was the reign of the day. However, there were positive sides as well. For instance, infrastructure development, improved sector of health and hygiene, access to education at least for the select few, advancement in science and technology were initially possible under the pall of colonialism.

With their customary habit of cultural superiority, the colonisers saw the ruled or native inhabitants as the “Other” falling short of standardised way of living. The natives did not deserve subject position, which was completely reserved for their masters. Given such a proposition, the colonisers maintained that they were on a civilising mission and their absence from the life of the natives might prove detrimental. Spread of Western learning, in addition to forming efficient work force, was also designed along the sense of cultural superiority the colonisers would like to sustain. Indeed the colonial rule was strictly marked by division in society, and interestingly this had been a preferred strategy to mobilise colonial machinery.

13.3 DEFINING IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

As both imperialism and colonialism are unfailingly connected to political and economic domination, usually they are used interchangeably. Of course, the passage of time postulates cultural conditioning that imperialism and colonialism get engaged in, and the discourses associated with them are very much interesting. Simply speaking, imperialism relates to the authority a given territory or nation assumes over another with a view to fulfilling some hidden agenda. Colonialism, on the other hand, is more close to the consolidation or settlement of imperial power. Territorial expansion, exploitation of resources, and the inward motif of governing indigenous people are some of the most preferred areas the racket of colonialism always considers. Often force is also used to carry out the basic facets of colonialism. There are different types of colonialism such as settler colonialism, surrogate colonialism, exploitation colonialism, and internal colonialism.

What is striking about imperialism is its idealistic formation, which acts as a driving force in the form of colonialism. In simple terms, colonialism is the practical edition of imperialism. Given the practicability of colonialism, resource-grabbing is of paramount importance- something that is not identical with the pre-eminently territorial expansionist agenda of

imperialism. Besides, imperialism has a longer history, and its beginning may be traced to the ancient Romans. In comparison to this, colonialism is a late development that had its start in the 15th century. Though a relatively late development, colonialism enjoyed a far greater hold, and most of the countries in the world experienced, in one form or the other. As such, India, Australia, Algeria, New Zealand, African countries, North America, among a host of others, came under colonialism. However, American domination over the Philippines and Puerto Rico may be understood in terms of imperialism. Another significant development in colonialism is the pursuit of trade and commerce with the objective of earning the maximum benefit. Here, the profit is intended for collective upgradation or the royal affluence. Imperialism is also directed with the spirit of profit-making, but with a difference. Indeed individual pursuits or the well being of individuals constitute a major part in the agenda of colonialism.

13.4 IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Given the far-reaching impact of imperialism and colonialism, every aspect of socio-cultural and political life was largely affected. Taking the developments as core issues, much of writing has come into limelight, and it constitutes a powerful body in world literature. Although colonial or imperial ethos takes the upper hand in literary output under the tag, offering a clear cut idea is not so an easy task. Causes were many and varied. Still the phenomena of heterogeneity and of being less canonised seem more redundant in this regard. Whenever the issues of imperialism and colonialism arise, a general tendency of assuring European superiority may be easily discerned. The expansionist mission conjoined with “civilising the uncivilised” or the “uncultured” turns out a potent factor in colonial literature. Indeed the emerging concept of the “Self” that most of the colonial guns used to inherit was conditioned on the presumed superiority of their culture. The moment we talk about imperialism and colonialism in English literature, there is large body of writing accommodating such developments. Of course

the writings of Herodotus, Marco Polo, Hakluyt or travel narratives of Mungo Park or Richard Burton came of great help to this direction. Travel writings in fictional mode such as Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* and *Don Juan* also encouraged writing of this category.

As colonialism attained consolidated position in the 19th century, there came a general tendency to deal with various facets connected to this. Though domestic fiction was of immense popularity, colonial ideology easily lured the writers. It is true that Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and a few others drew largely upon domestic life and manners, but the undercurrent of colonialism was hardly left out. In Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram is represented as someone engaging in sugar plantation and his estate is run with the income generated in the business. Similarly, Mr. Micawber in Dickens' *David Copperfield* scales much success in a colony like Australia. In Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* too, India is preferred by St. John Rivers as a place of wish-fulfillments. His missionary aspirations are intended to get materialised only in India. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and a few of his short stories are faithful records of imperialism and its various sides.

In *Kim*, Kipling speaks of imperialism as a Great Game that involves different quarters of people. William Arnold's *Oakfield* is another influential text recounting the stay of white man in India colonised by the British. In course of time, the essentialist concept of imperialism and colonialism dried out, and the concept became more problematic. This development could be envisaged as the outcome of crisis felt in the colonial rule, especially in the first half of the 20th century. In the wake of decolonisation, the advantageous position usually held by colonial ideology was no more common a sight. At this critical juncture, Joseph Conrad arrived at the scene and unfolded the problematic picture of colonial machinery. His widely read texts such as *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* deserve mention in this connection. Hence his protagonists, Jim and Kurtz are seen failing in their respective mission. To this, R.L. Stevenson's later tales or Kipling's *The Light that Failed* may be assigned as convincing documents. Like Conrad, another influential novelist, E.M. Forster also talks about the mismatch between the colonisers and colonised. Any attempt at their intimacy is certain

to bring out disaster. In his *A Passage to India*, Forster talks about this aspect in a befitting manner.

In opposition to the developments in the decolonisation period, there is a large body of writing that unfolds trade and commerce as a preferred agenda for the colonisers. Of course, the peak time of colonialism facilitated such a development to a great extent. Dickens' *Dombey and Son,* Thackeray's *Vanity Fair,* Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, to mention a few, may be cited in this context. Products like the Indian shawl, bracelets, hot pickles, limes and ginger found their easy access in the overseas market.

13.5 IMPACT ON INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

It is interesting to know that the Indian writing in English came into effect against the backdrop of British colonial rule. Hence it is very much natural to deal with issues related to colonial machinery and the way Indian life and manners were impacted by them. However, the most potent aspect to Indian writing in English at the nascent stage was whether a foreign language like English could be a sound medium of expression for the natives. Much speculation followed. With the Charter Act of 1813, Macaulay's historic Minute and the pro-English mindset of emerging educated youths including Raja Rammohan Roy, English was soon indigenised and people started using the language as a preferred one in their pursuit of writing. R. K. Narayan's *English in India*, as most of the texts, also talks high of the importance of English in India. Though this new set of writing came into prominence in the 19th century, cutting out the image of India as a fabulously wealthy place for the merchant adventurers was a recurring theme in the early novels, published in England in the 1780s.

The 19th century had been a fertile ground for Indian English literature. In poetry, fiction, and non-fictional prose, Indian English literature has made a mark on its own. Arrival of poets like Louis Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, among others, gave a new turn. In early poetry, we notice a questioning motif, which was not directed towards the colonial brigade, but the orthodox Hindu customs and

conventions. Derozio's skeptical outlook and renunciation of Christianity exerted far-reaching impact upon the young minds that they unfolded in their writing too. The year 1864 was a crucial one because of the grand entry the Indian English novel made with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife.* The novel heralded a new tone and temperament to the distinctive genre. One of the major concerns in this mode of writing was the strict sense of nationalism, which carried its flag in connection with colonialism. Indeed, the following decades of Sepoy Mutiny were very much focused on unfolding the strength and weakness of colonial rule. In addition to fictional narratives, a few tracts of imaginary history by Kylas Chunder Dutt and Soshee Chunder Dutt in early part of the 19th century also project confrontation with the British. Though some quarters of writing maintained reactionary attitude towards the British, there were others voicing out pro-British mindset. Writers like A. Madhavaiah find it a matter of pride to be a part of the British Raj. His *Thillai Govindan* may be cited in this connection. The subsequent development in writing came into a reality when the anti-colonial movement was at its peak point. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Two Leaves in a Bud*, and R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, among a host of other texts, deal with colonial machinery in one form or the other. Apart from establishing firm rapport with the political scenario, East-West cultural exchanges also constitute a major space in writing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. How would you understand imperialism and colonialism from historical and geographical points of view?

Q2. What are the fundamental differences between imperialism and colonialism?

Q3. Do you find literary works in the 19th century accommodating much of colonial machinery?

Q4. How did Indian writing in English come into effect under the aegis of imperialism and colonialism?



13.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt that imperialism and colonialism are inseparable parts of European history. Most of the nations hailing from Europe preferred settlement on foreign soil. Though trade and commerce was of primary agenda in consolidation of colonialism, other areas such as accommodation of overpopulation, technological interest and religious impulse played their role. Imperialism and colonialism may be understood from geographical and historical points of view. Despite the usual negative connotations, the other side of colonialism is closely connected to positive note. Development of infrastructure, health and hygiene, access to education, among others, came into effect under the banner of colonialism.

Imperialism is more related to idealistic formation, while colonialism is the practical edition of imperialism. Enunciation of European superiority conjoined with expansionist agenda constitutes a major space in the writings coming under this category. Of course, the colonial machinery does not remain the same since paradigm shifts have appeared in course of time. Subsequent times saw the troubled phase of the colonial rule. Colonialism made strong entry into Indian English literature. Indeed the alliance between colonialism and nationalism is of primary interest for the writers. If a few sets of writing appeared reactionary, there were certain others standing in favour of the colonial rule.



13.7 FURTHER READING

1) Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Empire and Poetic Voice-Cognitive and Cultural Studies of Literary Tradition and Colonialism.* New York: State University of New York, 2004.

2) Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism.* Routledge, 1998.

3) Pollock, Sheldon (Ed). *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

4) Sadana, Rashmi. “Writing in English”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Indian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: In European history, imperialism and colonialism constitute a major space. Their origin may be conveniently traced to a host of European nations. The capitalist thrust upon profit-making conjoined with accommodation of population, facilitation of science and technology, and religious impulse act as potent factors consolidating the developments. In geographical parlance, the developments engage passing across time zones, while historical bearing extends back five hundred years or so. The expansionist agenda lies at the bottom, but all colonial guns did not have similar mode of perpetuating the same. The British surpassed all the rivals in this regard. Both good and evil practices may be discerned in colonial machinery.

