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American Literature

SEMESTER IV

ENGLISH

BLOCK 3

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SEMESTER 4

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE 3: AMERICAN LITERATURE

BLOCK 3: FICTION

DETAILED SYLLABUS

CONTENTS **Pages**

Unit 11 : Ernest Hemingway: Life and Works **215-227**

Hemingway: Life and Works, Story of the Novel, Critical Reception of Hemingway

Unit 12 : Ernest Hemingway: *The Old Man and the Sea* **228-249**

Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Major Characters, Hemingway's Narrative Style

Unit 13 : Herman Melville*:* Life and Works **250-261**

Melville: Life and Works, Story of the Novel, Critical Reception of Melville

Unit 14 : Herman Melville*: Billy Budd* **262-285**

Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Major Characters, Melville's Narrative Style

Unit 15 : Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* **286-309**

Mark Twain: Life and Works, Story of the Novel, Reading the Novel, Major Themes, Mark Twain's Art of Characterisation, Mark Twain's Narrative Style

BLOCK 3: INTRODUCTION

In this Block, we shall discuss American fiction with reference to some of the most representative fiction writers.

Unit 11 & 12: These units shall introduce us to Ernest Hemingway, the celebrated American novelist, and his Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. We shall also learn how many of his works carry deep impressions of his own experiences with life.

Unit 13 & 14: These units deal with Herman Melville's novel *Billy Budd*, which records the final confrontation between evil and innocence. *Billy Budd* could be seen as a narrative that takes place in the sea and at the same time, it could also be read as a philosophical novel dealing with Christian allegories. Thus, in these units, we shall find that *Billy Budd* uncovers a strong, mature author who questions his own art.

Unit 15: In this unit, we shall discuss the American novelist Mark Twain who occupies a unique position in the history of the American novel. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures Huckleberry Finn* are two famous novels by Mark Twain that have fascinated readers for over a century now. By the time we finish reading this unit, we shall learn that *The Adventures Huckleberry Finn* is highly significant due to its deep study and analysis, of issues relating to racism and morality.

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 11: ERNEST HEMINGWAY: *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Ernest Hemingway: The Novelist

11.3.1 His Life

11.3.2 His Works

11.4 Critical Reception of Hemingway

11.5 Let us Sum up

11.6 Further Reading

11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.8 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

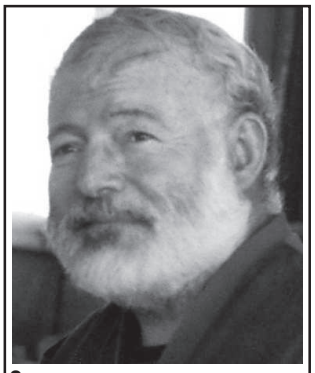
- discuss the life and works of Ernest Hemingway
- read about Hemingway the man and the novelist with all his unique accomplishments
- state why he is considered one of the greatest modern writers from America
- discuss how Hemingway has been critically received

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 3 of the course on American literature. This unit shall introduce us to Ernest Hemingway the celebrated American novelist, his colourful life as a hunter, war reporter, writer and a world celebrity who won the Noble Prize for literature in 1954 and the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. This unit will also familiarise us with Hemingway's works and the ways in which many of his works carry deep impressions of his own experiences with life. We shall finally learn why Hemingway has been pronounced the most influential author of 20th century.

11.3 ERNEST HEMINGWAY: THE NOVELIST

11.3.1 His Life



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois, in an upper class suburban in Chicago, the second child and first son of Dr. Clarence Edmonds Hemingway and Gace Hemingway, a devout religious woman with considerable musical talent. Ernest's mother hoped that her son would develop an interest in music but Ernest was no musician, and instead, inherited his father's love for adventures. His boyhood and youth were actively spent in hunting, fishing, camping, vegetable gardening, adventuring in the Michigan north woods, where his family had a summer cabin. Hemingway's literary career started early. He was a reporter for his high school newspaper 'The Trapeze', also published stories in the school's magazine called 'The Tabula'. After graduating from High School, he started his career as a reporter for the Kansas City Star instead of attending college. At 18, he volunteered to serve first as a Red Cross ambulance driver in World War I joining the Italian army and later as an infantry officer. However, at 19, he was badly injured by shrapnel burst. He moved to Paris, re-entered into newspaper work as a correspondent for the 'Toronto Daily Star' reporting on the Greco-Turkish War. In Paris he fell in with a group of American and English expatriate authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and Ford Madox Ford and became close friends with them, who helped him develop his craft. In the early 20s, Hemingway became famous as a chronicler of the disaffection felt by many American youths after World War I.



LET US KNOW

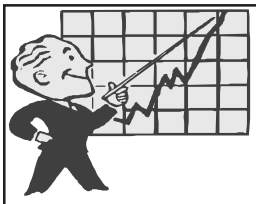
The phrase 'lost generation' became instantly popular among his readers–a name symbolizing the attitudes of the post world War I American generation, especially the young authors, who had lost all their hope in the war. They were not moved by noble patriotic high ideals anymore but were led by greedy, power-loving groups. The high sentiments of the older generation authors were not to be trusted; only reality which was harsh and life without any meaning was truth for them (the war's effect on their lives and the futility and meaninglessness of life).

In 1923 Hemingway made the first of the five consecutive yearly trips to Pamplona, Spain to experience bullfighting that eventually served as the basis for 'The Sun Also Rises', recording expatriate lives in Paris and Pamplona. He very casually quoted Gertrude Stein's line 'You are all a lost generation' in the epigraph of the novel, the first major novel of his career. The first few volumes of his short stories *In Our Time* and *Men without Women* and *Fiesta* or *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell To Arms* established him as an extraordinary young author of the time. He became the dominant literary voice of America with his revolutionary zeal, charged with his style of writing.

In 1928, Hemingway moved to Key West, Florida and fishing occupied most of his time. In 1932, he went on a 2-month fishing expedition to Havana; then in 1939 to Cuba for fishing again, sailed to Paris, and went to Africa for a Safari in Kenya and Tanganyika. These years of experience in fishing provided him with material for his *The Old Man and the Sea* and the Safari provided him with a setting for 'Green Hills of Africa'. Thus, his life as well as art revolved around hunting, fishing, boxing, bullfighting; endeavours that the author had deep interest in and longed to master. In 1937, he went to Spain as a war correspondent covering the Spanish Civil War,

which provided him essential materials for *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). This novel deals with an American volunteer and a band of Spanish Loyalist guerrillas. When World War II started, he volunteered his service and cooperated with the US Navy intelligence. Drawing on his World War II experiences, he published in 1950 *Across the River* and *Into the Trees* about a May-December romance. The novel was without his earlier control and precision of narration, less realistic and more symbolic. Critics attacked the book and readers claimed that it was not Hemingway but a parody of Hemingway.

In 1959, the Hemingway family shifted to Idaho. At the end of his life, he suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and mental depression. The legendary figure committed suicide by a shotgun at his home in Ketchum, Idaho, on July 2, 1961 and left the world to mourn.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Mention Ernest Hemingway's vast range of hobbies that contribute towards making him a successful novelist?

Q 2: What does the phrase 'Lost Generation' mean? Discuss.

11.3.2 His Works

Published in 1926, *The Sun Also Rises*, all in the first person narration, is about the predicament of a hero left alone by an unlucky war wound and his ladylove, an English woman. He has learnt to lead an honest life with much courage in spite of his plight; even the lady, though morally ruined, is true to herself. The hero is morally strong enough to be with her. Hemingway's use of the phrase in the novel 'Lost Generation' to indicate the generation after World War I, which lost all hopes and aspirations, instantly became popular among his readers.

A Farewell to Arms, published in 1929, communicated directly Hemingway's World War I experiences, which included his pain of

being severely wounded in Italy. It is a romantic tragedy of love and war dealing with cruelty and stupidity of war and the greedy materialism and hunger for power. In the novel, war is synonymous with horror. During the war, near the Austria-Italy border, the protagonist is wounded by a machine-gun bullet. Critics believe that the near-death experiences of the protagonist narrated by Hemingway re-tell his own fear of death and war experiences. For Hemingway, writing was a kind of self-therapy.

During this period, he wrote a good number of short stories—the genre for which Hemingway is best known today. He also published two significant non-fictional works *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) which is about big game hunting and *Death in the Afternoon* (1939), which talks about bull fighting. Both the works reflect the author's lifelong love and interest in these two violent sports.

To Have or Have not (1937) deals with contemporary social and political issues which the author experienced being an observer in the Spanish Civil War. This provided material for his play *The Fifth Column* (1960). The novel is often regarded as Hemmingway's masterpiece. His bestselling novel 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' (1940) revolves around two themes—the dynamiting of a bridge by a guerrilla group and the love story of an American partisan and a girl from the guerrilla troop. After a decade of complete silence, in 1950 'Across the River and into the Trees' appeared, which was a symbolic love story. The novel was neither a critical nor a popular success. In 1952, Hemingway wrote a short novel *The Old Man and the Sea* that restored his literary stature. This was his last work of fiction, based on the story of survival and Hemingway's years of experiences of the fisherman's craft. It gained immediate critical acclaim. It is a saga of struggle between an old fisherman and the greatest catch of his life.

A good number of his works came out posthumously. *A Moveable Feast*, published in 1964, narrates striking and abusive representations of famous literary figures the author used to know

in Paris. The long semi-autobiographical novel, set in the Caribbean Islands is about a painter, his relationship with his family, his sense of loneliness and at the end his violent death. 'The dangerous summer', published in 1985, is a record of a bullfight Hemingway experienced and witnessed in Spain in 1960. In 1986 appeared *The Garden of Eden*, which was about the love affair of two women and one man. The work attempted to explore complex gender issues.

Hemingway's works before the World War I, his short stories and three novels, namely, *Fiesta*, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which won wide critical acclaim as well as popular success, were actually enough to make Hemingway one of the greatest and most influential prose writers of the 20th century. The author was profoundly affected by the First World War and his early works are illusion breakers, ironical and full of suffering. He grew up as a writer and his mortally wounded experience of war, deep interest in deadly sports, made death omnipresent as the supreme reality. His writings are full of his philosophy, his way of life—a life with qualities which help man meet his end—courage, dignity and the power to endure. By 1950, hostile critics started ignoring Hemingway, declaring the author's best years had been past. In 1952, Hemingway shocked them all with his *The Old Man and the Sea* that deserves to be placed with the best works of pre-war time.



