PGEG S3 01

20th Century Novels

SEMESTER III

ENGLISH

BLOCK 1

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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SEMESTER 3
MA IN ENGLISH
COURSE 1: 20TH CENTURY NOVELS
BLOCK 1: CONRAD AND LAWRENCE

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is the first Course of Semester III. In this Course, the learners shall be taken through the study of six novels roughly covering the 20th century. The learners are supposed to study these representative texts in order that they comprehend the issues addressed and learn the proper modes of analysing a work of fiction from the perspectives of various critical approaches. Thus, this course is intended not just to introduce learners to the various theoretical premises of fictional narratives but also to the contextual relations of the texts to the age out of which they actually emerged. The novel appeared as a popular literary form in the 18th century England. However, the six novels prescribed for your study in this course will take into account the preoccupations that permeate the complex of ideas of the 20th century. As major works of fiction, these novels will be the sites of explorations of characters as well as theoretical analysis of fiction. The learners will be required to gain some grasp of both narrative theory as well as cultural-historical issues at work within these texts.

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

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

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

BLOCK 1: INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Unit 3: This unit, which needs to be studied in connection with the previous unit, deals specifically with Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness.* The novel is presented in the form of a frame narrative (a story within a story). In Conrad's own words, this novel is "A wild story of a journalist who becomes manager of a station in the (African) interior and makes himself worshipped by a tribe of savages." At the root of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* lies various assumptions of civilisation, which is hollow at the core.

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

Unit 5: This is the fifth and last unit of the Block you are reading. This unit, which is to be studied along with the previous unit, is based on D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*. From the unit, we hope,

you will gain sufficient ideas on the different aspects of the novel *Sons and Lovers,* which is an example of modernist fiction. While most of his works have elicited both negative and positive attention, *Sons and Lovers* stands out as being Lawrence's most widely read and most widely reviewed novel.

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

UNIT 1 : TRENDS IN 20th CENTURY NOVELS

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 The Intellectual Contexts

- 1.3.1 Modernist Fiction
- 1.3.2 Post-Modernist Fiction

1.4 Important Trends in 20th century Novels

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

1.5 Let us Sum up

1.6 Further Reading

1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

1.8 Possible Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the course on 20th Century Novels. In this unit, we shall try to gain some ideas on the emergence of the various trends in novel writing in the 20th century, as this background shall help you to better

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

1.3 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

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

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

Therefore, in comparison to the late 19th century novels of Thomas Hardy and others, the works of Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia Woolf seemed quite different. Their radical experiments with language, form and

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



LET US KNOW

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

1.3.1 Modernist Fiction

One of the most significant modernist poets T. S. Eliot in 1921, in a brilliant essay entitled "The Metaphysical Poets" famously argued that the present-day poets "must be difficult" because "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility [that of the literary artist of merit], must produce various and complex results." The same argument could perhaps be applied to the novelists. Three other seminal modern intellectuals—Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud also contributed a lot to the emergence of 'modern' ideas in fiction. All speculated that human beings created

God out of their need for a protecting father, and to explain an otherwise inexplicable, threatening, chaotic world. For example,

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

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

Another very significant development that influenced the modernist novels in the 20th century was the flourish of the late Victorian idea of Psychology, which further eroded traditional faith in objective norms of perception, knowledge, and certainty. You will

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

1.3.2 Post modernist Fiction

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

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

postmodernist intellectual and artistic climate reflected in developments in postmodernist fiction.

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

Thus, in this section, we have tried to discuss the growth and development of 20th century fiction as well as the different influences that shaped. We have seen that there are two major groups of 20th century fiction—Modernist and Post-modernist. We have also seen that with the emergence of English language fiction from different parts of the world, there has been a resurgence of fiction writing in the later part of the 20th

century and this is still flourishing. An understanding of this background and the important issues is essential for you to discuss the prescribed modernist and postmodernist texts in this course.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

1.4 IMPORTANT TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY NOVELS

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

1.4.1 Realist Novels

It is important to note that a host of 20th century writers, essentially called modernists, continued within the broad tradition of realism. Among them, mention may be made of John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, Earnest Hamingway, John Updike and Saul Bellow. These writers present a credible picture of the fictional world, in which we are not particularly aware of the narrator's presence. They deal with social, personal and ethical problems and show us the ways people cope with life in the 20th century. In this tradition, specific mention may be made of D. H. Lawrence. His novels conform to the usual pattern of presenting characters at odds with society. However, Lawrence also feels that there must be a new way in which people can relate to each other. It is important to note that while his best novels like *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921) help to explore fresh

areas of experience, we never forget that his characters are bound by all the demands of ordinary existence.