Ans to Q 2: Though used interchangeably, imperialism and colonialism do have certain differences. Simply speaking, imperialism relates to the authority a nation assumes over the other, while colonialism is the practical rendition of imperialism. If colonialism engages resource-grabbing as of prime objective, imperialism is much of the principle of territorial expansion.

Ans to Q3: Colonial texts establish the relative superiority of European culture, and the mission of “civilizing the uncivilized” runs through them. The colonies were seen as the good sources of generating profit. Travel writings in real life or of fictional mode came out handy in giving new impetus to colonial writing. With the consolidation of the empire in the 19th century, much of colonial writing in English followed. Alongside the popularity of domestic fiction, colonial ethos also came up in writing. The process of decolonisation brought out new phase of colonialism, and its troubled phase made its presence in most of the writings.

Ans to Q4: Indian writing in English established its firm holds against the backdrop of colonialism. Initially much speculation came out regarding the use of a foreign language like English in dealing with issues pertaining to Indian ethos. As anti-colonial agitation was very high, the writers responded to it in a befitting manner. However, there were others speaking favorably of the Raj. In addition to political issues, cross cultural exchanges also impacted the large body of the Indian writing in English.



13.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. What is your observation on the historical roots and cultural conditioning of imperialism and colonialism? Give a detailed answer.

Q2. How did mercantilism motivate colonial machinery to establish its hold on foreign soil?

Q3. What were the prime factors operating in the formation of imperial and colonial racket in the world?

Q4. Do you find imperialism and colonialism identical? What are the defining traits that have given them distinctive meaning and position?

Q5. How did imperialism and colonialism exert influence on English literature? Discuss with special references to their practitioners.

Q6. How do literary works respond to the shifting paradigms of colonialism and imperialism?

Q7. What is your approach to imperialism and colonialism in connection with their accomplishment in Indian English literature?

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UNIT 14: THE MODERN AGE I

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Literary Characteristics of the Age

14.4 Major Literary Forms

- 14.4.1 Poetry
- 14.4.2 Non Fiction Prose
- 14.4.3 Drama
- 14.4.4 Fiction
- 14.4.5 Literary Criticism

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Further Reading

14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.9 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you shall be able to:

- explain the context of the modern period and its influence on English Literature
- assess the main literary features of the modern age
- learn about the practiced literary forms and literary criticism of the age
- gain an idea on the important writers of the age and their contributions

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The modern period in English literature, as we shall see now may be dated back to the nineteenth century. With the Victorian period coming to a close there emerged a whole new range of engagements, not only in the field of art but also literature and other associated spheres. When we

make an attempt to understand the idea of modernism as revealed in these areas, we shall be able to infer that the **period stood for a coming away from the previous modes of aesthetic engagements to dwell upon novel and experimental methods in creativity which resulted in an entire new world of creative forms including art and literature.** The changed canvas that modern art and literature reflects may perhaps be due to the radical changes that were brought about in the various walks of life – be it science, technology, culture, religion and politics as well. The modern period saw a sustained progress of science and technology which on the one hand brought about new ways of life and living and on the other hand, resulted in a breaking down of hitherto, treasured values and ethics of the society. The tempo of life attained a pace that accommodated more material values unlike the earlier complacent ways of life. Human life now witnessed several luxuries that were the gifts of science and technology, thereby making man more and more material and mechanical. Such a material and comfortable life also ensued an awareness of 'class' structures, leading to greater divisions among the masses in the society.

14.3 LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE

Modern literature thus became the veritable storehouse of cross cultural ideas with which the writers engaged in a **close reading of the self and its situational context**. The self as an individual and its narrative delineation therefore becomes one of the most significant preoccupations for writers of this period. In doing so, the writers of the period also deliberated upon **symbolism**, **imagism** and **vorticism** which were some of the methods that provided the writers and artists alike, with the much needed novel conventions through which they were able to engage in an effective portrayal of the dilemma of the age. Einstein, Nietszche, Russell and Husserl were among others who provided the philosophical succour to the modern experimentalists in the literary and other creative fields.

A cursory glance at the literature produced during this period reflects the extensive **use of juxtaposition**, **irony**, **comparisons** and **satire.**

Modernist writers also adopt **impressionistic mode** and other such contemporary experimental devices in order to call attention to the subjectivity of reality, while exploring issues pertaining to **narratology** such as omniscient narration and fixed narrative points of view, which they felt provided a superficial idea of objectivity. As a part of their experimentation with the narrative, these writers employed discontinuous narratives and fragmented plot structures which allowed them a broader scope to study and make an evaluation of what constituted the modern condition.

It is this **experimental attitude** and **cynical perspective** towards life that modernist writing appears difficult for a reader who approaches it for the first time. The reader seems to be frustrated for the apparent display of disjointed style and the want of succinct presentation of plot, character and theme of a particular narrative. This happens because the endeavour of the modernist writer is not to receive the approval of a predetermined audience but rather to produce a creative atmosphere of forceful opposition and alternative opinion, while doing away with the established norms of the society and culture.

Thus, the general concerns of modernist literature appears to be the breaking down of given social norm, refutation of customary social ideas, traditional thoughts and expectations, denunciation of religion and resentment against the negative feelings created in general, by the world wars. Besides, the writings of the modernists show an inclination towards rejection of history, socio-cultural systems and calls attention to the feeling of isolation and alienation experienced by the self located in modern urban and industrial societies

14.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

Let us now make a brief survey of the predominant forms of literature and the writers who practiced modernist writing.

14.4.1 Poetry

To begin with, we may have a look at poetry that was produced during this period. Although, modernist poetry seems to refer to poetry produced during 1890 and 1950 written in conformity to the accepted tradition of modernism, it may be safe to assert that the dates would vary in relation to the country in reference, the school in question and the critical assessment belonging to a particular perspective. However, it has been a convention to regard the beginning of modernist poetry with the **beginning of the French Symbolist movement** and is understood to come to close with the Second World War. The question of having precise dates for the beginning and end of modernist period again is an arbitrary matter.

We have poets such as **W. B. Yeats** and **R.M. Rilke** who adopted a post-romantic stance while experimenting with symbolism and modernised poetic idiom owing to the contemporary poetic and literary developments initiated during their times. Other poets of this school such as **T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound** or **E.E. Cummings** for that matter were seen creating a substantial body of work only after the Second World War. A fundamental concern of these modernist poets appears to the question of impersonality and objectivity in art. Traditionally speaking, modernism as a movement seems to have evolved from lyrical expression that focused on culture, personal imagination, emotion and memory of the poet artist. However, the demands of the modernist practice in poetic expressions necessitated a moving away from the merely personal towards an intellectual utterance that enclosed universal bearing. Thus, in the very personal poetic expressions such as T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* we may find a transformation of the personal into a poetic texture in which is embedded universal human significance. After the close of the Second World War, there were sustained efforts by poets to revoke traits of impersonality and objectivity that were induced by their predecessors. With the coming of **confessional poetry** of the likes of **Robert Lowell** and **Sylvia Plath** modernism may be said to have come to an end.

Let us now, come to some of the significant poetic voices of modernist poetry. To begin with we may make a foray into what was known as war poetry that was produced during this period. Poets such as **Rupert Brooke**, **Wilfred Owen** and **Siegfried Sassoon** made significant contributions to this genre with their responses to the context of war around them. Rupert Brooke for instance, was known for his romantic association with war, developed out of a high sense of patriotism. In the series of sonnets composed by Brooke, the learners shall find him as a spokesperson for the dedication of the English souls to the cause of the nation. *1914 & Other Poems* is Brooke's most famous collection of poems which was published in May, 1915.

Among **the war poets**, Wilfred Owen appeared to be the most gifted of all with his rather realistic vision and understanding of war, which went beyond the high romanticism of the earlier poets belonging to this school. Owen had had enough experience of the war which enabled him the see beyond the glamour and romanticism associated with patriotism and to realise with genuine honesty the repercussions of the war. In poems such as "Insensibility", "Anthem for Doomed Youth", "Strange Meeting", Owen achieved success while experimenting with the substitution of consonance for rhyme with considerable originality.

The first decade after the First World War saw the emergence of a group of poets known as the **Georgian poets** who appeared to be **anti-urban and anti-mechanical in their attitude with their fascination for the English countryside and their engagement with simpler and unsophisticated matters of life**. Edward Thomas, one of the earliest Georgian poets made sensitive observations of nature and rural life which were published in *Cloud Castle* and *The Last Sheaf* in 1928. **W. H Davies**, another poet of this school was famed for simplicity in his lyrics which was amply reflected in his work titled *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* published in 1908. **Harold Monro** one of the most active of Georgian poets dedicated intensely his services to the activities of publishing and readings and more than any other of his contemporaries he felt that poetry needed renovation in so far as poetic technique was concerned. His experimental

verses include '*Real Property*' (1922) and '*The Earth for Sale*' (1928) through which Monro inculcated a realistic aspect in poetic diction.

In his nurturing of a childlike disposition, innocent wonder and his struggle against the noticeable changes of the modern-day world, **Walter d- la Mare** resembled the Georgians. With his gift for the supernatural, de la Mare wove the most eerie locale for his lyrics at which he was unparalleled. The childlike world that he wove in his lyrics was a world that had its own share of mystery accompanied by its fears and pain that reflected the pains of a soul not being able to come to terms with the radical changes of the times. A great master of lyrics, de la Mare shall remain unequalled for his extraordinary sense of rhythm and sensitivity.