LET US KNOW

Hemingway is believed to have been influenced by authors like Gertrude Stein and James Joyce**.**

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) poet, short story writer, novelist, literary experimentalist, art patron and an influential literary figure of the 20th century, was born to a wealthy German-Jewish immigrant of a merchant family in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. During World War I, she served as an ambulance driver for the French. She continued to inspire American expatriates like Sherwood

Anderson, Hemingway and Fitzgerald. She coined the phrase 'the lost generation' to describe the expatriate writers living abroad between the wars which Hemingway quoted in the epigraph of his 'The Sun Also Rises'. Her memoir 'The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas' published in 1933 reflects the writer's experiences in the colourful world of art in Paris between the World Wars but written from Toklas's point of view, inventing another technique of describing her own experiences while pretending to be someone else.

James Joyce (James Augustine Aloysius Joyce) (1882-1941) was born in Rathgar, a wealthy suburb in Dublin, Ireland, of old Irish nobility. With Joyce's *Ulysses*, a modern version of Homer's epic *Odyssey*, Joyce was hailed as a genius. His inventive writing style, advanced use of interior monologue, use of stream of consciousness technique, accurate detailing of any geographical feature of locality (namely Dublin in the book) and multiple philosophical themes in the novel set a new course in novel writing and established him as a leading modernist. At the outbreak of World War II, fearing Nazi invasion of Paris, Joyce and his family had to move to Zurich where eventually the writer died of a stomach ulcer at the age of 59 in 1941. Joyce's popularity spread in the decades following his demise. *Ulysses* marks the foundation of the Modernist movement in America.

11.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF HEMINGWAY [Adapted from the entry on Hemingway, Ernest by Thomas Strychacz in *Encyclopaedia of Twentieth Century Fiction*]

No writer of the 20th century can match Ernest Hemingway's charisma. War hero, war reporter, big-game hunter, bullfighting aficionado, celebrity expatriate, bestselling author, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954 – for 30 years, "Papa" Hemingway found ways to place a series of iconic roles and images before the American public. However, few writers

can match Hemingway's impressive range of literary accomplishments either. The Nobel Prize committee, in its remarks, celebrated him for the "influence that he has exerted on contemporary style." The committee was correct. He was a key figure in the development of American literary modernism, creator of a terse, minimalist style virtually synonymous with his name. He fathered a distinctively American school of "hard-boiled" fiction, whose practitioners, from Dashiell Hammett to Elmore Leonard, feature tough prose and tight-lipped men. Perhaps most remarkably, half a century after his death Hemingway's posthumously published writing has provoked new appraisals of what had long seemed the obvious interpretation of his work: that it was mostly engaged with men and their tough, lonely pursuit of manhood.

After a short stint as a reporter for the Kansas City Star, Hemingway, eager to see action in World War I, undertook to drive ambulances on the Italian front. There, in July 1918, he was seriously injured by an exploding shell. That wounding, according to many scholars, was the seminal event of his life. Physically wounded and mentally traumatised male characters haunt his fiction, from Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), suffering from some serious though unspecified wound to his genitals, to a shell-shocked Nick Adams in "A Way You'll

Never Be," to a plethora of gored bullfighters. For Hemingway, it seems, the existential condition of men in the early twentieth century is to be wounded. Scholars generally agree on two corollaries. First, those male characters who rise bravely to the challenge of that wounding by exhibiting what Hemingway called "grace under pressure" define true manhood. Second, displaying grace under pressure typically means observing a rigorous code of conduct, which allows one to impose a ritualistic control over chaos and pain, and which stands in lieu of a fading belief in a divinely ordained cosmos. Philip Young (1952) importantly extended the idea of the code to Hemingway's early writing style, arguing that its famous economy dramatised in linguistic terms the control men sought to exercise over themselves.

However, the first two great works of Hemingway's career, *In Our Time* (1925) and *The Sun Also Rises*, cannot be explained only in terms of his wounding. By 1922, Hemingway was living and working in Paris, a hotbed of literary and artistic modernist practices. There he was inspired by novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald and the modernist poet Ezra Pound, whose call to express emotion and meaning in poetry by way of compressed, concrete images found a counterpart in Hemingway's famous description of his style, set forth in Death in the Afternoon, to "put down what really happened in action." There he met James Joyce and admired his paradigmatic modernist novel, *Ulysses* (1922); and there he met the avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein, whose linguistic experiments were a particular influence on Hemingway's early style. Through her, he was introduced to the work of post-impressionist painters such as Matisse, Picasso, and Cezanne, whose techniques of fragmentation and juxtaposition resonate throughout *In Our Time*–a work about which Hemingway claimed that he was "trying to do the country like Cezanne."

The posthumous *A Moveable Feast* (1964) gives a moving, often scurrilous, sometimes hilarious, but always fascinating account of those Paris years. Both *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises* portray a post-war world of angst, anomie, disillusion, casual violence, and ruptured relationships amid a pervading sense that all traditional structures of value–spiritual, social, and ethical–are being swept away or shifting in unpredictable ways. *In Our Time*, a collection of short stories thematically related to even shorter interspersed vignettes, concerns conflict in a variety of ways: cultural and racial tensions between European Americans and Native Americans in the early stories, for example, are interwoven with laconically delineated flashes of horror from World War I battlefields. Another source of conflict emerges in stories such as "The End of Something," "Cat in the Rain," and "Out of Season," which anatomize gender relations between men and women in terms of power plays.

The post-war stories in particular depict (to employ a term Hemingway popularised when he used it as the epigraph to Sun) a "lost generation" of men and women who wander, irresolute and broken,

searching for spiritual or emotional sustenance. Like other famous modernist works such as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *In Our Time* develops aesthetically in concert with a wide spread sense in the early twentieth century that traditional frameworks of Western society were fast eroding. Many scholars consider that Hemingway's work from the early 1930s on suffers an aesthetic decline, relieved by *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), as the cumulative effect of his alcoholism and his devotion to his "Papa Hemingway" persona began to take its toll on his writing.



LET US KNOW

The Old Man and the Sea, published in 1952, the last one to be published in his lifetime, was a huge success, restoring his reputation as well as earning him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953. In 1954, the Nobel Academy cited his mastery over narration and his powerful writing style. The novel regenerated Hemingway's writing career. The novel has been praised as a classic. It is placed with Melville's *Moby Dick* and Faulkner's short story 'The Bear'.

Hemingway's sensitivity toward gender issues has been the focus of much attention in the last 20 years, particularly after the publication of *The Garden of Eden*. Some critics have explored his career in terms of a fluctuating relationship between masculine and feminine elements of his psyche or investigated the importance of his fascination with cutting and colouring hair, to his constructions of identity. These ideas occur even in what appears the unlikely venue of Hemingway's epic novel of the Spanish Civil War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which places Robert Jordan as an American sent to aid a Loyalist (Republican) guerrilla group in their effort to blow up a strategic bridge. The novel gives Hemingway his most thorough opportunity to explore the psyches of men at war at a pivotal historical moment – the imminent victory of the fascists in Spain foreshadowing the rise of fascism elsewhere in Europe. But it also allows him to create one of his more complex and evocative female characters in the figure of Pilar,

who supplants her husband's leadership of the guerillas and plays a tough counterpoint to Maria, whose rape before the novel opens represents in human terms what is at stake in this conflict, and whose experience of love with Jordan offers partial redemption.

Over a decade later, many critics greeted the novella *The Old Man and the Sea* as a sign of Hemingway's literary resurrection, and it was in large measure responsible for his winning the Nobel Prize in 1954. Certainly this tale of a Cuban fisherman in his battle to capture the biggest marlin he or anyone else has ever heard of seems in many ways a miniature gloss on ideas long held to be the quintessence of Hemingway's aesthetic and philosophy. The tale pits Santiago, a man off alone, against gigantic natural forces–the sea, the marlin, sharks – that he seeks to overcome by strength and enduring courage. He is guided by a simple code of ethics that has him respecting the great adversary he must kill. His failure to return the marlin intact after sharks attack accentuates the grandeur of his accomplishment. Since the marlin no longer possesses economic worth, its value has to be reckoned instead in mythic terms: as an epic battle between human and nature, between a man's frail body and his indomitable will, in which Santiago, that most humble of fishermen, takes his place among David, Hercules, Beowulf, Captain Ahab, and many more in an ancient tradition of giant slayers. In some respects, this novella plays an odd role in Hemingway's career. Its laconic understatement and "winner-take-nothing" attitude return us to his early work, but the mythic resonances of the story make Santiago a more complete and confident hero than traumatised characters such as Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, and Frederic Henry. Yet the flood of posthumous work in the next 40 years – Islands, Garden, and True at First Light (1999), among others – showed that Hemingway's attention never shifted from representing a cultural landscape not only of traumatic disorientation, but also of the myriad new possibilities for human expression it liberated.



11.5 LET US SUM UP

After going through the different sections of this unit, you must have understood the importance of Ernest Hemingway in the context of American literature. Authenticity in writing was important to him, as he believed that one could treat a theme in writing more honestly if the writer had actually experienced/observed the subject closely in life. Contrasting to the earlier themes and narrative styles, he enhanced literature of his time with realistic themes borrowed from his personal life like isolation, friendship, strength, skill, pride, man and the nature etc., all immortalised by the individuality of his unique style of subtlety. His Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Old Man and the Sea* is a landmark in American fiction.



11.6 FURTHER READING

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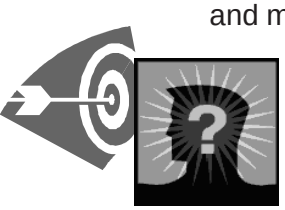
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11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Uncomplicated plots, colloquial language, exact description of situation/scene and character… …the telling of the actual life… …experiences from personal life… …Hemingway's unique personality and ceaseless quest of adventure loomed almost as large as his creative talent… …passionately involved in bull-fighting, hunting, fishing, boxing to war front.

Ans to Q 2: Appeared first in Hemingway's 1926 novel, *The Sun Also Rises…* …coined by Gertrude Stein who heard this from her French garage owner to the young auto mechanics about their poor repair skills… …all the disillusioned young men who had survived World War I… ...signifies a sense of moral loss and high aim in life… ...courageous young men died in the war front or deadly wounded both physically and mentally lost their hopes and belief in the moral guideposts.



11.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Explain Ernest Hemingway's timelessness as a writer.

Q 2: Write a note on how Hemingway has continued inspiring generations of writers and readers.

Q 3: Discuss the significance of the different literary works of Ernest Hemingway.