1.4.2 Experimental Novels

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

With a far more emphasis on the mind of the individual and the human psychology, there emerged a technique what is called 'Stream of Consciousness'—a way of writing reflecting a new view of the human mind. It is a technique that seeks to record the random flow of impressions through a character's mind. In the novels of James Joyce [*Ulysses* (1992)], Virginia Woolf [*To The Lighthouse* (1927)] and a few others, the flow of ideas does not follow a pattern, presenting nothing except a chaos of jumbled phrases. In their works, there is an exploration of the characters' mind. Another aspect of such experimental novels is the display of their own fictionality. For example, James Joyce's *Ullysses* is written in a sequence of different

styles. Against the realist fiction's presumptions of reading the world, the 20th century experiments in fiction instead draw attention to the ways in which fiction tries to structure experience, for reality is always beyond the grasp of the text. Therefore, we can say that the technical experiments in these writers were prompted by a genuine awareness of life's complexity in the 20th century.



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

1.4.3 French Noveau Roman

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

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

The term *antinovel* was first used by Jean-Paul Sartre in an introduction to Nathalie Sarraute's novel *Portrait d'un inconnu* (1948; *Portrait of a Man Unknown*). This term has often been applied to the fiction of writers such as Sarraute, Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Marguerite Duras, and Michel Butor and is therefore usually associated with the French *nouveau roman* of the 1950s and 60s. In place of reassuring conventions, these French authors offered the reader more demanding fiction, presenting compressed, repetitive, or only partially explained events whose meaning is rarely clear or definitive. In Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1957; *Jealousy*), for example, the narrator's suspicions of

his wife's infidelity are never confirmed or denied. The story is not laid out chronologically, but rather the reader is subject to the narrator's obsessive review of observed details and events.

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

1.4.4 Magic Realist Novels

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

subvert, exaggerate and parody the ways in which Western European culture has used the novel to make sense of experience—be it personal, social and political.

1.4.5 Feminist Novels

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



LET US KNOW

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

convictions and sensibility" of any single individual consciousness or historical account.

Indeed, such observably postmodern novels as Fowles's *French Lieutenant's Woman*, Swift's *Waterland*, Gray's *Lanark*, and Byatt's *Possession* deconstruct traditional notions of subjectivity and history, and problematize the distinction between fact and fiction, in ways that go beyond what Joyce and other modernists envisioned. Another clear difference is that postmodernist novels tend to be far more demotic and less elitist in orientation than their modernist forerunners.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

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



1.5 LET US SUM UP

From your reading of this unit, you have learnt that in Europe, since the beginning of the 20th century, novels proliferated. You have learnt that the novelists of the 20th century, unlike those in the previous eras, wrote two different kinds of fiction. The first kind refers to a historical and realist narrative conventions that have been familiar to the readers for nearly two centuries. In the other kind, a new form of language prevails in the writing of fiction. The trends of fiction writing in the 20th century can further be divided into Modernist and Postmodernist fiction. Some of the modernist writers

continue to publish novels in the sense that they adhere to the conventions of historical thinking and of realism current in 19th century narratives. While the postmodernist novelists treat new materials with substantially new experiments and effects. We can say that Lawrence, Conrad and James, broadly belong to the modernist tradition of 20th century fiction. On the other hand, Joyce, Robbe Grillet, Nabokov and Pynchon might belong to 20th century post modernist fiction. You have also learnt from this unit that in the later part of the 20th century, following decolonisation, English language fiction evolved like never before. Therefore, in order to have a clear grasp of the issues discussed in this unit, you should be able to read some of the modernist and post modernist novels of the 20th century. We hope that the ideas you have gained from this unit shall help you to discuss the prescribed texts of this course in terms of the characteristics of 20th century fiction.



1.6 FURTHER READING

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1.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Radical experiments with point of view… …representation of time and space… …shattering of the illusion of a unified… …preference of an omniscient narrator… …textual self-referentiality… …literary allusiveness… …fragmented narratives and so on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ans to Q 8: Conrad often uses a narrator Marlow and sometimes disrupts the time sequence of events… …Henry James uses extremely long sentences making the tracing of the line of thought almost impossible… …with an emphasis on the mind of the individual and the human Psychology, authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf employed the 'Stream of Consciousness' technique reflecting a new view of the human mind.