The most striking feature of modern poetry perhaps is its experimental tendency and one of such experimental engagements led to the movement known as **Imagism**, patronised by three Americans namely, **Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, H.D. (Hilda Dolittle)** and an Englishman **Richard Aldington**. In so far as the definition of poetry was concerned, the Imagists held that **poetry was "the presentation of a visual situation of the fewest possible concrete words, lightened of the burdens of conventional adjectival padding, and unhampered by general ideas or philosophical or moral speculations."** (Moody and Lovett, 474)

Although, the use of such a technique may be considered to have brought about limited poetic effect, it would be worthwhile to note that through their innovative use of language the Imagists were able to bring about radical changes in the use of diction while ridding poetry of extravagant artificialities. In the poems of Richard Aldington for instance one may be able to trace the positive and negative effects of the Imagist approach. Poems included in volumes such as *Images Old and New* (1915) and *Images of War and Images of Desire* (1919) display rich craftsmanship, delicate aesthetic values though presents limited scope and appeal brought about by the use of formulaic versification. Aldington's fiction however, attained greater fame and attention. *Death of a Hero* (1929), *The Colonel's Daughter* (1931) and *Rejected Guest* (1939) are some of his novels which express his disenchantment with the bourgeois social order. Perhaps, one of the

greatest practitioners of Imagism may be found in Ezra Pound whose poems display his handling of this modern technique, a mode of poetic expression designed to achieve aesthetic excellence in a manner which was to show the way to many later poets. Pound's single minded commitment to the development of the imagist technique resulted in poems like "The Return" which makes use of free verse combined with metrical exactitude that lies at the heart of his poetic art.

In the verses of poets such as **Gerard Manley Hopki**ns and **Thomas Stearns Eliot** one may find several other radical innovations and experiments that were a move away from those of the imagists. G. M. Hopkins was regarded as one of the modern poets of primary significance whose verses displayed the poet's preoccupations with experimentation and technical innovations brought about in poetry. Bringing about a change in the traditional metric structure Hopkins introduced to poetry what he called the **sprung rhythm**, a rhythmic structure that may be said to anticipate free verse. While experimenting with diction and metre, Hopkins demonstrated an inflexible restraint of the sonnet in his poems. He seemed to have experienced a curious joy in developing strange but persuasive patterns while innovative poetic techniques, coining expressions and portmanteau words. His poems are intensely emotional expressions that bring out the poet's personal experience as one might witness for instance, in "Pied Beauty" (1877), a poem that exhibits the poet's sheer ecstasy and delight in the world of nature that lies around him and through which he visualises the presence of divinity. With unflinching honesty and purity of expression, Hopkins brought about in the world of poetry, a freshness that enabled him to attain the position of one of the most original poets of his time.

The experimental quality that marked the poetry of Hopkins and Eliot were visible in the works of several other poets who succeeded them. Younger poets such as **Cecil Day Lewis**, **W.H. Auden** and **Stephen Spender, known as the Thirties' Poets**, were among those who experimented with the technical aspects while reflected on the socio-economic problems of a society inflicted by the post war depression. Their

poems explored the loss of human values in an era which gave boost to materialism while believing that only a revolution could bring about the changes that would establish a new social order. Lewis was perhaps, one of those poets of his generation who gave fullest expression to the revolutionary doctrines shared by many of his contemporaries. In his "The Magnetic Mountain" (1935) he made a significant appeal for the establishment of a new order that would do away with the old one through the imagery of a train journey towards the magnetic mountain, the motif of the new society he anticipates. However, in his later poems the poet directed his attention towards subject matter and style of poetry as revealed in "O Dreams, O Destinations" contained in the volume *Word Above All* (1943); poems of this period were more personal and intimate unlike his earlier compositions which had marked socio-political orientations.

W. H. Auden, a poet of the younger generation and a contemporary of Lewis was experimental and radical in his poetic expressions. In his memorial verses to Yeats and Freud, Auden seems to be questioning some of the constructs modernity had ushered in while pursuing more tolerant values that at times had political undertones. He was one of the most well read and informed poets of his generation. "New Year Letter" (1941), one of his most autobiographical poems looks back into the significant influences of his past that had shaped his sensibility. Stephen Spender made an early reputation as one the most radical voices through his predominantly romantic and introspective temperament that made his poems quite personal. He was influenced largely by European thought and culture and he consistently spoke for the significance of social revolution in relation to the individual as well his ideology.

14.4.2 Non-Fiction Prose

The modern period was also witness to the growth and development in the genre of non-fiction prose writings namely **biography** and **criticism**. The publication of **Lytton Strachey**'s *Eminent Victorians* in 1918 may be seen as an event that marks the closure of the Victorian period while

ushering in the modern era. Apparently appreciated, this work turned out to be ironical in its tone and for its attempt to do away with the halo and aura that had been associated with the heroes and heroines of the period. While intending to create an honest portrait he adopted a critical and a skeptical spirit in his biographical work.

Strachey's attempt may be seen as a reaction against and a response to the monotonous inclusiveness of lives and letters characteristic of nineteenth century biography, a work of considerable eminence through which he was able to give voice to his anti-Victorian ideals in a brilliant and impressive manner. In *Queen Victoria* (1921) Strachey's tone of mockery transforms into a kindly and compassionate voice in his treatment of the Queen which makes the piece more enduring and satisfying than his earlier work. *Elizabeth and Essex* published in 1928 is perhaps more a historical romance than a biography in which Strachey marks a departure from his earlier tone of skepticism and indifference. Strachey was able to set role models for several successors who came after him but very few were able to achieve the height of success and accomplishment that he had achieved through a carefully cultivated style and a gift for selection of material. Perhaps, the most prolific of Strachey's successors was **Sir Harold Nicolson** and **Philip Guedella**.

In his early phase, Nicolson was concerned with the reassessment of some of the eminent Victorian personalities such as Tennyson and Swinburne. To this phase belongs his work titled *Byron, the Last Journey* published in 1924, an anti-romantic study, subtle in its tone, that deals with the final year of the most flamboyant of the English romantics. In his later phase Nicolson engaged in biographical studies of famous personalities some of whom he had known personally. Out of such associations were created *Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart*. (1930) based on his father, *Curzon, the Last Phase* (1934) based on the life of his patron and Lord Dufferin in *Helen's Tower* (1937), works through which Nicolson made substantial contributions to the art of biography.

Philip Guedella too found his subject of biographical study in the nineteenth century topics such as *The Second Empire* (1922), *Palmerston*

(1926) and *The Duke* (1931). Guedella's work is characterised by a wealth of intelligence and witticism, an almost ornate enchantment in historical décor, a talent for spectacle and an almost too conscious set-up of historical scene.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) One of the most significant preoccupations for writers of the modern period is the self as an individual and its narrative delineation. **(true/false)**

b) Impressionistic mode of writing is preferred by the modern writers. **(true/false)**

c) The Georgian poets were fascinated by the English countryside and engaged with simpler and unsophisticated matters of life in their poetry. (**true/false)**

d) The modern period never witnessed writings on biography. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The modern period stood for a coming away from the previous modes of aesthetic engagements to dwell upon novel and …….methods

b) The writers of the modern period employed ……narratives and ……..plot structures

c) It has been a convention to regard the beginning of modernist poetry with the beginning of the ……. movement.

d) Hopkins introduced the ……. to poetry that is, a rhythmic structure that may be said to anticipate free verse.

Q 3: Write a note on war poetry and its practitioners.

14.4.3 Drama

Like poetry, drama too underwent series of experimentation with regard to theme, subject matter and treatment during the modern period. **One of the most prominent figures of modern theatre**, **Henrik Ibsen is considered to be a pioneer in the development of realist theatre** through which Ibsen ushered in experimentation in relation to style and presentation. Significantly aware of the needs of his contemporary times, Ibsen contributed remarkably to the growth and development of modern European theatre creating a type inimitably his own.

English drama of this period was largely confined to a breaking away from the preceding Victorian frameworks while it attempted to introduce several new structures in the forms of poetic drama and absurd theatre, for instance. In England however, theatre received the much needed shift away, from the Victorian mould at the hands of George Bernard Shaw who seems to have been considerably influenced by Ibsen. Devoid of the moral idiom his early plays reflect Ibsen's shaping influence. In plays such as *Widowers' Houses* (1892) and *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1902) Shaw achieved success in blending commercially viable interests with ideational principles. He became one of the most successful playwrights of his times with most of his stage performances attaining great popularity. In plays such as *Androcles and the Lion* (1913), *Pygmalion* (1914) and *Saint Joan* (1924) Shaw achieved remarkable success while moving beyond the usual frame.

Proletarian playwright **Sean O' Casey** is one of the most talented amongst his contemporaries who was famed for his tragic-comedies that revolved around his experience of growing up in Dublin. The conflict between the Irish Republican Army and the English Black and Tans in May, 1920 finds expression in *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923). Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) written during the post war period is considered to be one of his best plays where one finds Casey achieving remarkable success through fine characterisation, racy diction resonant of Dublin speech and abrupt variation of mood – from tragedy to comedy, from melodrama to farce, from pathos to humour. He displayed similar strength in his next play

The Plough and the Stars (1926), a play which dealt with the tragedy of a young wife Nora who was unsuccessful in her efforts to keep her husband away from joining the Easter Rebellion of 1916. The play abounds in portrayal of characters in a manner that is at times, earthly, humorous or tragic – all people affected by the civil strife in one way or the other. In his next play *The Silver Tassie* (1929) Sean O' Casey appears to break away from naturalism which one finds in his earlier plays. This play narrates the accounts of an Irish soldier throughout the World War I in naturalistic technique in the first act while in the second act influences of German expressionism was clearly visible in the manner in which the playwright employed stylised poetic litany to the guns which the soldiers echo on the battle front.

T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry were two poets who were conspicuously involved in the movement to revive poetic drama. In his essay "A Dialogue of Poetic Drama" (1928) and his Aristophanic melodrama *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932) Eliot reveals his interest in the problems of modern poetic drama. However, it was only in *The Rock* (1934) where he employed the choruses in the pageant play, that he encountered the challenges of the modern stage seriously. *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is perhaps, his first full length play which displays an effective blend of a medieval saint's legend and comic relief that expresses itself in the form of contemporary satire while treating the conflict between the claims of the corporeal body and the spirit.