Q 4: *The Old Man and the Sea* as a sign of Hemingway's literary resurrection, and it was in large measure responsible for his winning the Nobel Prize in 1954. Elaborate.

Q 5: What is the relevance of 'Lost Generation' in the context of American literature? Discuss Hemingway's contributions to the literature of the 'Lost Generation.'

Q 6: Hemingway became famous as a chronicler of the disaffection felt by many American youths after World War I. Explain.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 12: ERNEST HEMINGWAY: *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Reading the Novel

- 12.3.1 The Story Element
- 12.3.2 Major Themes
- 12.3.3 Major Characters
- 12.3.4 Narrative Style

12.4 Critical Reception of the Novel

12.5 Let us Sum up

12.6 Further Reading

12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.8 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the major themes dealt with in his works mainly in *The Old Man and the Sea*
- explicate his unique prose style as reflected in his classic novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.
- appreciate the novel in its totality.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit needs to be studied in connection with the previous unit. We shall in this unit, try to examine the various important aspects of Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea.* Ernest Hemingway was an overall outdoor person who loved adventure, bull fighting, fishing, hunting and was also known to many as a great fan of baseball. He learned from nature's lessons which formed ingredients for his short stories including the Nick Adams Stories (Nick Adams is Hemingway's young fictional

persona) and *The Old Man and the Sea.* He relied heavily on autobiographical sources as an author. Both as a dedicated writer and careful editor, he achieved widespread fame that was swiftly followed by a steady decline in terms of public support for his works. However, with the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea,* his popularity began to grow and continues to last beyond his mortal existence, even after his suicide in 1961. As we finish reading this unit, we shall have read about the major themes, major characters, Hemingway's narrative style and the reception of the novel in the world of literature.

12.3 READING THE NOVEL

The following subsections will help you to read the text in some detail.

12.3.1 The Story Element

Santiago is an old fisherman who is luckless but undaunted and for 84 days, he has caught nothing. The fisherman, who had fished in the Gulf Stream off Havana is alone today, impoverished and considered unlucky. For the first forty days, Manolin, a young boy whom Santiago has taught since the age of five, was his partner in fishing. Now Manolin's parents have ordered him to fish with another productive fisherman. Yet, every evening when Santiago returns empty-handed, Manolin helps carry home his skiff, brings him food and beer and keeps him company. Every morning they drink coffee together before setting out in their respective boats. On the 85th day, Santiago sets out before dawn on a three-day odyssey in a desperate attempt to break his run of bad luck. He loves the sea and all the hardships and cruelties it offers. He baits and waits hopefully for the epic catch. Eventually he catches a marlin of epic proportions and after a long battle with the fish at last Santiago manages to land the great fish. On the third morning when the mighty fish, which is longer than his boat, becomes tired, the old fisherman harpoons it. The fish is dead and the tired but fulfilled old man heads for home, hardly believing his own victory. However, the return to

Havana proves a nightmare. The sharks soon scent the blood of the dead fish within an hour and come in pursuit. First, a Mako shark attacks the marlin, tearing away a great hunk of its flesh. Santiago fights and kills it with his harpoon without trouble, but it sinks with the precious harpoon still in it. The great tear in the marlin's flesh releases more blood and scent into the water attracting more sharks. With whatever equipment on board, Santiago repeatedly fights off the packs of the sharks, defending not only his own prize but also the dignity of the dead fish. In exhaustion and great physical pain, he wonders whether it was a sin to kill the marlin, but soon realises that it's in man's nature to fight. He tells himself, "You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish… …You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman." Completely fatigued, he is forced to resort to progressively makeshift means of repulsing the sharks—first his knife, then a club and lastly the tiller of his boat. All his struggles go in vain. The sharks eventually take the marlin clean. On the fourth morning, Santiago, defeated, reaches the harbour. Alone, in the dark, he looks back at the dead fish's skeletal remains in the reflection from the street light—all its beauty and valuable meat are gone with just the head and the tail as leftovers. He stumbles home to his shack. The next morning, while coming for coffee, Manolin discovers the injured old man in his hut. He comforts Santiago on being defeated by the sharks. The other fishermen marvel at the catch and seeing the marlin's skeleton find it the greatest fish they have ever seen. Manolin assures him that the fish cannot defeat him and they will fish together again as he has to learn much from the experienced old fisherman. That afternoon, some American tourists see the marlin's skeleton and confused by a waiter's bad English, mistake it for a shark; thereby miss the whole point of drama. As the novel ends, with Manolin sitting behind him in his shack, Santiago falls asleep, dreaming of young lions he had seen along the coast of Africa when he was young.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you really think *The Old Man and the Sea* is a tragic story?

Q 2: What role does Manolin play in the story?

12.3.2 Major Themes

The novel presents a number of themes and provides sufficient strata of meaning. The narrative has multiple layers of meaning and critics have many different opinions to offer. The Swedish Academy especially commented on the central themes the novelist dealt with and upheld courage and compassion in a world of violence and death, themes that were seen as the distinguishing traits of great writers and Hemingway reproduced the real picture of the hard countenance of the age.

The Grace and Honor in Courage, Struggle, Defeat and Death

Santiago resembles an epic hero struggling against defeat day after day, having spent 84 days without catching a fish—soon breaking his own record of 87 days. His skiff resembles 'the flag of permanent defeat''. Critics are especially concerned with two wonderful qualities of the old fisherman—his individualism (that he resolves to sail out beyond the others to the place where the biggest prize lay) and his love for the sea creatures with whom he has to fight to get his due. Santiago is an alienated individual. His wife is dead; he has no child; he is old; luck does not favour him; socially he is cut off by the fisherman community. Manolin is his only companion, whom he often remembers in his fatigue and alienation. However, strikingly, he is independent and strong enough to stand alone saying, 'no one should be alone in their old age'. He is reluctant to bow down to defeat at any stage of his life. He continues to ward off the sharks from stealing his prize, fully knowing the battle is useless. While all his struggle go in vain and on the fourth morning he arrives fully exhausted from the three days of fighting, he says,

"A man may be destroyed but not defeated." The novel points out the honour of struggle.

Santiago represents the heroic aspect of mankind. Success may not be the ultimate goal of heroism. Success and failure are the consequences of human endeavours, however, facing adversity or suffering with grace and dignity matters most, which define true heroism. Santiago says, "[M]an is not made for defeat." Like a true hero, Santiago demonstrates heroism with dignity and valour. Even the marlin is heroic in its struggle to escape. It is described as 'great', 'calm' and 'noble' for its dignified struggle and suffering. Both Santiago and the marlin appear clearly as sufferers as well as victors. Success has two different faces—outer, which is materialist and inner, which is spiritual. Though the old hero clearly fails to demonstrate outer success and loses his hard-earned possession, the fish, what he earns in the process is heroism, his lost dignity and respect. Therefore, one way of looking at the novel is the triumph of indomitable heroic spirit of man over materiel resources. As the story starts, Santiago is obsessed to prove his worth to the villagers like he did in the past. However, for Santiago 'Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it.' Like a hero, Santiago hopes to prove his worth each time through his actions.



LET US KNOW

The novel also hints at feelings of brotherhood in human society for though the hero is an isolated man, he often remembers his youth— symbolised by the baseball and the African lions. He has realised that moving ahead alone and leaving his friends behind has ruined not only the great fish but his life too. Santiago is not above an average man, he is dependent on the society and desires human companionship. The theme of brotherhood is also a significant aspect of the novel.

The Relationship between Man and Nature:

The kinship between man and nature has been confronted by authors since long. Nature as a theme has been explored by several generation of authors. As an author, Hemingway was inspired by Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), the American classic, which had an effect on Hemingway's creative mind. *The Old Man and the Sea* sketches the relationship between Santiago and nature. Unlike Melville, he did not represent the malevolence of nature. Unlike Ahab, the protagonist in *Moby Dick*, Santiago does not feel a sense of union with nature.

Hemingway's work talks about an invisible tie that man shares with nature. The novel presents the story of an old man's courage and on a larger scale of human beings' heroic journey and constant struggle with nature. Nature is represented as a malevolent force, which is respected by all for its power. For Santiago, the sea is 'la mar'; he acknowledges the beauty and also occasional cruelty of the sea; fishing is a way of cultivating a craft or art.

In the narrative, Hemingway has provided a detailed account of the old man's thoughts on the grand beautiful fish. With great struggle Santiago conquers the fish that symbolises nature with due recognition of its being his worthy foe; but he is defeated by another natural entity-the sharks. He respects the marlin's strength and intelligence and is impressed by its beauty. While fighting the sharks, he defends not only his own victory but the dignity of the dead fish as well. He comes to love and respect the fish and laments its death. His empathy towards nature—the weather, the sea and the sea creatures reflect another face of Hemingway—a sort of transcendental pantheism, opposing the Christian symbolism in the book. Santiago loves the sea but at times thinks of it as his enemy. However, he loves the sea for its beauty as well as forgives it for its cruelty. Therefore, the novel expresses the conflict between man and nature as well as man's place in nature. It is not a chronicle of man's struggle against the natural world but a story of man's kinship

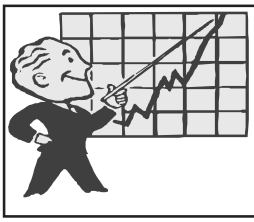
with nature. The old fisherman as well as the fish exhibit essential human qualities like pride, honour and bravery. However, neither of them is above the eternal law—they must kill or be killed.

Pride and Determination

The character of Santiago is based on the classic heroes of the ancient world. Like them Santiago is strong, brave and possesses a high moral sense. However, his pride causes his downfall. By sailing beyond the measured boundaries of the average fishermen and by losing the marlin to the sharks, Santiago establishes his pride, the flaw which proves dangerous. It is his pride that forces him to risk more than he could afford as he ventures 'beyond all people in the world' to catch the fish. Keenly aware of the mistake he has made, he regrets his pride. His 84-day-long travel far into the gulf waters and killing the mighty marlin are proof of his pride on his own self as a skilful fisherman. His overwhelming trust in himself and on his skills leads to the blow that he experiences during his voyage. However, the narrator does not seem to condemn the protagonist for being proud. Santiago is an instance of how pride motivates man to greatness. His determination to catch the marlin and bring it to shore and his ferocious fights with the sharks exhibit his strong desire to fight against the destructive forces of nature – all these show how pride works in him.