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

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

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

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



1.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Joseph Conrad: Life and Works

2.4 The storyline of the Novel *Heart of Darkness*

2.5 Critical Reception of Conrad and His Works

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

2.9 Possible Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

2.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

2.3 JOSEPH CONRAD: LIFE AND WORKS

Life:



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

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

Imperialism and Colonialism:

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

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

Works:

You must have already read that Conrad was not an Englishman, but he took to writing in English. This should be considered important while you study his works. Conrad's first novel *Almayer's Folly* was published in 1895. The story is based on a Dutch trader whom Conrad had known in Borneo. This was followed by *An Outcast of the Islands,* also based in Borneo in 1896. Meanwhile, Conrad became friends with many of the leading writers of his day and also collaborated with Ford Madox Ford on two novels *The Inheritor* (1901) and *Romance* (1903). Then in 1897, he published *The Nigger of the Narcissus* often considered to be a more mature novel. This novel used "Poetic Realism" to describe the negative effects of one particular man upon a ship's crew. It is one of those novels in which the sea life is powerfully and vividly portrayed. Conrad's *Tales of Unrest,* published in 1898 is a collection of five stories.

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

such a vision is that Conrad in this novel wanted both to endorse the standard Victorian moral positives, and to express his forebodings that the dominant intellectual directions of the 19th century were preparing disaster for the 20th. This novel gradually became one of the best fictional works of Conrad.

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.4 THE STORYLINE OF THE NOVEL *HEART OF DARKNESS*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

2.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CONRAD AND HIS WORKS

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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



2.6 LET US SUM UP

As you have finished reading this unit, you are in a position to discuss the life history of the Polish writer Joseph Conrad and the range of issues he sought to incorporate in his fictional works which are often considered to be great achievements in modernist literature. You have read that the

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



2.7 FURTHER READING

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Said, Edward.(1966). *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

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

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ans to Q 7: The natives are hardly allotted any voice… …most of the characters are unnamed… …the tale brings about an ambience of

darkness, ambiguity and horror… …the journey of Marlow (along with the hardships) has both literal and symbolic meaning.

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

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

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

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

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



2.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Reading the Novel

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

3.4 Let us Sum up

3.5 Further Reading

3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

3.7 Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

3.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

3.3 READING THE NOVEL

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

3.3.1 Major Themes

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

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

The Idea of Darkness:

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

LET US KNOW



Significance of the title *Heart of Darkness*

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

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

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

Civilization and Barbarity:

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

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

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

The Psychological Note:

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

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

The Autobiographical Note:

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.2 Conrad's Art of Characterisation

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

Charlie Marlow:

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

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

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

Kurtz:

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

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

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

The Female Characters:

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

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

Other Minor characters of the Novel :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.3 Conrad's Narrative Style

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

You must have already realised that another way to consider the narrative style of Conrad in this novel is the elements of obscurity that lingers in the entire text. For example, Kurtz means too many things at the same time. *Heart of Darkness* employs doubly oblique narration: an anonymous character reports the story told by Marlow. The doubly oblique narration tends to generate ambiguities. The baffling and bewildering experiences were sought to be expressed through adjectival expressions like "unspeakable rites", "unspeakable secrets", "inconceivable mystery" etc. in the narration.

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

John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knight errands of the sea." This is a unique style of writing on the part of Conrad as he is having Marlow question the frame narrator's generalisation about how they all "looked at the venerable stream", differentiating the internal narrator's outlook from the one of his audience, and setting up the ironic perspective, which characterises the conflict between the wandering seaman and the listeners.

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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



3.4 LET US SUM UP

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

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



3.5 FURTHER READING

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Websites and Electronic Resources:

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

3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



3.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 D H Lawrence: Life and Works

4.4 Story of the Novel *Sons and Lovers*

4.5 Critical Reception of Lawrence

4.6 Let us Sum up

4.7 Further Reading

4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

4.9 Possible Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

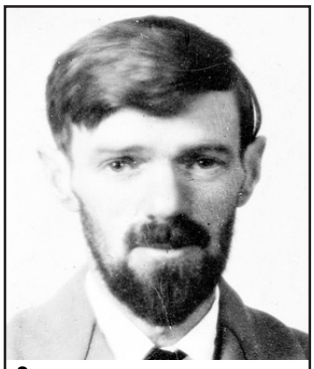
4.2 INTRODUCTION

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

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

4.3 D. H. LAWRENCE: LIFE AND WORKS

Life:



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

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

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

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

In the autumn of 1902, Lawrence took up a post as a pupil teacher at the British School in Eastwood though he did not enjoy teaching. From 1906 to 1908, he enrolled in the teachers' training course in the University College at Nottingham, earning his Teacher's Certificate at the end. During

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

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

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

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

very next day (2 March 1930). Five years later, his remains were exhumed and the ashes were taken to Taos where they were mixed with the cement used to make a small shrine in Lawrence's memory at Kiowa ranch.