Considered as Eliot's most powerful play, *The Family Reunion* (1939) exhibits a stylistic complexity that makes performance difficult. The play is Eliot's modernised version of the old Greek theme of Orestes trailed by the Furies. Through these dramatic engagements Eliot realised the need to create a kind of poetic diction that would at once contribute towards the enhancement of modern drama while simultaneously providing drama the elevation which even the finest prose was incapable. Out of such a need was created the experimental play, *The Cocktail Party* (1949) in which Eliot brings in characters who belongs to upper class London society and who converse in highly sophisticated tone. In it, Eliot was able to create a poetic

diction that was beyond the mundane gossip of a cocktail party through the theme which revolved around the distinction between the life possible for the average person and that of a saint.

Christopher Fry on the other hand did not seem to share Eliot's view that poetry should adapt itself to the demands of drama in his early compositions. *The Lady's Not for Burning* (1948) is Fry's attempt at medieval comedy which fascinated the audience with its exuberant language reminiscent of the Elizabethan stage. The play is based on the attempt of a soldier to save a young woman accused of being a witch from burning, at which he is successful achieved through a use of metaphors which is at once fresh and startling. Fry shared with Eliot the concern with religious issues which received dramatic treatment in his plays such as *A Boy With a Cart* (1939), *Thor with Angels* (1948) and *A Sleep of Prisoners* (1951).

14.4.4 Fiction

As a literary form, the novel dominated the literary scene during the modern period. The novelists of the modern period emphasised on the changes in the narrative style, techniques and characterisation in their works in keeping with the transformation of the inner realities of the modern man. One of the foremost works that characterise modern fiction is James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

You will be interested to familiarise yourself with Joseph Conrad, who was one of the greatest novelists of the modern period. Much of Conrad's works were based on his own personal experience. He had joined the French Mercantile Marine prior to joining the British merchant service and spent twenty years of his life on the sea, sailing and roaming the world, his experiences on the high seas manifested in his works like *Lord Jim: A Tale*. It is Conrad who had for the first time introduced the technique of **'oblique narrative'**, a speech indirectly quoted or by a different person from that employed by the original speaker like the narration by his famous protagonist, Marlow in *Lord Jim* who also appears in his other works. Another significant work by Conrad is *Heart of Darkness* which highlights the themes

of imperialism, power and the endeavours of the human spirit. This significant novel marks a break from the Victorian novels, in the sense that it explores the threats of the changing world like doubts, confusion and alienation. Conrad is considered as the **precursor of modernist literature.**

The novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy represented in his significant works the themes of social importance, spoke against Victorian conservative mind set and exuded an admiration of the country life in his works like *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*. D.H Lawrence who was inspired by the works and philosophy of Hardy resulted wrote the *Study of Thomas Hardy* in 1936 and incorporated in his own works Hardy's conception of his characters. D.H. Lawrence's was a major writer of the period and wrote novels like *The Rainbow, Sons and Lovers*, *Kangaroo*, *Women in Love, Lady Chatterley's Lover* among others, represented his own interpretation and perception of life, the effects of the industrialisation and the modern world on human life and the current of human psychology. His novels reflect his inclination towards the primitive or natural world, rather than the mechanised modern world.

In terms of narrative techniques, mention must be made of one of the most influential writer James Joyce, who had experimented and explored the **technique of "stream of consciousness"** in his novels and wrote exceptional works like *Ulysses*, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce in his works represents his Irish experiences closely in relation to the conventions of the Dublin society, human relationships among others and it is his skill in handling the **internal monologue** which results in his remarkable writing. Another remarkable novelist and a leading intellectual who had employed and popularised the "stream of consciousness" technique is Virginia Woolf. By rejecting conventional concepts of the genre of the novel, she had highlighted the importance of details in incident and narration. Her novels like *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *Orlando*, *Flush* etc. are some of her well known works. She had

famously remarked: **"A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."**

It is evident that the disillusionment, despair and decadent moral values in the modern man are best depicted through the genre of fiction. The interest of the modern novelist shifted from Impressionism to that of an expressionist technique, thus, laying emphasis on the inner realities and the workings of the mind. Hence, an inner conception of time and the workings of the human psychology as well as narratives of fragmented realities were employed in the narratives of modern fiction.

14.4.5 Literary Criticism

Apart from biographical prose writing, literary criticism too established itself as one of the most significant genres of literary form which received rich impetus in the hands of critics such as **J Middleton Murry**, **I.A Richards**, **F. R. Leavis** and **T. S. Eliot**.

J Middleton Murry may be regarded as a romantic critic with regard to his method. Murry is considered to the best practitioner of romantic criticism with regard to his method which involves his identification with the subject he is criticising in order that he may be able to see a work from the point of view of its creator for he appeared to believed that sensitive understanding and receptiveness lies at the core of all sound critical activity. However, such a stance in criticism had the tendency of becoming too subjective and hence had the probability of becoming a personal account rather than an objective study which forms the underlying trait of all healthy criticism. In *Keats and Shakespeare* (1925), Murry achieves success in exploring the relationship between Keats' mind and Shakespeare's while his critical study of D. H. Lawrence suffers from intense subjectivity that affects the work negatively. However, Murry gains considerable success in his critical method in his work *Jonathan Swift* (1953) in which he was able to bring together and blend most of the findings of modern scholarship while providing a fresh interpretation to Swift's inexplicable personality and his ambiguous relations with Stella and Vanessa.

Principles of Literary Criticism **published in 1924 is regarded as one of the most influential works on the theory of literature and criticism to be written by I. A. Richards**. This major work, is concerned, in the first place with evaluating the elements involved in the process of appreciating a work of art and secondly, with relating aesthetic worth to the theory of value in general. In *Practical Criticism* (1929) Richards deals with the problems that lie in the course of sympathetic appreciation of a work of art which preceded any worthwhile evaluation of the subject. He was perhaps, one of the pioneers to have brought about technical details into the field of literary criticism by coining expressions such as "mnemonic irrelevances", "technical preoccupations", "doctrinal adhesions" and so on which established him as one of the shaping influences in the domain of literary criticism. Richards also directed his attention towards semantics, a study of the meaning of words as he was concerned with the way in which words acquire legitimate and illegitimate meaning reflected in his work *Interpretation in Teaching* (1938) through which he initiated his disciples such as F. R. Leavis and William Empson to the study of the process of criticism.

Under the competent leadership of F. R. Leavis, contemporary criticism achieved success in bringing about significant changes. Leavis was the editor of the celebrated critical journal *Scrutiny* (1932 – 1953) and he was able to gather a group of likeminded critics who were dedicated to a **close reading of literary texts** with exacting standards that was reminiscent of the New Critics in America. His unfailing concern and serious tone attracted attention and was able to leave a mark in the domain of criticism. His *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) is still relevant and is considered to be a major influence in the poetic movement led by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. In *The Great Tradition* (1948) Richards argues that the truly great novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad.

William Empson who succeeded Leavis is considered as one of the most seminal critics of his times with his work such as *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) which establishes him in a similar position to that of

Kenneth Burke in the American scene. Empson was an important figure in the realm of literary criticism in both England and America while his work titled *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951) is regarded as one of the most significant contributions to literary semantics with its relevance undiminished till date.

In the field of literary criticism T. S. Eliot, the Anglo-American poet is considered to be one of the most profound practitioners. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Eliot's method of criticism was seen to be based on a logical sequence of doctrines which were however, not static. Eliot's theoretical method was greatly shaped by the movement known as humanism led by Professors Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More in America. Humanism was a modern version of neoclassicism which stood in opposition to both romantic and realistic trend in literature as well to unrestrained democracy and humanitarianism in politics while it called for a restoration of the classical methods in criticism. In an important essay **"Tradition and the Individual Talent"** Eliot noted

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work of art arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty the *whole* existing must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. (Moody and Lovett, 502)

Thus, Eliot appears to believe that the function of the modern critic was to demarcate his position with regard to the ancient and the modern classics on the one hand, and to review the modern classics in relation to such ancient classics on the other. As an editor of the *Criterion* Eliot gained both English and American readership while his forte in analysis and expression brought to him a reputation that was beyond the reach of many of his contemporaries in the field of literary criticism.



14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt about the background and influence of the modern period in the history of English Literature, a period that saw radical changes in science and technology, socio-cultural and religious life, war and politics that introduced new ways of looking at life, art and literature. The modern artist, who suffered a crisis in the experience of modern life, struggled to make meaning of his existence and his modern self which found a reflection in the literature of the time.

You have learnt the major literary features or the characteristics of the Age which provides a window or an entry point into the nature of modern literature. The various literary forms like modern poetry, non-fictional prose, drama, fiction and literary criticism gives you a broad overview of the literary trends and practices of the age. It has provided you with an insight into how the writers, in each of the above genres had experimented with these forms and familiarised yourself with the important writers of this period. The unit thus, acquaints you with the modern period which is taken to have begun from the late nineteenth century onward and infused a new creativity, infusion of cross cultural contexts and cross fertilisation of ideas and experiences into modern English Literature.



14.7 FURTHER READING

1) Blamires, Harry. (1984). *A Short History of English Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
2) Bradbury, Malcolm. (1989). *The Modern World: Ten Great Writers*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
3) Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James. Eds. (1991). *Modernism*. London: Penguin.
4) Cannon, John. Ed. (1997). *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Oxford: OUP.
5) Coote, Stephen. (1993). *The Penguin Short History of English Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

6) Moody and Lovett. (1962). *A History of English Literature*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

7) Sanders, Andrew. (1996). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. London: OUP.