When the first shark comes he is full of resolution but has little hope; however, after some time, "He hit (the shark) without hope but with resolution". He does not mind dying in the process of killing the marlin, and is willing to die fighting the sharks. The old man never gives up his spirit. When he goes back to Havana losing his prize to the sharks after a long battle, he is fully aware of the fact that he has done something courageous. Honour also depends upon one having the pride to struggle till the end, irrespective of the outcome. The edible portion of the fish is gone and the old man almost dies during the fight but the honour he achieves is not due to

the battle but for his pride and determination to succeed. His pride offers Santiago a challenge worthy of his heroism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What are the various themes dealt with in the novel?

5.3.3 Major Characters

The following are some of the important characters in the novel.

Santiago

The novel's central character, a poor but humble, skilful, dedicated fisherman is the old man in the novel's title who has had an extended run of ill luck. His best days are over; has lost his wife, has no children. Santiago says to Manolin, "I am a strange old man." And as the story develops, he proves right. After going without luck for so many years, which should have affected him badly, shattering his self-confidence, his skills as well as his sensory perceptions are perfect. Not only in physical strength but Santiago is strong in will power as well. Once he readies himself for the challenge, he stops at nothing.

Despite his mastery over the craft, for long 84 days, he has been unable to catch a single fish and started losing his sense of identity and the community's respect as well. Nevertheless, this doesn't deter him; he is humble as well as proud of his knowledge of the sea and sea creatures; it's his mastery over his craft, which keeps his hopes alive, regardless of the circumstances. He has his own philosophy of life and follows his own code of conduct. He is a dedicated fisherman who thinks beyond material gain for survival at a time when materialistic views have percolated through people's minds and the 'fishing village' concept has given way to the 'fishing industry' concept. For him his profession has spiritual connotations.

He acknowledges it as a part of nature's order in the eternal cycle that binds all creatures into one, as either a predator or a prey.

Throughout his life, the old fisherman has been fighting against nature's odds to test his strength; the giant marlin is the greatest challenge of his life against which he struggles tirelessly for three days. It is paradoxical that Santiago loses the great fish to the sharks but the marlin becomes the symbol of his greatest victory. The whole episode of hooking the marlin is symbolic of his strength, knowledge and positive energy. The old fisherman reveals his endurance, his love and respect for the marlin—his opponent—his 'defeat' against the sharks and his triumph in continuing his struggle against his enemies. He suffers a lot while hunting but shows 'grace under pressure'. He is desperate to have an epic catch just not to survive, but to prove his skills once more, to re-establish his identity as a fisherman, secure his reputation in his community and ensure honour for himself and his successor—Manolin—for a life time.



LET US KNOW

It is important to note that the name 'Santiago' has biblical connotations. In Spanish Santiago stands for Saint James who was a fisherman apostle in the New Testament. At an allegorical level, he is a Christ-like figure. Santiago is old, but not senile; unlucky, but not helpless or defeated; gentle, but not soft; proud, but not boastful; resigned but not passive. In his tragedy, suffering, isolation and near-death condition, he is linked with Christ. The "young lions" of Santiago's dream are also very suggestive. The loins on the beaches of Africa appear three times. Santiago associates the lions with eternal youth. The novel ends with Santiago's dreaming the lions at play, which suggests that the old man of the book is eternally young even in the later part of his life. Lions are also linked to the young boy as Manolin watches over Santiago when the hero goes on dreaming about the lions again for the last time in the narrative.

Towards the end of the narrative Santiago is compared to Christ. He transforms into the revered Christ figure at an allegorical level for the readers. During the fight, Santiago's back is beaten raw by the line; he bleeds, gets headaches and struggles with painful hands. The imagery of crucifixion is purposely involved in the most noticeable way. When the fisherman's palms are cut by his fishing line it reminds one of Christ's suffering. Later when the sharks attack, he makes a noise like 'Ay' and the author comments that it is similar to that of a man having nails being hammered through his hand. Furthermore, when the old man returns to shore, he carries his mast up the hill across his shoulders, resting several times in exhaustion and agony that reminds of Christ's march towards Calvary. Finally, when Santiago reaches his hut, he collapses on his bed "with his hands straight out and the palms of his hands up" which again reminds one of the Cross. At the signs of Santiago's agony, Mandolin, his disciple, weeps. The novelist employs these images in the final pages of the novel to transform his pain into gain, his defeat into triumph and his death-like experiences into renewed, reinvigorated life. His physical suffering leads to a spiritual triumph. However, these are indeed parallels and the very essence of the book seems pre-Christian.

Another noticeable aspect is the relationship between the old man as the mentor, a spiritual father to the young boy, Manolin, who inherits his values and philosophies like his pupil and son. In the end, Santiago transpires not as a solitary man but the force behind shaping Manolin. He teaches the young boy with all his dedication the tricks of the trade and instills in him to accept his teachings as a way of life, with all his imagination and inspires him to endure and achieve the intangibles, which make man indefatigable among all odds.

Manolin

Manolin, the young man in the narrative, presumably in his adolescence, is the old man's apprentice, a devoted attendant and

the only person with whom Santiago shares the deepest relationship. He is the old man's only companion who admires Santiago for his unique skill. He says, "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you." He has fished with the old man since the age of five but Santiago's recent bout of ill luck forced the boy to fish with another man whom his parents consider luckier than Santiago. However, the young boy still cares deeply for his mentor Santiago. He knows Santiago stands alone among all fishermen of his village and shares a unique relationship with the sea and its creatures; the old man's trust in dignity and unity is exemplary.

The old man and the boy discuss baseball and have coffee together. Though Manolin prevails as a pervasive voice all through the narrative, the character actually appears only twice in the beginning and at the end of the novel. Manolin's devotion, attachment and love for the old man highlight Santiago's character, his value as a man and as a skilled fisherman. Manolin asks for help from the villagers to improve Santiago's poor conditions. He takes care of the old man's food, blankets and makes sure that he gets proper rest and does not go hungry. He attends to his physical needs like a son. Even after his withdrawal from Santiago's boat, he does not stop taking care of the old man. For him, Santiago is the "best fisherman". He hero- worships the old man. When Santiago returns from his last, arduous expedition, and comes home empty-handed, Manolin stands behind him with food and medicines. His deep concern for Santiago and the old man's love for Manolin talk volumes about the selfless love that still exists among human beings.

Manolin's purity of heart and singleness of purpose takes him to the level of the symbolic. He begs Santiago to forgive him for joining another fisherman. Against his wish, Manolin obeys his biological father but gets caught within conflicting loyalties and at the end of the narrative decides to be with the old man regardless of the consequences. He becomes a symbol of uncompromised love

and fidelity, a true companion. He professes his complete trust on the old man and everything the old fisherman stands for. Towards the end of the narrative, the boy watches over his aged friend as Santiago returns to his dream of the lions. Only Manolin truly understands the true significance of Santiago's greatest challenges and his struggle. Manolin's acceptance of marlin's spear clearly shows that he truly values Santiago's inheritance. His dedication to learning the craft and accepting Santiago's fishing spirit ensures that Santiago will live on.

The Marlin and the Sea

Although not a human character, the marlin certainly plays an important role in the narrative. A major segment of the book describes Santiago spending time tracking, killing, and attempting to bring the marlin to the shore. The marlin that Santiago hooks is more than just a giant fish. The fish measures eighteen feet. It's so large that Santiago has to work really hard to bring it ashore. He knows the big catch will drain him of his strength, but he is committed to his job."Fish ... I'll stay with you until I am dead." The fisherman idealises the giant fish ascribing its traits of great nobility, a fish to which he must prove his own capability if he is to be worthy to catch it. Santiago talks to the marlin as if it is a human opponent. "Fish ... I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends." The two opponents become engaged in a kind of tug-of-war for three days and after much hardship, Santiago succeeds in having his sweet prize. Santiago feels oneness with the fish for sharing qualities like fighting spirit, greatness in living, faithfulness to one's identity and ways of life. Santiago admires qualities like endurance, beauty and dignity—all that the fish possesses, So much so that they become intimately connected.

At first Santiago feels pity for the large fish but later begins to admire it. The fish is magnificent and glorious—it's his ideal opponent. But soon he starts feeling that he has committed a sin in

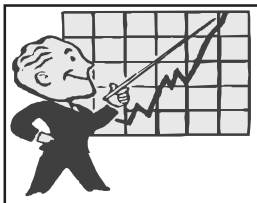
killing the marlin. Nevertheless, he knows that he is a fisherman and it is his profession; he has not killed the fish merely for food.

Santiago's deep understanding of the marlin echoes the fact that he did what he had to do; what he was born to do and what his role in life demanded. Just like the fish was born to be a fish, he was born to be a fisherman. They were brothers under the circumstances. The death of the Marlin fish meant a lot to Santiago—his greatest victory enabled him to achieve what he aspired in life. That was the core of his existence. Just after a while, Santiago became the victim and lost his biggest prize to the sharks. However, later he had to take the fish's meat to survive, which completed the natural circle. Thus, all creatures in nature are predators and preys and they nourish each other as well.

As men continue to kill fish, sharks continue to rob them of the fish, thereby completing the natural order, which is cruel, at the same time remind the existing man-animal kinship. The suffering, struggle and death that were earlier associated with the marlin pass to Santiago. The marlin's spirit to struggle to save itself becomes a part of Santiago's struggle to save the beautiful fish from the sharks. The sharks take away all that is valuable from the fish leaving the skeleton for Santiago. As he returns to his village on the fourth day of his fishing expedition, feeling apologetic towards the fish, he suffers something akin to death, just like the fish. He feels that he has betrayed the marlin by letting it go to the scavenging sharks. However, Santiago feels glad to find himself matched against a creature that brings out the best in him—courage, love, strength and respect. Though he fails in bringing back his precious prize—the marlin—he succeeds in his determined efforts.

As the title suggests, the sea plays a significant role in the novel. Most of the story takes place on the sea. Santiago is constantly identified with it and its creatures; his sea-coloured eyes reflect both the sea's tranquillity and power; its inhabitants are his brothers. Santiago refers to the sea as a woman, and the sea seems to

represent the feminine complement to Santiago's masculinity. The sea might also be seen as the unconscious from which Santiago's creative ideas are drawn.



CHECK YOUR PROGRES

Q 4: Consider some of the biblical and literary characters with whom you can associate the old hero of the novel.

Q 5: 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated,' says Santiago after the first stark attack. So how do you find Santiago at the end?

Q 6: Write a note on the significance of the sea and the giant fish.