LET US KNOW

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

His Works:

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

When Lawrence and Frieda Weekley returned to England in June 1913, they found themselves in the midst of the fashionable literary society. Lawrence became acquainted with Lady Ottoline Morrell (the model for Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love*), and the philosopher Bertrand

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

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

In January 1916, the Lawrences moved to Cornwall, where, however, they were hounded as German spies. Moreover, Lawrence also had to undergo a medical examination to determine whether he was fit to be

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

In the beginning of 1922, the Lawrences were invited by a wealthy American admirer, Mabel Dodge Sterne, to join a colony of artists at Taos in New Mexico. They accepted and travelled to America via Ceylon and Australia, arriving in September. They stayed there for three years with only an interval of a few months between 1923 and 1924 being spent in England. They also travelled extensively in Mexico but came back to Taos where they bought the Kiowa Ranch from Mabel Dodge Sterne (now Mabel Luhan, after marriage to her American-Indian lover). During the excursion to Mexico, Lawrence suffered his first pulmonary haemorrhage that anticipated his later emaciation and death. In the third year at Taos, the Lawrences stayed in their own ranch, leading a rough frontier life, an experience they longed to revive after they left the place. However, Lawrence never did return to the

place due to various reasons. Lawrence wrote his *Kangaroo* during the early part of this period namely during his 3 month stay in Australia and revised a novel *The Boy in the Bush* by the Australian woman writer M. L. Skinner. After recording his experiences and responses to Australia in these novels, he recorded his Mexican experiences in Quetzalcoatl (that later became *The Plumed Serpent*, published in 1926).

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



LET US KNOW

Range of Lawrence's Works

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 STORY OF THE NOVEL *SONS AND LOVERS*

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

4.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF LAWRENCE

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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



4.6 LET US SUM UP

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



4.7 FURTHER READING

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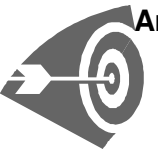
Trotter, David. (Ed). (2009). *D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers*. Oxford World's Classic.

Williams, Linda Ruth (1997). *D.H. Lawrence*. Plymouth: North Cote House.

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

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

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



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

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

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

Ans to Q 6: His major theme of the relationship between men and women, which he regarded as disastrously wrong in his time.

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

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

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

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



4.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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UNIT 5: D. H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers* (Part II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Reading the Novel

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

5.4 Critical Reception of *Sons and Lovers*

5.5 Let us Sum up

5.6 Further Reading

5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

5.8 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

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

5.2 INTRODUCTION

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

5.3 READING THE NOVEL

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

5.3.1 Major Themes

The Novel as an Oedipal Drama

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

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

Class and Society

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

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

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

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

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



LET US KNOW

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

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

Industrialisation

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

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

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

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

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

Gender and Patriarchy

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

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

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

Individual Identity

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

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

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

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

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

Nature

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

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

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

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

5.3.2 Lawrence's Art of Characterisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

5.3.3 Lawrence's Narrative Style

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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

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

5.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *SONS AND LOVERS*

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

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

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

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

still technically omniscient, becomes to a great extent, unreliable. Following Martz, critics like Diane S. Bonds, Graham Holderness and Tony Pinkney have questioned the validity of the novel's association with realism, insisting more on the constructed and fictional nature of such an ostensible neutrality that the realistic mode proclaims.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

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



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5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Oedipus complex is the choice of the mother as "love-object" of the child… …the child's rejection of the castrated mother in favour

of the phallic father and entry into the social world of the father… …traces of the Oedipal complex, however, exist in the psyche of the individual even when he grows up into adulthood… …there are some instances in the novel (in chapter 8) which shows the eroticized relation between Mrs. Morel and Paul, within the family.

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

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

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

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

hand, refuses to take into account on organic sense of community and is more individualistic.

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

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

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



5.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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