14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

b. True

c. True

d. False

Ans to Q No 2: a. experimental

b. discontinuous, fragmented

c. French Symbolist

d. sprung rhythm

Ans to Q No 3: War poetry was about the responses to the context of war. The war poets comprised poets such as Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon who made significant contributions to this genre. Among the war poets, Wilfred Owen appeared to be the most gifted particularly for his sensitivity and poetic expression in poems such as “Insensibility”, “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, “Strange Meeting”. On the other hand, .Rupert Brooke was known for his romantic association with war.

Ans to Q No 4:

a. I.A Richards

b. Joseph Conrad



14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What are the main features of the literature during the modern period?

Q 2: “The modern period stood for a coming away from the previous modes of aesthetic engagements to dwell upon novel and experimental methods

in creativity which resulted in an entire new world of creative forms including art and literature". Discuss.

Q 3: Comment upon the influence of the French Symbolist movement on modern poetry.

Q 4: Write short notes on the following:

a. Georgian poetry

b. The Thirties' Poets

c. Modern prose

Q 5: What do you mean by poetic drama? Discuss with examples.

Q 6: "Modern fiction emphasises on the changes in the narrative style, techniques and characterisation" Discuss with examples.

Q 7: Trace the growth and development of literary criticism as one of the most significant genres of literary form during the modern period.

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UNIT 15: THE MODERN AGE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Socio-intellectual Context of Modern Age

15.4 Impact of the World Wars on English Literature

15.5 Important Writers

15.6 A Note on the Major Post War Writers and Literary Forms

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.10 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you shall be able to:

- explain the Socio-intellectual context of the modern period and its influence on English Literature
- assess the impact of World Wars on English Literature
- discuss the practiced literary forms of the age
- gain an idea on the important writers of the age and their contributions
- learn the literary contributions of the major post war writers.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

With life, transforming into a fast mode and the accompanying changes taking place in the modern age, the **modern artist felt himself at a loss**. Changes in the socio-cultural outlook, owing to the onslaughts of technology made the artist a desolate man. There seemed to be a loss of faith in man and civilisation and the modern artist was seen struggling against a world of barrenness and decadence. Life thus, became a challenge for the artist and it was this challenge to face and overcome the modern

experience of life which was to be the subject of creative and critical engagements for writers, novelists, poets, thinkers and philosophers of this period. However, we need to remember that this exercise was not limited to the English soil alone. It became a world-wide phenomenon, as modernity broke barriers and had an effect on the entire human race, bringing about a similar experience of desolation. It left them vulnerable to the challenge of living life, in the wake of the **World Wars** and the following sense of decadence and destruction, anxiety and boredom.

Thus, we find a whole lot of writers such as **T. S. Eliot**, **W. B Yeats**, **D. H. Lawrence**, **Virginia Woolf**, **Joseph Conrad**, **Ernest Hemingway** and **Henry James** who traversed through the borders of their respective nations and engaged in an exchange of ideas, images, themes and issues which they reflected passionately and intensely in their works.

15.3 SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT OF THE MODERN AGE

Post war English literature may be said to have been shaped by the defining influences of the prevalent trends in the social, political and cultural spheres of contemporary period which provided the context within which the creative spirit blossomed. It is needless to say that the two World Wars had a sweeping impact all around the globe. However, the way in which they affected the British society was perhaps different from the manner in which it influenced people and their lives elsewhere around the world. As mentioned earlier, one of the most significant developments that had come upon the English soil was its declining control over its colonies which were becoming more assertive in their fight for freedom and liberty. Subsequently, the issues of English nationalism and national identity came to be redefined and reshaped.

Since the end of the First World War in 1918, there had been several intermittent political and economic events across the globe which culminated in the Second World War that began in 1939. By the time it came to an end in 1945, the world had been divided into opposing political

blocks. However, it was during this period that the English society witnessed a surge in courage and heroic sensibility that was accompanied by an innate sense of pride and grandeur. The prevalence of such an attitude in the English society and culture in general may be attributed to the occurrence of the War and the fact that Great Britain represented the victors in it. Britain's win in the war was visualised as a win that was inevitable for a people deeply in love with the ideals of virtue, justice and morality posited against the evil culture of the enemy forces. On the other hand, Great Britain's colonial and imperialist enterprise all over the world which was still prevalent stood in opposition to the present euphoria over its victory in the war and its concern for justice and morality. It was rather paradoxical to witness a nation that fought against the injustices of the enemy forces represented by Germany and its allies could not somehow relinquish its imperialist hold over the colonies. A deeper analysis would also let one see that the war was won not owing to the so called intrinsic qualities of bravery and patriotic commitment epitomised by the British forces but because of the enhanced technological quality of the armed forces, economic strength and industrial force of the USA and USSR. Besides, it is noteworthy that during the Second World War that Britain had to face defeat in many places elsewhere while the common citizens had been subjected to mass violence when the German forces unleashed a series of aerial bombardment destroying several places in and around London. The hitherto powerful supremacy of Britain in world politics was perhaps largely weakened within such an environment. Subsequent to this, English society also appeared to have undergone several changes in terms of class structure, a rapidly growing industrial society with its accompanying impact the contemporary life and culture of its people and a wartime economy that was not very promising to the people in general. Against the predominant general impression that the War comprises a grand narrative of victory in terms of British history, in reality the war revealed the progressive decline of Britain in relation to its power and hold over other political powers of the world, its diminishing impact upon the colonies and more importantly, its reliance upon the more powerful USA while it engaged with the ever increasing socio-economic and political crises within the national landscape.

Contemporary English society then was experiencing the repercussions of mindless destruction and violence that came in the form of the war, thereby giving rise to a tremendous sense of misery which was by far more intensely felt and experienced in comparison to the grandeur of English heroism and bravery displayed in the war. The almost dysfunctional industries owing to the declaration of freedom by many of its colonies created an environment of widespread unemployment and poverty; many young nations were rising in terms of industrial and economic growth leading to a kind of crisis to English domestic economy. The lives of people were in reality far removed from the romantic glory made manifest in literature earlier. The growing complexities of life – society, culture, economics, science and politics among others stimulated the intellectuals to contemplate upon the insecurities and uncertainties of the existential situation. The overpowering impact of the World Wars made writers rethink their mode of expression and engagement in the field of literary creativity. It was perhaps the complex contemporary ethos that made writers discard the conventional modes of expression in literature while they engaged with their creative representation of the world and life in it. On the other hand, the growth of science and technology opened up new vistas of imagination and achievement for the people and the intellectual and academic society appeared deeply influenced. The modern lifestyle comprising a reduced level of physical labour, increase in general literacy of the society and the benefits of technological advancements perhaps offered the writers and philosophers of the modern period a congenial atmosphere for the nurturing of their creative and contemplative faculty. In the field of art, late 19th century and 20th century displayed intense experimentation which became a predominant practice with the artists engaged in evolving techniques such as symbolism, impressionism, post impressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, imagism, cubism among others. It is interesting to observe that these experimentations that began in the field of art and painting began influencing the world of literature significantly wherein the writers began adapting the techniques employed in painting and art to their works in the field of literature. Modernist sensibilities that were manifest in the world of art and painting

were not perhaps an exclusive and isolated event. One may understand this as the culmination of several contemporary happenings in other fields of human activity comprising science, economics, philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics. Einstein's theory of relativity, Marxist postulation of a classless socialist society and Nietzsche's philosophy of anti-idealism provided material for contemplation and reorganisation of society and reformation of values. Besides, the contribution made by psychoanalysts such as Freud and Jung had far reaching effects upon the manner in which society perceived the ways in which the human mind worked, the mental processes involving dreams and illusions placed within the broader perspective of temporality. In the realm of linguistics, Saussure's study revealed the social aspect of language and the linguistic phenomena which subsequently opened up new avenues of language study. These events taking place in the variegated sphere of human activities not only motivated the writers of the age to think in a similar fashion but also provided the context within which they engaged in an effort to give creative expression to their ideas through the various genres of literature.

15.4 IMPACT OF THE WORLD WARS ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

FIRST WORLD WAR:

The last decades of the 19th century coincides with the end of what one may call Victorianism that had an all pervading influence over the social, cultural and literary activities of the time. The initiation of modern period in English literary history is dated to the beginning of the 20th century with several distinctive trends that became visible in the field of creativity comprising art, painting and literature. One may say that the conventional steadfastness towards propriety brought about a sense of limitation in almost spheres of human activity leading to a kind of conflict in values and hypocrisy. Modernism may be seen as a reaction against such values of the preceding age. The modern period witnessed widespread scepticism and critique of the hitherto established values of Victorianism – indeed it would not be

erroneous to state that the most significant trait of modernism is perhaps its 'questioning spirit' which became evident in literature produced in the early decades of the 20th century. An instance from A.C. Ward's work titled *Twentieth-Century Literature 1901-1925: The Age of Interrogation* (1928) would perhaps be sufficient proof:

From 1901 to 1925 English literature was directed by mental attitudes, moral ideals, and spiritual values at almost the opposite extreme from the attitudes, ideals and values governing Victorian literature. The old certainties were certainties no longer. Everything was held to be open to question…(quoted in Poplawski, 547)

It is interesting to note that Ward had subtitled his work "the Age of Interrogation" – Ward's reading of the early period of the 20th century as an age of interrogation and subsequently his assertion that "Everything was held to be open to question…" seems to aptly summarise the prevalent temper of the first part of the modern period which was also witness to the First World War. The impact of the war came to be felt upon literature produced during this period as it provided a veritable source for the numerous texts that were being written besides also creating an atmosphere for experimentation regarding form, technique, content leading to a discursive ambience in the fields of literature and criticism. The resultant product in terms of literary texts was a diverse range of works which seemed to transcend the confines of formal classification as one had in the preceding ages of literature. The plurality of voices, multiplicity of forms, diversity of range and richness of technique and treatment made reading modern literature a difficult task. As mentioned earlier, several movements that began in the sphere of art and painting found its way into to experimental and innovative writings of the modernist writers of the period. Movements such as naturalism, symbolism, imagism, futurism, cubism, vorticism, surrealism came to influence the literary practices of several writers of the period. In the realm of English literature, the period till 1939, in general, is classified as the period of modernism which displayed a kind of experimentation and innovation in terms of form and technique. The overwhelming achievements in the sphere of science and technology alongside the all pervading impact

of the war gave a new shape to literature as practitioners were motivated to employ innovative techniques such as the stream-of-consciousness technique, allusions, reworking of myths, spatiality and temporality – to reflect upon the fragmentary experience of living in an age tormented by widespread conflict and violence.