5.3.4 Narrative Style

For Hemingway, every book was 'a new beginning' and the author 'should always try something that has never been done'. He was a careful artist who started his writing career as a newspaper correspondent that made him expert in writing graphic declaratory prose. His unique and simple style of writing earned him a place as one of the two great stylists of the 20th century American literature, the other being William Faulkner. Usually Hemingway's novels or short stories are composed in simple, direct, unadorned narrative, the result of excellent training of his early journalistic career. He erased the dividing line between journalism and literature. Before his coming into the literary scene, adjectives, adverbs piled on the top of one another; colons, semi colons clogged the flow in a short paragraph. Hemingway stripped all ornate literary mannerism, adjectival colouring and artificial flourishes. His unique style and manner, his terse representation of simple acts, his sparse dialogues and his understatement of emotions made his narrative distinctive. Throughout his writing career, he was known for his simplicity. He used short sentences, simple terms and colloquial idioms, without any sentimentality.

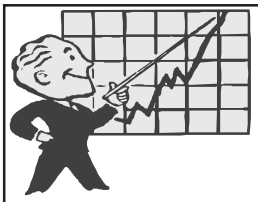
A deliberate author, Hemingway wrote and rewrote all or portions of *The Old Man and the Sea* more than 200 times before he approached the printer. Hemingway was an obsessive revisionist. He took great pains in revising his work tirelessly. Though all the plots of his novels are simple, the simplicity of *The Old Man and the Sea* is of a unique kind where he aimed at Biblical grandeur. The novel begins with "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream …"and the readers at once sense that they will be getting something that resembles a parable. The story develops a careful surface realism informing the readers the minute and particular account of the old fisherman's thoughts and acts but one cannot overlook the universality of meanings and references. That is why Santiago and Manolin are "the old man" and "the boy", expressions that are intended to make them typical or universal figures.

Hemingway's simple, lucid, fresh and clean narrative style is his greatest contribution to literature and his true claim to fame. The polished style of *The Old Man and the Sea* affirms why Hemingway has been described as a master creator of dialogues. The narrative truthfully represents the way people speak in their real lives. Hemingway once said, "A writer's style should be direct and personal, his imagery rich and earthy and his words simple and vigorous." One has to admit that the carefully honed and polished writing technique was by no means spontaneous; rather it was the result of evolution, which begun with the publication of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884. Hemingway once commented, "All modern American literature comes from that one book Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'". The renowned Hemingway style of narration derives its roots from Mark Twain's. Each of the authors tried and used day-to-day language for narrating the experiences of their sensitive real characters. Both of them were sceptical of their literary language.

In *The Old Man and the Sea,* the novelist's words are uniquely brilliant, yet colloquial; normally short and common. Readers having no experience of fishing can imagine the whole episode of fishing, for the writer has made it sound so familiar. Hemingway used the exact words to touch the depth of human feelings; the psychic status of the old fisherman's character. The novel employs and aptly illustrates what is particular to Hemingway—the "iceberg principle" technique. This implies that the simplest writing, when done rightly, would hint at the greatest human truths, and hit the terrific frozen mass of an iceberg, which lies underwater.

In Hemingway's novels, there is always a good blend of symbolism and realism. Santiago is a real fisherman with all his thoughts, actions and philosophy. His struggle with the great fish represents man's struggle with life, a universal phenomena. The Marlin is magnificent and glorious symbolising the ideal that needs to be achieved amongst all odds. In a world where "everything kills everything else in same way", the hero feels lucky to find himself fighting against a creature that brings out the best in him—his strength, love, respect, pride and courage. On the other hand, the shovel-nosed sharks, standing in bold contrast to the marlin symbolize the destructive forces of the universe. They are the creatures that thoughtlessly and gracelessly attack the beautiful.

The Nobel Prize Committee singled out his literary style as one of his foremost achievements. His style is a combination of elements from Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and his profession of journalism. Hemingway had a good knowledge of French, Spanish and Italian–the romance languages. With his lingual expertise, he had a way with his vocabulary and expressions.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What is your idea of Hemingway's 'iceberg' principle of writing with respect to the novel?

Q 8: Briefly comment on Hemingway's prose style.

12.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE NOVEL

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* was an instant success with its publication in an edition of *Life* magazine. The book received warm critical reception and was considered Hemingway's best work. William Faulkner said, "Time may show it to be the best single piece of any of us, I mean his and my contemporaries." Some, of course, complained of artificiality in the characterisation and excess sentimentality in the work. Despite these detractors, *The Old Man and the Sea* was awarded the 1953 Pulitzer Prize and American Academy of Arts and Letters' Award of Merit Medal and the novel as an work of art played a significant role in Hemingway's selection for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

This novel was published first as a sea story in LIFE, which received readers' approval in the form of reviews and appreciation—the magazine sold over five million copies in just two days. After six months of its release, the Scribner's edition of the book topped the best seller's list. It sold immensely and moved ordinary people to tears. Sermons were preached on it. The novelist received warmth and love from the people and hundreds of laudatory letters every day. Critics were full of admiration for his technical accomplishment, lyrical and rhythmic prose and elegantly used direct symbols in the book.

William Faulkner declared the work as Hemingway's best and perhaps the finest work from his contemporaries. However, notable critics of the day Philip Rahv and John Aldridge found it a minor work with issues like lack of complexity and emotion; colourless style (since the book revolved mainly around the physical and physic world of Santiago, the hero). Despite all, the novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and Hemingway was honoured with the Nobel Prize in 1954, which restated his international reputation. From 1952 to 1966, critics like Philip Young, Leo Gurko and Clinton S. Burhans appreciated the character of Santiago as a noble and tragic hero. The book's message of respecting humanity and brotherhood did not go unnoticed. Carlos Baker, a well-known Hemingway scholar, welcomed the Christian theme of the book which is evident in Santiago's suffering, his

humility which is quite saintly and the idea of redemption from meaningless existence in this world.

For the first fifteen years or so, after the publication of the book, critical response remained largely positive. Then there came a shift in assessment. Since the mid-60s, it was attacked by realist critics who condemned the book's unrealistic or simply incorrect elements. Earlier admirer Young objected to its affected simplicity whereas Robert P. Weeks could not find realistic details. By the mid 1970s, only few articles appeared in scholarly journals discussing biblical, baseball or some allusions in the book. The views on the book as embarrassingly narcissistic, psychologically simplistic and too sentimental became more and more entrenched. By 80s and 90s, critics lost all interest in the book.

While *The Old Man and the Sea* is popularly loved by many and assigned reading for students in the US and around the world, critical opinion places it among Hemingway's less significant works. The book fell from its earlier grace, yet had an incredible impact on its readers and continues to do so. Despite all, the book continues to nurture Hemingway's reputation. The work is still considered as Hemingway's most distinctive fictional effort and one, which communicated many of his ideas and philosophy of life. Critics and readers of each generation have discovered new meanings and values in the work.

Yet the simple vocabulary and evocative narrative prose style of the book has been influencing generation of writers. If one generation, profoundly affected by the war, had found much to identify with the lost generation's alienation, succeeding generations who were worried about international economics and threats to the world environment were touched by the multicultural aspects of the author in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Similarly, the future generation will discover something irresistible and appreciating. Hemingway's works will remain an invaluable contribution to world literature.



12.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that *The Old Man and the Sea* is a short novel written by the American author Ernest Hemingway in 1951 in Cuba. The novel was published in 1952. It was the last major work of fiction by Hemingway that was published during his lifetime. One of his most famous works, this novel tells the story of Santiago, an aging fisherman from Cuba who struggles with a giant marlin fish far out in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Cuba. In 1953, *The Old Man and the Sea* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and it was cited by the Nobel Committee as contributing to their awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Hemingway in 1954. The various themes of the novel help the readers to comprehend many of the important aspects of Hemingway as a writer and American literature as a whole. You have learnt that Hemingway's simple vocabulary and evocative narrative prose style of the book has been influencing generations of writers even today.



12.6 FURTHER READING

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12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Yes… …Santiago is a tragic hero... …Santiago sails out further than others for only a big prize that satisfies his pride... …but loses the great fish to rapacious sharks on his way back... …accuses himself of ruining both the fish and his life... … the novel ends with Santiago's spirit undefeated who represents Everyman, heroic in the face of human tragedy.

Ans to Q 2: The novel is a story of the character Santiago ... ... the only other human character that receives the reader's prolonged attention is Manolin who exists to highlight Santiago's character... ... but he is more like a side/supportive character... ... always appreciating Santiago's heroic spirit and skills despite his outward lack of success.



Ans to Q 3: Honour in struggle… …facing adversity or suffering with grace and dignity… … heroism and worth… …unity or kinship between man and nature… …Santiago and nature's adversities… …brotherhood in human society… …Santiago-an epic hero with his flaw (pride)… …the author's treatment of pride as a positive trait.

Ans to Q 4: Specially images referring the Crucifixion of the lord are present... ... Santiago's palms are cut by his fishing cable while battling with the giant marlin... ... he suffers but determined... ... even ready to sacrifice life to do his job done well... ... then Santiago's reflection on nature of the universe echoes God's answer to Job... … losing all, tired Santiago climbs the hill up with his mast across his shoulders to his hut reminds Christ's journey to Calvary... ... Santiago's position on his bed refers to Christ on the cross.

Ans to Q 5: Santiago killed the fish on the fourth day after much hardship and suffering … ...the dead fish invests Santiago with a new life

…victory with dignity and grace over crushing adversity is the mark of heroism... … Santiago becomes the heroic emblem for humankind after monumental tribulation … what a man achieves or loses externally is not as significant to heroism as the comforting ourselves with inner nobility.

Ans to Q 6: Santiago considers all natural creatures as brothers or friends- the fish, birds, stars and the sky. … …strong bonding with the sea as a fisherman... …loves and respects the sea foe her kindness as well as fears her cruelty... …but never poses as antagonist competing with her... …killing the marlin marks the climax of the book… …Santiago's reflection on nature of the universe… …fish is killed giving the fisherman a new life… …the predatory nature of nature.

Ans to Q 7: Hemingway was the master of simple, evocative prose narrative… …used simple words from the familiar scenes to create poetic images… …chose just the exact words rather than sounds to create maximum effect making the scene visibly imaginable to the readers… …choice of words reflect the speaker's psychological depth… …the simplest writing when done correctly would hint at the greatest human truths just like the tip of an iceberg hits the terrific frozen mass underwater… …this is known as the 'iceberg principle.'

Ans to Q 8: Hemingway's unique writing style and invention of narrative form... …simple vocabulary, colloquial language... …with themes which are distinctly modern, existentialist worldview... …storyline as close to the actual experience as possible ... … matured handling of themes… …tale of man struggling to define their identities and find honour in a chaotic world... ...an enormous influence on American writers.



12.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Describe how Ernest Hemingway has depicted Nature in the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Q 2: What do you think about Ernest Hemingway being a modernist novelist?

Q 3: Attempt an appreciation of Hemingway's narrative style in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Q 4: *The Old Man and the Sea* has a timeless appeal. Discuss.

Q 5: Discuss the different themes of the novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

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UNIT 13: HERMAN MELVILLE: *BILLY BUDD* (PART I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Herman Melville: The Novelist

13.3.1 His Life

13.3.2 His Works

13.4 Critical Reception of Melville

13.5 Let us Sum up

13.6 Further Reading

13.7 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of Herman Melville and understand his philosophies and works
- writer about Melville the man and the novelist with all his qualities
- state why he is considered one of the greatest writers from America
- discuss how Melville been critically received

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two units, we have discussed Hemingway's famous novel *The Old Man and The Sea.* This unit shall introduce us to yet another significant American novelist Herman Melville–one of the two most widely read and written about authors of 19th century America, Mark Twain being the other. Melville is another most widely known novelist from America. Financial difficulties at home forced him to the sea and he had numerous exotic experiences, which provided Melville with endless literary themes. He was a reserved, bookish man of life and yet gave life to his imagination

through his writings. The turning point of his career came with *Moby Dick,* now considered a milestone in American literature. Melville finished his most challenging work *Moby Dick* when he was 32 years old. Still a young writer, he had crafted one of the most incredibly dense and imaginative work of art in all of literature. However, *Moby Dick* failed to impress the critics and was spurned by the readers. A good numbers of novels followed but failed to please the readers. Until then, Melville's gradual literary growth in terms of language and theme started to express the darker side of human soul. His style became demanding and themes started questioning the nature of good and evil. As we finish reading this unit, we shall be in a position to discuss the life and works of Herman Melville in sufficient details.

13.3 HERMAN MELVILLE: THE NOVELIST

In the following section, you will get to read about the life and works of Herman Melville.

13.3.1 His Life



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Herman_Melville

Born in Pearl Street, in the City of New York, on August 1, 1819, Herman Melville was the third of eight children born to Maria Gansevoort Melville and Allan Melville, a prosperous importer of foreign goods. Allan Melville, Herman's father, a snobbish man, suffered a mental breakdown due to over work and with his death in 1832 Herman's mother Maria moved in with her well-to-do parents, who helped her educate and support her children. They relocated to Albany.

The Melvilles were descendants of respectable Scotch, Irish and Dutch colonial settlers. For two years, young Herman attended the Albany Classical School, which specialised in preparing students for the business world. As a student, he neither showed a scholarly attitude nor literary promise. However, he joined a literary and debate

society and submitted letters to the editor of the Albany Microscope. However, misfortune fell and Herman and his brother Gansevoort had to drop out of school to support the poverty-stricken family. At the tender age of 13, he started working in a bank; finished his formal education after seven years and at 18 became an elementary school teacher. This career was abruptly cut short, followed by a brief tenure as a newspaper reporter. Although he enrolled at Lansingburgh Academy in 1838, studied engineering and surveying and graduated the next year with a dream of helping to construct the Erie Canal Project, he could not gain a post in the project. At 18, his mother's worsening financial condition and his own inability to establish himself forced him to leave home. Melville made his fast sea voyage at 19, as a cabin boy, on a travelling vessel bound for Liverpool, England, in 1839. This four-month voyage established his relationship with the sea. He returned to America the next summer to try his fortune. By that time Melville had become an avid reader of Shakespeare, French and American Classics and the holy Bible. However, he went back to sea in 1841 at 21 after being disappointed in love and continuing financial difficulties. He joined a whaling ship, Acushnet, and in its maiden voyage head towards the South Seas from New Bedford. This journey took him around the continent of South America and across the Pacific Ocean and this eighteen-month voyage provided him the material for *Moby-Dick*, Melville's masterpiece.

However, the brutalities on the ship destroyed his romantic notions of a sailor's life. He abandoned the ship with a fellow sailor named Richard Tobias 'Toby' Greene to avoid intolerable conditions and a meagre diet of hardtack and occasional fruit on the ship in the summer of 1842. The two men found themselves in the Marquesas Islands where they accidently wandered into the company of a tribe of cannibals. Harmed by an injury to his leg, he became separated from his friend and lived for a month under benign house among the cannibals as the guest of Typees, the natives of the island. This experience later formed the core of his first novel *Typees, A Peep at*

Polynesian Life published in 1846. Melville enjoyed a few carefree months amongst the cannibals. He came away from the Western world's philosophies as well as 19th century 'civilised complications' and faith in progress. Melville's career as a sailor was full of adventures. He escaped the Typees aboard the Lucy Ann, an Australian whaler; became embroiled in a mutiny; was jailed for a few weeks in a British prison; deserted a ship a second time at Papeete, Tahiti, with the ship's doctor named Long Ghost in 1842. He had a relaxed life on the island as a field labourer. Leaving Tahiti, he took his final whaling voyage on the 'Charles Henry' as a harpooner, off the shores of Japan, Lahaina, Maui and Honolulu, Hawaii. He left the voyage on the Hawaiian Island and to earn his passage home he worked as a store bookkeeper and a pinsetter in a bowling alley. He enlisted in the US Navy and as an ordinary seaman on the man of war US, Melville landed in Boston in October 1844 nearly three years after his departure in the Acushnert, where he resumed civilian life. His sailing career ended with this and he devoted to writing novels drawing freely on his sea going experiences.

On August 4, 1847, Melville married Elizabeth Lizzie Shaw, daughter of Lamuel Shaw, chief justice of the commonwealth of Massachusetts. They settled in New York City where the couple spent the happiest days of their life enjoying intellectual company like William Cullen Bryant, Richard Henry Dana and Washington Irving. In 1850, the Melville family moved to a large, two-storey farmhouse near Pitt's field, Massachusetts. For twenty years from 1866 to 1886, he served as deputy inspector of customs, a job according to him "a most inglorious one... …worse than driving geese to water." The financial strain, the immobilising attacks of rheumatism on his back, failing eyesight, psychological collapse of loosing readership for his later books led him to a nervous breakdown. He wrote poetry to stabilize his failing finances. Melville's final years were marked by personal tragedy. His son Malcolm shot

himself in 1867, another son Stanwix died of tuberculosis in 1886, then there was this carriage accident with him, which further diminished Melville's health. During his final years, he returned to prose and composed his final manuscript *Billy Budd* which appeared several decades after his death. Melville died of a heart attack on September 28, 1891 in New York.

13.3.2 His Works

Melville's was an eventful life on both sea and shore. From a boyhood of relative affluence, the Melvilles underwent a rapid fall in social circle as their family business collapsed and young Melville chose an adventurous life of a sailor as his career. His profession provided him ample opportunities to taste life and have diverse experiences. His first four novels are semi autobiographical novels. *Typee: A Peep at Polynessian Life* (1846), which he dedicated to his wife Elizabeth "Lizzie" Shaw, was composed from his experiences among the cannibals in the Polynesian island. The novel is the reputed story of his life among those cannibalistic Typee people, but is highly fictionalised dramatisation of the real story. The novel, a fanciful travel narrative, opened the world of the South Seas to the world. It was the most popular and successful work during Melville's lifetime, for the novel went into its fifth printing that same year of publication. An indeterminate mixture of fact and fiction, the first novel of Melville also met with negative criticism from religious reviewers who were offended with his description of the greedy missionaries to the South Pacific. However, the favourable reactions of the readers encouraged him to write a series of novels detailing his adventures blending personal experience with fiction and presenting his philosophy of life.

Typee was followed by *Omoo* (1847) describing his wandering in Tahiris; *Redburn* (1846) is about his maiden voyage to Liverpool, England and *White-Jacket* (1850) describes his last voyage on a US warship. These four fanciful travel narratives

composed in the same style established Melville as a notable author of travel romances. His *Mardi* (1849) with its satirical comments is more of an allegory than a novel. The book, his first experimentation with satire, allegory and symbol, brought a critical and commercial disappointment. By that time, Melville had made a major literary contact. He met and formed a closer relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose *The Scarlet Letter* and other works Melville had reviewed in an essay for the Literary World. Melville bought the Arrowhead farm near Pittsfield so that he could be Hawthorne's neighbour. Soon the two writers of similar philosophies came even closer. This friendship provided Melville creative energies and in 1851 came out Melville's most renowned novel *Moby Dick* or *The Whale*. Today *Moby Dick* is considered his masterpiece and all those first five novels published before *Moby Dick* are seen as one big prologue to a great work like *Moby Dick*. As a token of his warm feelings, Melville dedicated *Moby Dick* to his friend Hawthorne. *Moby Dick* was an ambitious project and a complex novel offering the readers a glimpse into the life at sea and at the same time it served as a philosophical allegory of life. It remains unsurpassed as a work of amazing symbolic dimensions. Yet Melville's grandest novel, which now is heralded as a landmark work in American literature, received lukewarm reception upon its release. It suffered severe critical disfavour and sold badly.

Moby Dick was followed by *Pierre* (1852), subtitled *The Ambiguities*, a novel that drew from Melville's experiences as a youth. The book with its emphasis on incest and moral corruption was pessimistic and received uncomprehending attacks. His readers who were so accustomed to his sea adventures could not make an easy leap to a probing fiction. After the disastrous reception of *Pierre*, his output dwindled from novel to short story. During this period he wrote 'Bartleby the Scrivener'' (1855), published in Putnam's magazine focussing on the dehumanisation of a copyist and 'Benito Cereno' (1855), which remain his most significant works outside

Moby Dick. He published several fictional sketches of various lengths in various prominent periodicals of his day. Then came out his two completed novels—*Israel Potter* or *Fifty years of Exile* (1855), a historical work that saw a modest success and *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), a maddeningly dark satire of trust. These were the final works that Melville would publish during his lifetime. None of these ever regained the readership the first four novels had enjoyed.