It may be noted that although the novel appeared to have predominance over other forms, there was a considerable body of poetry being written during the first half of the modern period. Till the beginning of the First World War in 1914 poetry that was being produced is generally termed Georgian poetry as the period coincided with the reign of King George V in England. Poetry of this phase displayed certain tendencies of continuity with the preceding Victorian sensibilities alongside the presence of modernist traits. It was a distinctive style of writing which blended a romantic spirit with sentimentality combined with a sense of self indulgence which made the Georgian poets to think of themselves as progressive and modern. Some of the most significant poetic voices who may be considered to have belonged to this class are Rupert Brooke, Walter de la Mare, A. E. Housman, Robert Graves and John Masefield. The period thereafter from 1914 to the 1930s saw the surge of the first generation War poets – Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen. Besides, this phase in modern poetry is also remarkable for the contribution made by the likes of W. B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot who came to be recognised as the 'first great moderns' in the world of English literature.

Stylistically speaking, literature belonging to the first few decades of the 20th century may be said to have been a blend of experimentation and innovation in the practice of modernism and realism in so far as its stylistic traits are concerned. Renowned author David Lodge has distinguished between these two tendencies reflected in literature of the period in his work titled *The Modes of Modern Writing*. One may then say that modernism implies a kind of practice that is remarkable for its poetic intensity associated with a wide-ranging application of metaphors while realism was marked by its striving for its precision of meaning and its penchant for the application of metonymy or imagery linked by an obvious

logical correlation. As far as realism in fiction was concerned, the most significant practitioners were Arnold Bennett, Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy, Graham Greene, George Orwell, W. S. Maugham and H. G. Wells. On the other hand, in the sphere of poetry it would perhaps be difficult to have a precise category termed realist while the overwhelming literary atmosphere of modernism came to have its influence on almost all writers of the period in some way or the other.

SECOND WORLD WAR

When one examines the history of English literature, one would perhaps acknowledge that the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 may be considered to have brought about a close to the phenomenon of modernism while ushering in the post-war era which appears to be allied with what we call post modernism. It is noteworthy that unlike the First World War phase which displayed distinctive traits in the sphere of literature, the period post the Second World War is remarkable for its absence of precise characteristic qualities owing to the overwhelmingly intense changes that had come upon life and society since 1939. The Second World War brought about radical changes in all spheres of human existence – the existential predicament engendered by a crisis of scruples in relation to humane and social obligations. The dark realities of the war led many writers of the period to introspect upon the political and social ideologies of the contemporary time. On the other hand, within the prevalent atmosphere of war, events such as the liberation of Paris provided an opportunity to continue having faith in the possibilities of change and larger human values. Literature produced during this phase then may be said to have a representation of the opposite culture of elation and disenchantment although the thematic concerns and subject matter was not radically different from those of the First World War period. By 1940s one would be able to trace a fleeting existence of neo-Romantic and decadent writing which came as a response to and reaction against the war imposed sombreness. During this phase writers contributed primarily through poetry and the short story – literary forms that were

comparatively convenient to engage with while posited in a politically, socially and culturally volatile environment. Within the decade beginning with the sixties there was an emergence of a different breed of writers in Britain who professed their rejection of modernism within post-war British society and culture. Some of the anti-modernist voices including Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Thom Gunn were representing a new kind of poetry which was significant for its employment of empiricism and universal values against the extreme modernist trends of the preceding decades. While discarding experimentalist treatment in modernism these poets were of the opinion that such poetry would engender a sense of isolation and alienation in the poet and the reader as well. Therefore they believed that poetry ought to be responsible and honest so that poet and reader alike would be able to converge along a common set of socio-cultural values and beliefs which would then strengthen universal feelings. Modernism then for these literary figures represented the elite escapist lost in obscurity against the more pragmatic values brought about by a need for egalitarianism and populist ethics within the post-war British society. Within such a socio-cultural perspective writers began employing social realism within the genre of fiction and drama as well in a manner that was found to be more close to the working class values. Novelists such as David Storey and John Braine and dramatists such as John Osborne were seen representing working class values. But it would be erroneous to assume that there was an absolute erasure of modernist traits in the literature of this period as there were poets such as David Jones and fiction writers such as Wilson Harris who continued to engage with modernist experimentation in their respective genres.

In the absence of a precise detail as to what constitutes post-modern literature it would therefore, be significant to note that there appears to be sustained engagement with the stylistic traits of post war literature. It was rather apparent that literature produced at this juncture was characterised by a kind of intense deliberation with the self, with techniques that constitute parody and pastiche among others and forms such as

metafiction while epistemologically emphasising that reality in its comprehensive sense, is constituted by language. Keeping in mind the complex and intricate nature of literary writing it would be of great importance to remember that literature may not be neatly segregated into – realist, modernist or post modernist – the apparently varied phases of development. For students of literature it is of primary significance to understand that at any given point of time the literature that is produced would be reflecting the multifarious sensibilities of the contemporary era. The complexity of life and times during the post war period therefore was imbibed by the literature of this era in the obscure and diverse nature of writing that was being accomplished.

15.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

Some of the major writers of the modern age are as discussed below:

Thomas Stearn Eliot:

T. S. Eliot's (September 26, 1888 – January 4, 1965) was a poetic persona with a blend of English and continental influences. As far as his poetic goes he may be said to have been immensely influenced by the poetry of French poets such as Jules Laforgue and Tristan Corbiere. Eliot's verses display his cynicism and anxiety about modern life through the use of an apparently incoherent imagery which resulted in a poetic expression that was unmistakably his own. "The Wasteland" (1922), published in *The Criterion* is Eliot's most ambitious poetic expression which alludes to several historical and legendary sources while dealing with the theme of spiritual decadence and sordidness of modern existence.

Eliot's poetry may be seen as expressions that invite analytical negotiations achieved through a carefully cultured style, intellectual considerations and allusions. Eliot is considered as one of the predominant voices in modern poetry owing to his poems such as "Ash Wednesday", "Four Quartets", "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", besides "The Wasteland", which exhibits the poet's consistent experimentation with a form of expression, technique and style that pave the way for many

modernist poets to come. Revolutionary in its technique, his poems involved a complicated style through which he gave voice to the post war attitude reflected within the contemporary society and culture.

William Butler Yeats:

W.B. Yeats (13 June 1865 – 28 January 1939) reveals significant development in his poetic output as one of the surviving pre-war poets who engaged in a realistic and intellectual mode of poetry. It was his belief that art and politics had an intrinsic link and his poems revealed his attitude towards Irish politics on which he wished to educate his readers. He had a deep sense of belonging to the Irish nation and his idea of national identity made him believe that British control over Ireland did little good to his nation in terms of politics and socio-cultural life. Thus, he made an effort to create awareness about Irish national life through the evocation of various myths and legends from Irish folklore in his early poems. Gradually, as Yeats became more involved in Irish politics his poems began to reflect his political temper which were voiced in poems such as "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death" (1919), "A Meditation in Time of War" (1921), "On a Political Prisoner" (1921), "In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz" (1933), "Easter 1916" (1916). Yeats was of the opinion that poetry can very well serve a political function as it may be seen as an instrument for critiquing and commenting on political events while educating and informing a people.

D.H Lawrence:

D. H Lawrence (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930) was an English novelist who according to F.R Leavis had made a significant literary contribution to the genre of the English novel. In the words of E. M Forster, he was described as "the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation". He was not just a writer but also a literary critic and a thinker, poet and a playwright as well as a gifted painter. Lawrence was born to Arthur John Lawrence, a miner and Lydia Lawrence, a tutor. His childhood years were spent in the mining township of Nottinghamshire and it is important to note that most of his mature works are inspired by the inner lives of miners in such mining locales.

From an early age, he had a love for books and his mother with whom he was very close to had encouraged him towards his reading pursuits. He taught at the British School, Eastwood and had been certified to teach by the University College in Nottingham. After being certified he had left for London in the autumn of the same year in 1908. Later on, Lawrence went on to marry Frieda Weekley and also dedicated his collection of love poems "*Look! We Have Come Through*" (1917) to her. Lawrence wrote almost 800 poems in his lifetime and some of his well known collections are "Love Poems and Others"(1913), "Birds, Beasts and Flowers"(1923), 'Pansies"(1929) and "Nettles"(1930) among a few others.

Among his plays *The Daughter in Law* (1912) was his mining play which was written in the local Nottingham dialect. The names of his other plays were *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* (1914) and *Touch and Go* (1920). His well known short stories are "The Fox", "Odour of Chrysanthemums", "The Virgin and the Gypsy" and "The Woman who Rode Away" among others. He is best known as a novelist because of his works of fiction like *The White Peacock* (1911)*, Sons and Lovers* (1913)*, The Rainbow* (1915)*, Women in Love* (1920)*, Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Trespasser* (1912). His novels explored the condition of workings of the human mind, modern man, relationships and life in a harsh, modern industrial world. Although, he had spent the second half of his life suffering censorship and gross criticism for some of his works, after which he had also opted for a voluntary exile, he undoubtedly emerged as one of the great modern writers in English Literature after his demise.