In the remaining thirty-five years of his life, Melville's creativity declined considerably. Melville devoted himself to lecture tours and a global voyage that he abandoned in San Francisco. He published a volume of war poetry titled *Battle Pieces* delineating the poet's views on war, particularly the American Civil War. *Aspect of the War* appeared in 1866 and a lengthy poem of 18000 lines titled "Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land" came out in 1876, which is said to have evolved from the author's travels in Jerusalem. It describes a young student's search for faith. He produced two more volumes of verse, published privately, primarily at the expenses of his uncle—*John Marr and -Others Sailors* (1888) and *Timoleon Etc* (1891). Then he returned to writing prose, finished *Billy Budd*, the story of a sailor who accidently kills his master after being provoked by a false charge, in April 1891. However, this work remained unpublished for more than thirty years and appeared in 1924 in a limited London edition. After *Billy Budd*, Melville gained wider acclaim in the mid 20th century and scholars as well as readers began to study the novel seriously. *Billy Budd* is based on events that Melville encountered at sea. In the novel, these events are depicted alongside a historical incident involving Melville's first cousin in 1842.

13.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF MELVILLE

[Adapted from *Student Companion to Herman Melville*]

Melville's demise in 1891 caused little stir, as he had long been considered dead as far as his literary reputation was concerned. His early

South Seas narratives had gained him recognition as a romantic travel writer, but the public—and most critics—had been unable to comprehend and appreciate his later, more ambitious works. As a result, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics relegated him to "minor status in American literary history… by means of two indices: his subject matter and his geographical location." Melville was deemed unimportant not only because he had written popular adventure books but also because he was a New Yorker rather than a member of the elite New England sphere of literary and intellectual influence. In 1921, 30 years after the writer's death, this contingent finally gained ascendance with the publication of Raymond Weaver's *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic*. In this first full-length biography, Weaver laboured to rehabilitate his subject's reputation by stressing the authenticity of his writings of the South Seas and by recognizing *Moby Dick* as a critical masterpiece. Although the former argument led to a subsequent overemphasis of the biographical component in Melville's writings, the latter argument formally launched the movement known as the Melville Revival, which redefined the way in which the author would be viewed from that time forward.

Weaver's biography of Melville laid the groundwork for the 1924 publication of a collected edition of the author's works, which incorporated the previously unpublished manuscript *Billy Budd.* A burgeoning body of scholarship, both biographical and critical, soon followed. Because of the experience of World War I, a new generation of readers was now valuing the very qualities in Melville's writings that his contemporaries had condemned—his rebelliousness "against both human society and the cosmos itself". Whereas nineteenth-century readers had been bewildered by what Hawthorne had called Melville's "freedom of view," modernist readers embraced his expansive metaphysical meditations and were not offended when his ideas could not be constrained by typical conventions of form and style. This movement to reassess Melville's critical reputation culminated in 1941 with F. O. Matthiessen's extended treatment of the writer in his *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. This landmark study "finally established [Melville] as a 'classic

American author'" and gave him a "permanent place in the canon" of American literature. Describing Melville as "the American with the richest natural gifts as a writer," Matthiessen revised the previously accepted reading of Melville's literary career.

Although springing from a kernel of truth, myths and legends move beyond the realm of reality to gain an exaggerated yet exalted status that make them impervious to factual probing. In the case of Melville, the establishment of such myths in the first place was facilitated by the fact that early biographers had few materials except his writings on which to base their suppositions about the man himself. Recent biographers, aided by the discovery of new documents, have sought to revise the portrait that was created as a result of the earlier generation's approach. Keeping in mind that the writer was human with human inconsistencies and failings, scholars have now discounted the more lurid claims that Melville was an insane alcoholic who beat his wife, drove his son Malcolm to commit suicide, and harboured homosexual desires for his mentor and friend Nathaniel Hawthorne. They also have argued that the tendency to read Mary Glendinning, the manipulative and controlling mother in *Pierre*, as a realistic representation of Melville's own mother has resulted in distorted extrapolations about Melville's childhood. Other legends about Melville, although less sensational, have proven equally hard to displace in the public's memory. First and foremost among these is the myth that Melville's later works—those after *Moby-Dick* —are Melville's Contributions to American Literature inferior creations that are as unreadable as they are undeserving of critical attention. Such a view has resulted in the neglect of those works that is only now beginning to be corrected.

Although *Moby-Dick* remains central to and the vortex of Melville's body of texts, scholars are now wrestling with the creative outpourings that followed it. Rather than finding only the signs of failure, exhaustion, and isolation in *Pierre*, *The Confidence Man*, and *Clarel*, scholars are now concluding, "the diversity and experimentation after Moby-Dick reveal an active, still searching, highly inventive artist." As a result of this new scholarship, Melville is now appreciated "not simply as the author of a few

famous prose fictions but as a writer whose lifelong engagement with language pushed him through generic boundaries in search of new ways of shaping and questioning the world." The single greatest influence on Melville's own writing was by all accounts Nathaniel Hawthorne, to whom he linked his own aspirations as a writer in his essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses", and who then inspired him to rewrite his nearly completed whaling manuscript and turn it into *Moby Dick.* The effects of the friendship between these two writers almost always has been credited to Melville's sole advantage, and Hawthorne's influence has especially been posited in Melville's discovery of the nature of evil.

Melville apparently had little effect on other writers of his own day, in large part because the only literary success he enjoyed during his lifetime was in his twenties as a writer of sea adventures. In the disillusion and alienation that followed World War I, however, modernists found much to admire in what they read as his mythic vision, and through their embrace of the archetypal struggle of Moby Dick, they fashioned Melville into an American cultural hero. Somewhat ironically, the British writer D. H. Lawrence, often harsh in his comments about America, was a fundamental voice in this movement to make an icon of Melville, whom he saw as a struggling victim of American duplicity. During this period, the poet Hart Crane wrote "At Melville's Tomb", in which he draws on the ending of *Moby Dick* to mourn the death of his predecessor, an event that he sees as symbolic of America's lost vision. Crane also quotes from Battle-Pieces in his epic poem "The Bridge" (1930), and many scholars have commented on the influence of Melville elsewhere in his poetry.

After World War II, as the Cold War brought conservatism to the forefront of American politics, the influence of Melville continued with a shift of focus to his softer, romantic elements. In addition to the continuing influence of *Moby Dick, Billy Budd*, as a Christian allegory, had particular appeal to this generation. Robert Lowell's "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" (1946) drew on Moby-Dick, and William Styron's "The Long March" (1953) was linked to *Billy Budd*, while the poetry of W. H. Auden reflects the influence of both texts. In his treatment of Nantucket, John Steinbeck also nods to Melville in his East of Eden (1952).

Nor was Melville's influence during this period limited to American writers. French philosophers Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, also acknowledge their debt to Melville in their essays. Despite the current critical disinclination to speak in terms of cultural icons, Melville retains a certain mythic status in the public consciousness. Even the many who have never read his works understand the symbolic implications of the related allusions; in fact, the "unreadability" of Melville has itself become part of the myth. Although it is easy to argue that Melville and his Whale are now engrained in American folklore, the reason why is not as clear. Perhaps Charles Olson comes closest to explaining the attraction when he admits, Melville's Contributions to American Literature "I am willing to ride Melville's image of man, whale and ocean to find in him prophecies, lessons he himself would not have spelled out." *Moby Dick* will always be out of a reader's "grasp just as the whale forever escaped Ahab." Nonetheless, Melville still encourages his readers—even those who do not read him—to dive with him into the ambiguous quest of life.



13.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have understood that Melville's career as a writer saw many sides of life. All his great works like *Moby Dick*, *The Confidence Man* and *Billy Budd* failed to achieve a great audience in their own time. Throughout his life, Herman Melville had much passionate concern with the ideas/concepts associated with faith, belief, good, evil, life and death, which later grew into an obsession. His novels with their wealth of allusions, imageries and novel ideas/criticisms concerning society and its institutions were not straightforward that could be lightly accepted by the provincial Americans of his age. Today *Billy Budd* is ranked one of Melville's greatest works. The novel has secured a position of being one of the most interpreted books ever written in the English language. *Billy Budd* is the creative product of a mature writer who poses many ethical questions and readers find themselves without answers.



13.6 FURTHER READING

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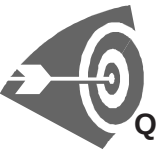
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13.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS



Q 1: How did Herman Melville's personal experiences in life contribute to his making as a novelist?

Q 2: Write a note on the critical reception of Herman Melville as an American writer.

Q 3: Which are the important fictional works of Herman Melville? Discuss how these work reflect American life and culture.

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UNIT 14: HERMAN MELVILLE: *BILLY BUDD* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Reading the Novel

- 14.3.1 The Story Element
- 14.3.2 Major Themes
- 14.3.3 Narrative Style
- 14.3.4 Major Characters

14.4 Critical Reception of *Billy Bud*

14.5 Let us Sum up

14.6 Further Reading

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.8 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- describe the story of the novel in *Billy Budd*
- discuss Melville's unique narrative style
- explain the major themes of the novel *Billy Budd*
- appreciate and discuss the different critical aspects of the novel

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Virtually ignored by the literary world of his day, Melville started working on *Billy Budd*, which records the final confrontation between evil and innocence. *Billy Budd* could be seen as a narrative that takes place in the sea and at the same time, it could also be read as a philosophical novel dealing with Christian allegories. Thus, in this unit, you will find that *Billy Budd* uncovers a strong, mature author who questions his own art.

14.3 READING THE NOVEL

The following sections will guide you to read the novel.

14.3.1 The Story Element

Billy Budd with its allegorical elements, richness, depth and ambiguities has been ranked as one of the greatest works of Melville as well as one of the greatest novels of the 19th century. The story of *Billy Budd* was drawn from diverse sources. The dedicatory page says Melville owed much to his old friend plus fellow sailor Jack Chase whose love for poetry and rugged good looks and indomitable spirit served as the model for *Billy*. Melville himself was a rebellious good-looking sailor. For the setting, Melville went back to his navy years as the man-of-war US. For the subject matter he relied upon a historical incident–a scandal resulting from an abortive mutiny on the American brig-of-war Somers on 1st December, 1842. At his officer's order, Alexander Mackenzie, the captain, ordered the hanging of three troublemakers, one of whom being the son of the Secretary of War John Spencer. When the ship backed to port, the Captain met the fury of the influential Spencer family. However, he survived both a military and a civil tribunal. However, facts were against the Captain's sanity. Melville was too interested, read the proceedings in the newspapers and received eye witness's accounts from his first cousin who was a lieutenant at Somers. Guert Gansevoort, his cousin, played a role as an arbitrator in the controversy who privately supported the victims. The author could identity with the whole situation and later used it as the basis for his last novel of life.