Virginia Woolf:

You will be very interested to know that the modern period had also witnessed some of the great women writers among whom Virginia Woolf (25 January 1882 – 28 March 1941) came to be considered as the representative modern woman writer. Virginia Woolf was born in London to the prominent intellectual figure, Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Duckworth. While her brothers were privileged to a Cambridge education, her sister Vanessa and she were taught at home and enjoyed the benefits of their

father's huge library in their Hyde Park home and cultivated an early interest in English literature. Woolf was a very sensitive by nature from a young age and she suffered several nervous breakdowns having lost her parents and her sibling at a tender age. But her life became much stable after she settled into her married life with a caring partner, Leonard Woolf with whom she shared an intimate bond till the end of her days. Together they formed the **Hogarth Press in 1917,** through which she had published her works along with those of writers like T.S Eliot and others. Also they formed the leading intellectual group which was known as the **'Bloomsbury Group'** which comprised of the intellectual couple and their friends like Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, Rupert Brooke, Clive Bell, John Meynard Keynes, David Garnett, Saxon Sydney Turner and Duncan Grant.

Woolf is known for her experimental use of a free prose style through the technique of the **'stream of consciousness'** in which the narrator uses a free flowing narration in keeping with the flow of the thought patterns of the mind. Also her works were fragmented in nature, figured out the inner workings of the mind and her lyrical style of writing created impressions on the modern reader. Her works have been translated into more than 50 languages and some of her best known novels are *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941).

Also she notably contributed to modern literary criticism through some of her works as *Modern Fiction* (1919), *The Common Reader* (1925), *A Room of One's Own* (1929), *Three Guineas* (1938), *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (1942) and *Women and Writing* (1979). She had also three written biographies like *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), *Flush: A Biography* (1933) and *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940). Some of her well known short stories are *Kew Gardens* (1919) and *Mrs Dalloway's Party* (1978) and she had also published a drama named *Freshwater* in 1976 after its theatrical performance in 1923. Her published letters and a series of autobiographies also reflect her perspectives of life and her acute intellect. She is often quoted to have famously said: "Life is not a series of gig lamps

symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semitransparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." Virginia Woolf is one of the foremost modernist writers and any study of the modernist writers is incomplete without her works.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Why is T.S. Eliot considered as one of the predominant voice in modern poetry?

Q2: Write a few lines on D.H. Lawrence.

Q3. What is the defining prose style employed by Virginia Woolf in her literary works?

15.6 A NOTE ON THE MAJOR POST WAR WRITERS AND LITERARY FORMS

By now we have seen how literature produced after the First World War appeared to contemplate upon the futility of exuberance and confidence associated with the notion of progress and development. Let us examine the kind of writing that was being done in the various genres such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry through a reading of the major writers in the respective areas. (refer to Modern Age I)

In the world of fiction **D. H. Lawrence** (1885-1930), was a significant voice with his works reflecting an all pervading consciousness of the war and its implications upon the spiritual and ethical aspects of modern existence that had in part stimulated and extended support as well to the destructive war. For Lawrence, the war was testimony to the shame and disgrace it had brought about through an unleashing of 'mass mechanised destruction'. Lawrence's vehement abhorrence towards the war is perhaps aptly reflected in these lines quoted below:

It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the old London collapsed, the city in some way, perished, perished from being a heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears, and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed, and the

genuine debasement began, the unspeakable baseness of the press, and the public voice and the reign of that bloated ignominy…(in Poplawski, 559-60)

Lawrence's attitude towards the war and its aftermath reflects the psychological contours of his creative engagement in his fiction and that of his contemporaries as well. The modernist writers of this period made an effort to represent the mindscape of a people who had been intensely affected by the overwhelming changes that had come upon the general affairs of life and human relationships in a war torn society and culture. The war was not only an influence overtly visible but more importantly it had an underlying intense impact upon the ways in which life and human thought had come to be shaped. Therefore, the form in which most modernist writing was accomplished came to embody the complexity of the life and times it was witness to. Although Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923) is not considered as one of his best novels, it is nevertheless remarkable for its intense and faithful delineation of the war torn society and the lives and sensibilities of people ravaged by it. His novels such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Women in Love* (1920) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) deal with the complexities of living in a mechanised and industrialised social set up where human relationships are put to test. *Women in Love* for instance was written almost at the same time with the First World War – in this exemplary piece of modernist fiction, Lawrence employs an episodic fragmentary structure to record the anxiety and trauma of war that the people were experiencing. In a highly accomplished manner the novelist displays his concern over the contemporary socio-cultural scene while weaving episodes that are remarkable for the sudden eruption of hostility accompanied by a language that revealed the sexual and emotional conflict within human relationships against the backdrop of war without however, any overt allusion to the war. Such approach may be attributed to the fact that Lawrence did not perhaps intend to engage with the explicit ramifications of the war upon the contemporary scene. But what seemed more significant to him was the need to contemplate upon the mindscapes of the individuals and subsequently explore their psyche which had been subjected to the

tremendous socio-cultural and political changes brought about by the devastating war.

That the war had an overwhelming effect upon the sensibilities of writers is perhaps made evident by the fact that many writers were seen working with the underlying motif of the war and between 1928 and 1930 and perhaps throughout the post war era, there was a considerable number of novels which dealt with the war theme in some way or the other. It is noteworthy that economic, social and cultural changes that had come over the contemporary life and times owing to the war appeared to have engendered a feeling of disillusionment with the war and its achievements. Writers such as **Virginia Woolf (**1882-1941) came to deal with such all pervading disenchantment through her representation of the shell shocked Septimus Warren Smith – a significant character in the famous *Mrs Dalloway*. This novel published in 1925 is a thought provoking narrative in which Woolf applies the modernist technique of 'stream-of-consciousness' to represent the inner life of the mind of her characters set against the backdrop of modern life permeated with gross decadence in all spheres. In this context one may refer to Woolf's views on life as reflected in her essay 'Modern Fiction' (1919) – life according to her was "a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end". It is this 'luminous halo' and 'semi transparent' aura, her perception towards life that became a predominant and recurrent issue in almost all of her fiction including *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). Woolf remained one of the most influential figures within the modernist genre owing to her innovative use of language and imagery with a technical efficacy which perhaps very few could equal.

James Joyce (1882-1941) a contemporary of Woolf was an Irish by birth and an exemplary writer of modernist fiction. Like most of the modernist writers who were preoccupied with the use of language, Joyce too engaged in experimentation with language through his masterpiece *Ulysses* which he began writing in 1914. It took him almost seven years to finish the work and it was finally published in 1921. The novel earned Joyce an everlasting fame as one of the greatest modernist novelists with his

extraordinary use of the stream-of-consciousness technique and his eye for detail. Employing the technique of interior monologue, Joyce delineates the character of the central protagonist Leopold Bloom while representing like Woolf, the inner life of the mind of his character. *Ulysses* remains Joyce's outstanding contribution to literary modernism for its kaleidoscopic sweep and deliberate formal framework shaped by an innovative employment of classical myth in his narrative representation of the modern man's predicament. Joyce was engaged with innovative use of language almost to the point of obsession. *Finnegans Wake* was published in 1939 and it took him a long period of seventeen years to finish this work. In it Joyce makes a remarkable use of language through a seamless blend of vocabulary, neologisms and unique word play intended to bring about the desired rhetorical effect. The novel is, according to many critics, Joyce's attempt to produce an effect of dream and illusions though his expansive use of experimental language and the rejection of conventional narrative frame.

Novels which were predominantly based on the experience of war were unique in their treatment of the theme of violence and war time life in that they depicted the war in its most realistic and appalling manner. Such novels provided an almost life like portrayal of the life in the trenches, the gruesome details of bloodstained warfare that took a toll of lives with its absence of romantic notions about the war. Instances of such novels are **Rebecca West's** *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) which presents a remarkable treatment of war by a woman writer. The central protagonist of the novel is the shell shocked Chris Baldry and the author employs a psychological framework to the study of the characters situated within the war torn contemporary world. Another important novel is perhaps *Death of a Hero* (1929) by **Richard Aldington** for its anti-war stand. Aldington's novel is reminiscent of the Jazz culture of the 1920s when America was swept by the all pervading Depression. The focus of the narrative is the overwhelming sense of disenchantment that had come upon society and people, the lost generation – the narrative represents the self destructive tendencies of the times in an elegiac tone lamenting the loss of a generation

that had been inflicted with the brutalities of the war. Aldington adopts a similar anti war stand in his novel *All Men are Enemies* (1933) which is a comparatively optimistic work than *Death of a Hero*. *Her Privates, We* (1930) by **Frederic Manning** is yet another effort to represent the violence and frenzy of the war. However, in all such narrative representation of the war, one would perhaps be able to discern not only a critical exploration of the good or a bad side of the war but more importantly, such narratives provided an instance of the intense critical dialogue within the historical contexts of the past, present and the future. By the end of the Second World War in 1945 and for almost a decade thereafter, literature seemed preoccupied with a wistful yearning for the pre-war life and times of yore. Moreover, such nostalgia was found to be combined with an effort to comprehend the actuality of the lived lives in contemporary socio-cultural setting. **Evelyn Waugh's** novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) presents a rather cynical understanding of the war as the novelist narrates the plight of a people situated in the vortex of the war afflicted society. Waugh also published a war trilogy during the period from 1952 to 1961, the first of which was *Men at Arms* (1952), followed by *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955) and finally *Unconditional Surrender* which was published in 1961. *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) is **William Golding's** attempt to look critically at the idea of civilisation while he engages in his narrative with childhood – a locale within which the child is conditioned and trained through the apparently civilised values of the adults, which in reality are embedded in violence and bloodshed. It is worth mentioning that by the middle of the twentieth century, literature displayed a new interest in the contemporary times while making an attempt to take into its fold the apparently peripheral sections of the society – such a change in approach may be said to have been displayed perhaps, as a reaction against the 'longing' for the so called serene pre-war society. Given such a milieu, the novel of the 1950s may be considered to have illustrated an attempt on the part of the margin to occupy the centre while giving expression to the general temper of disillusionment and discontent echoing similar sentiment as that reflected in the drama of the Angry Young Men and some poetry of The Movement as well.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1947) and *1984* (1948) regarded as dystopian narratives employ fantasy perhaps to illustrate the author's concern for the decadent ways of life and people in contemporary society. One may assume that Orwell's application of fantasy is suggestive of the idea that for him fantasy is not the means of escape from the realities of the lived world; on the contrary the use of fantasy allowed Orwell to articulate, in an unconventional manner, the disquiet engendered by contemporary history. By the 1960s, fantasy became discernible in the English novel in the works of novelists such as **J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock**. While Ballard came to attain fame for his experimental science fiction that comprised the elements of fantasy and horror, Moorcock too was a

practitioner of the new wave science fiction like Ballard. Ballard is best known for his novels such as *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961) and *The Drowned World* (1962) wherein he makes an effort to challenge the borders between the conventional realistic fiction and fantasy.

In the midst of such unconventional modes of narratives that were practised during the period, realism did not however, vanish entirely from the scene.

As mentioned earlier, the post war novel may also be considered as paving the way for the emergence of the post modern novel. However, one needs to remember that it would be rather difficult to arrive at a comprehensive definition of the post modern novel. The novel as a genre presented a fertile ground for multifarious experimentation in terms of stylistics and linguistic structures – the novelists began experimenting with the ways in which language could be employed to question its fictional nature, the scope of having multilayered implications while challenging the very concept of fixity of meaning leading to an analysis of the relationship between 'narrative and representation'. However, one would be able to notice that the post modern novel in English did not wholly reject realism while making an attempt to blend multiple narrative modes including those of fantasy, autobiography and historiography. Thus the post war novel accommodated a wide variety of novelistic forms while also subsequently providing a shaping

influence to the post modern novel itself. With the growing impact of media and changing market conditions, the contemporary English novel came to display an increased complexity structurally in a tone which echoed sardonic humour. By the period from 1975-1990 the English novel had come to display a healthy growth without however expressing a direct affiliation towards any specific school, movement or literary fashion. The latter half of twentieth century witnessed a growth of novel writers who were not native to the English soil but they had contributed considerably towards making the English novel grow further. Salman Rushdie is one such novelist who has received world wide acclaim for his great novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Satanic Verses* (1988) – works in which Rushdie has employed magic realism to build up the narrative world. Contemporary writers continue to engage in a similar mode of narration. Generally speaking, contemporary fiction draws perhaps considerably from the popular fiction while continuing to experiment in terms of technique, form and narrative structure as well which has established the novel as one of the most popular genres in the twentieth century. If one need to understand the post war novel in English, one would need to acknowledge that it is best described as a polyphonic entity which allows for the presence of variety and flexibility – the novel has by now become a medium through which the varied experiences of different classes, culture, nationalities and even gender may be given expression in a manner that would include realism and experimentalism as well.

Poetry, like fiction, registered the widespread upheavals that had come upon the contemporary lives of people and society during the war years. As mentioned in the previous chapter, modern poetry came to engage with a number of experimental techniques while reflecting changes in several aspects of poetry writing and also displaying a sense of continuity with the preceding forms that were available. Inheriting the tradition of modernist experimentation from the likes of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, the poets post Second World War too, remained obsessed with the themes of disillusionment, death and decadence in a war torn society. Poets who

belong to this period were seen preoccupied with form while they gave voice to a feeling of dejection; experimentation with form gave the poets an avenue to express their private predicaments in relation to their lived realities within a society that witnessed not only the overwhelming war but also considerable growth in science and technology that had influenced human lives and society to a large extent. Poetry was influenced by various schools of thought such as existentialism, Marxism, feminism – all of which provided poetry a new way of expressing the predicament of contemporary life. Besides, English poetry also imbibed the American influence; there were poets who represented the Irish poetic school and the women poets who were making their voices heard simultaneously with their male counterparts. Poetry therefore, post Second World War is a fusion of varied shaping influences which resulted in a body of poems that resonate with an intense vitality while contemplating upon the realities of the lived lives and culture of the time. It is this environment perhaps which inspired a group of poets to write in a distinct mode owing to which they came to be known as the 'Movement Poets'. Coined by J.D. Scott, the term 'Movement' implied the works of a group of poets such as Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis and John Wain among others who were in opposition to the elitist and high romanticist elements reflected in modernist poetry. Published in 1952, Donald Davie's *Purity of Diction in English Verse* was the guiding principle which enabled the Movement poets to maintain discipline and austerity in their verses while doing away with application of extravagant diction.

Philip Larkin wrote novels, essays and poetry; however, it was through poetry that he received lasting fame. Greatly influenced by Yeats' poetry of early years, Larkin published his first volume of poems titled *The North Ship* (1945). However, it was only with the publication of *XXPoems* (1951) that Larkin emerged as a poet with a distinction. *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1964) are Larkin's more mature works. As a poet, Larkin appeared driven by an impulse to preserve the native convention while being critical of superficialities of the urban practices of living brought about by modern age. Larkin was like Thomas Hardy in his association with the provincial life rooted in Hull.

Thom Gunn was another poet of this period who became famous for his anti-romantic stand expressed in a verse form that was identifiably taut. Gunn permanently left for America in 1954 and here under the influence of one of the renowned American poets and critic, Yvor Winters, he began his poetic explorations. His collection of poems titled *The Sense of Movement* (1957) comprises verses on diverse subjects. Some of Gunn's famous volumes of poetry are *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Moly* (1971) and *The Passages of Joy* (1982). In his poetry the reader shall be able to discern a blend of certain features of the English Movement and aspects of American Beat poetry in his tribute to heroism, his fascination for ferocity and his subtly conversational style.

Ted Hughes is known for his intense engagement with the animal world through his poetry. Almost all of Hughes' poems reveal his metaphorical representation of the animal world with his foregrounding of the violent and predatory instincts that are prevalent in the animal world. Some of Hughes's famous works are *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) *Lupercal* (1960), *Wodwo* (1967), *Cave Birds* (1978) and *Selected Poems, 1957-1981* (1982). In the first two volumes of poems Hughes reveals his awareness of intense affinity between the human world and the animal world. Devoid of sentimentality, Hughes poems appear to make an attempt to metaphorically trace several significant developments in human civilisation. *Birthday Letters* published in 1998 was Hughes' last volume of poems in which he reveals his personal world, his relationship with his wife Sylvia Plath.

Another significant poetic voice was that of Seamus Heaney who initiated himself into the world of poetry through his verses that revealed his intense love of the Irish landscape and culture, his childhood reminiscences which are beautifully expressed in volumes such as *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Door into the Dark* (1969). Heaney however, appears more politically inclined in his later collections of poetry such as *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975) and *Field Work* (1979). Heaney was deeply affected by the contemporary history of Ireland and his intensely private feelings regarding several issues afflicting Irish social and cultural

history were aptly expressed in *Sweeney Astray* (1983), *Station Island* (1984) and *The Haw Lantern* (1987). Highly inspired by the preceding traditions of Anglo Saxon School of poetry, the uniqueness of Metaphysical school, and the romanticism of the likes of Wordsworth and later poets such as Hopkins, Auden, Yeats and Ted Hughes, Heaney engaged with English poetry in a manner which made him of the most important voices in literature.

In the field of drama, one would be able to notice significant activities in the form of experiments carried out through international theatre, regional repertory theatres which received an increased impetus from the government. The history of British drama is marked by two very important events in the year 1956 – Bertolt Brecht's famous theatre company the Berliner Ensemble visited London during this year. Another major event that marked the history of drama during the year was the performance of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* – this play marked the beginning of the presence of the 'angry hero' through its central protagonist Jimmy Porter who came to be looked upon as the representative of an entire generation of young people suffering from disillusionment and disappointment.



15.7 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, the learner will gain an insight into how writers in the modern period had experimented and succeeded with their literary contributions and radical works in English literature. The unit provides you with a broad idea on the literary practices by the major writers of the period which is taken to have begun from the late 19th century onward. The period had infused a new sense of creativity, a blending of cross cultural contexts and a rich cross fertilisation of ideas and experiences into modern English Literature.



15.8 FURTHER READING

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15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Eliot is considered as one of the predominant voices in modern poetry owing to his poems such as “Ash Wednesday”, “Four Quartets”, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, besides “The Wasteland”, which exhibits the poet’s consistent experimentation with a form of expression, technique and style that pave the way for many modernist poets to come.

Ans to Q No 2: D. H Lawrence was an English novelist who according to F.R Leavis had made a significant literary contribution to the genre of the English novel. In the words of E. M Forster, he was described as “the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation”. He was not just a writer but also a literary critic and a thinker, poet and a playwright as well as a gifted

painter. Lawrence was born to Arthur John Lawrence, a miner and Lydia Lawrence, a tutor. His childhood years were spent in the mining township of Nottinghamshire and it is important to note that most of his mature works are inspired by the inner lives of miners in such mining locales.

Ans to Q No 3: Woolf is known for her experimental use of a free prose style through the technique of the **'stream of consciousness'** in which the narrator uses a free flowing narration in keeping with the flow of the thought patterns of the mind. Also her works were fragmented in nature, figured out the inner workings of the mind and her lyrical style of writing created impressions on the modern reader.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. What were the rapid changes that took place in the modern age?

Q2. Write short notes on the following writers of the modern age.

a. T.S. Eliot

b. W.B. Yeats

c. D.H. Lawrence

d. Virginia Woolf

Q3. Discuss the socio-intellectual context on the Modern Age in details.

Q4. Write short notes on the following aspects

a. First World War and its Impact on English Literature.

b. Second World War and its impact on English Literature.

Q5. Discuss the contributions of the following post war writers

a. James Joyce

b. George Orwall

c. William Golding

Q6. Trace the development of modernist poetry and contributions of some of the major post-war poets.

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