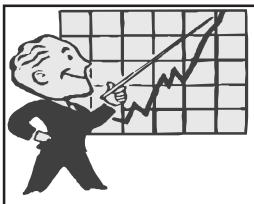
The action occurs in 1797, following the great mutinies in the British Navy at Spithead and Nore and during the first of the Napoleonic Wars. It is the summer of 1797 and Billy Budd, a young handsome sailor on a British Merchant ship named the Rights-of-Man is the protagonist. Billy is good looking, innocent, simple, good-natured. However, he has one fault–when seised by strong emotion, he stutters. The time is terrible for the British Empire—it has been

four years into the Napoleonic wars between England and French. Napoleon's high ambitions and France's revolutionary attitudes panic the whole world. The navy wing is the foundation of the British defence force and it continues to depend on impressments. H. M. S Bellipotent, an English man-of-war, in need of man, halts the merchant ship Rights-of-man. Lieutenant Ratcliff, the boarding officer, is impressed by only one sailor, Billy Budd, who is also happy to serve his land. He extracts Billy from duty aboard the merchant ship. Though Captain Graveling protests to let his best man go from the Rights-of-Man, he has no option to voice against the superior ship's commands as Billy has no choice. Billy, without any objection, is set on his way. He bids farewell to his old mates and to Rights-of-Man. Aboard the Billipotent Billy settles in quickly and assumes the duties of foretop man. He proves most hard working and takes no time to earn the love of his fellow sailors and senior officers. The Captain of the ship, Starry Vere, is a just officer but the master-of-arms, Claggert, is a malevolent and moody man. Billy attempts to do his job perfectly but is surprised when he is under constant scrutiny for petty errors. Fearing punishment, a puzzled Billy asks the Dansker, a veteran sailor, for advice. The Dansker warns Billy saying Claggert is obsessed with Billy, for that positivity in Billy, which Claggart himself will never possess. However, Billy refuses to accept his opinion for he cannot believe that Claggart harbours any ill will towards him. He continues to wander sadly about his present situation.

One night an after guardsman rouses Billy from his sleep on the upper deck and asks him if he would join a group of impressed sailors in the event of a mutiny and offers him a bribe. Shocked to be approached in this way, enraged Billy threatens the man and the unidentified man flees. Billy does not disclose it to the officers except the Dansker who suspects Claggart's involvement in the incident. Later Claggart approaches Captain Vere and forebodes the chances of a rumoured rebellion and names Billy as head of the mutiny. Not really impressed with Claggart's version when the Captain asks a helpless, terrified, speechless Billy to defend himself, he does it the

only way he knows how—giving Claggart a swift blow on the forehead. The blow proves fatal and kills Claggart. Captain Vere, though loves and knows Billy well, has to call a drumhead court consisting of the captains of the marines, the first lieutenant and the sailing master to decide the foretop man's case. Captain Vere gives a testimony of the incident to the jury as the main witness. Billy admits to his blow but says that the act was unintentional and declares his lack of affiliation with any potential mutiny. The time is tough. England is at war and there have been widespread mutinies in force. If Billy gets free it may result in an all-out mutiny. Captain Vere asks the jury to decide to acquit or condemn in strict accordance with military laws. The officers' panel convicts Billy and sentences him to death by hanging the next morning. Billy is hanged from the yardarm. He dies uttering "God bless Captain Vere."

On the return voyage to join the Mediterranean fleet the Billipotent encounters the French warship Athee (the Atheist). In an attempt to capture it, Captain Vere is fatally wounded and eventually dies in a hospital in Gibraltar, murmuring the last words "Billy Budd". Later, the legend of Billy Budd is falsely recorded; a newspaper figures Billy as the villainous murderer of an officer on duty and Claggart a patriotic sailor. However, the fellow sailors record the truth and continue to believe that Billy was innocent, remember his nobility and the spirit of Billy lives on. They preserve a track of the spar from his gallows as a holy object. To them, it becomes "a piece of the Cross." A fellow foretop man composes laudatory verses and immortalises Billy in a ballad.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you think Melville's *Billy Budd* is an attempt to review the concept of military laws?

Q 2: Melville's *Billy Budd* can be termed as a book posing questions on ethics and rich in moral values. Comment.

14.3.2 Major Themes

Melville as an author was deeply touched by the ambiguities of life, the clash between good and evil in the universe, corruption of innocence by society. *Billy Budd* is the posthumous work of Melville, and since his first novel *Typee,* Melville did not alter much his chosen area. All the heroes of his novels face the threat of destruction by an evil force beyond their range of understanding or control. His heroes are noble savages—unaware of the ways of the world.

Billy Budd deals with the theme of **innocence and corruption of innocence** by society. Billy Budd is the embodiment of innocence, in constant clash with the evil embodied in Claggart. However, Billy is not the embodiment of goodness. The novel is not a clash between good and evil but innocence and evil. The two concepts are not the same. The homicidal act of Billy draws the innocent away from virtue into violence thereby proving his poor moral strength. Billy is primitive and not perfect. He is young and handsome; he takes everyone at face value; he is a popular sailor. Claggart is deceptive and distrustful and there is no reason for Claggart's animosity towards Billy except Billy's innocence. His innocence is the beauty of his character yet it is the only quality that dooms him. He becomes victim to Claggart's evil plans, his malice and treachery. However, Billy embraces his punishment; for him, death is a means of atoning for evil. Billy goes quite peacefully blessing his Captain as Christ blessed his enemies. Billy's simplicity and innocence finds its evil counterpart in John Claggart's depravity. The author has tried to present a convincing psychological portrait of Claggart but the reason behind his hatred goes mostly unexplained. The narrative hints at some point that evil exists alongside good and it corrupts innocence. Throughout the narrative, the evil remains unexplained and unmotivated. Billy falls from moral grace by killing the evil and also suffers death; as a result he who lacks sophistication and experience to roll with lives becomes evil's obvious victim.

Melville's fascination with ideas of **man in primitive states** rather than man being the Noble Savage, innocent of the malice of civilisation is so very clear in the novel. Melville prefers the primitive society over the civilised one. Billy is somehow related to Adam before the Fall, he is an idealised version of humanity. This theme may indicate in his terminal work Melville's personal rejection of the so-called civilised society and his acceptance of the simple, honest, yet an imperfect life.

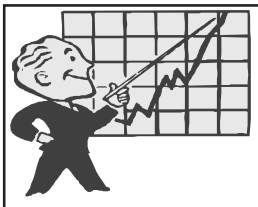
Melville was concerned about society playing its role in limiting **people's individuality.** Bellipotent taking Billy away from his former ship Rights-of-Man symbolises a society which is so powerful that it compels one to participate in wars and while doing so readily dispenses his rights. Bellipotent is usurper of human rights. It protects the rights of a man only by impressing men from the ship. It snatches Billy away from a safe berth to the death penalty. Captain Vere, the Captain of the ship, stands for a truly balanced civilised man of the society. He opposes innovation or change yet wills peace in the society; he knows how to separate one's feelings and emotions from one's social obligation. Therefore, he decides to follow the words of the law despite his knowing that Billy is innocent. His position does not allow him to let a man free who has disobeyed the law; all men must obey the Mutiny Act. Therefore, suppressing his own feelings, he asks the jury to go with the law of the state. To be a "good" captain Vere has to act against his impulse and do which is morally right. The book is a commentary on impersonality and brutality of a civilised man by penalizing the innocent.

The novel also centres upon the **clash between conscience and law**. Life aboard the ship is strongly ruled by a strict set of rules. Not individual conscience, all of them on the ship have to trust the military rule, the aim being to maintain peace an order. All may have individual choice but none is allowed to govern according to their preferences. Captain Vere is the best example of sacrificing conscience for maintaining law and order in the ship.

The Captain has begun to love Billy like his son but he must go against his instincts while condemning a guilty man. The Dansker's position is the same as the Captain. He has started liking Billy too but fails to help him. He never takes direct action against the evil fearing the strict punishment of facing evil directly, thus leaving a good man like Billy to know the deceptive world and help himself. The Dansker represents people in the modern society who never go fully with their conscience or impulse but act as per their own convenience, acceptable to the society. The ship seems to be a larger representation of the society. The narrative poses a question, especially toward the end of the book, when the narrator tries to explore some of the contradictions associated with performing a citizen's duty during the war. Military hierarchy which is in charge of citizens' democratic rights, during emergencies, respect neither individuals nor their rights or ethics. The crew in the ship questions the Captain's right on passing judgement upon Billy so swiftly. Moreover, the Captain plays a significant role as chief witness as well as a jury member. These types of courts do exist during wartime. Even the people in the ship having doubts in mind regarding the case is suppressed by the superiors quickly blowing their whistles and forcing them back to their jobs. The dilemma that people usually have whether to follow ones conscience or the law can be noted in Captain Vere. Law exits to support the integrity of a society and if one disobeys; he threatens the very fabric of the society. However, what if law itself is unjust? Captain Vere surely applies logic in arguments keeping the war in mind. However, like the crew of the ship readers are left feeling that Billy is punished unnecessarily for the greater glory of an abstract cause. Keeping in mind the intention and motivation of a crime sometimes wrongdoings are justified in the eyes of the laws. But, sadly in Billy's case the jury conforms to Vere's rude reliance upon military law and order, a system that rejects any motive or intention on the part of the criminal. Billy chooses to keep himself silent, which complicates the matter further.

Closely connected with this theme is **the theme of duty and principle** which are embodied in Captain Vere whose idea of strictly abiding by the military rules and position cost a sailor his life. The narrator speaks well of the Captain and his values are admirable. However, the novel ends asking the question whether one's sense of duty and principles are higher than a human life.

Melville wrote *Billy Budd* during the last years of his life. Though it may appear a simple tale of injustice, Billy Budd is not just a straightforward narrative. It produces an astonishing diversity of equally plausible interpretations. Due to the novelist's extensive use of different Biblical, literary, and historical allusions and richness of suggestions, a large number of attempts came out of many critics that tired to interpret Billy Budd. Because of its wealth of Biblical allusions, some critics argue that Billy Budd was Melville's attempt to relook at orthodox Christianity and reconcile with the notion that good and evil coexist in the universe. Billy Budd explores **the eternal conflict between good and evil**. If innocent Billy represents Christ, Captain Vere stands for God the Father and Claggart stands for Satan; the novel becomes a retelling of the life of Christ. However, Melville has portrayed both the story and its characters as multi-allusioned and no single interpretation can be ever fully satisfactory. To others, Billy is not Christ, for he is just not perfect; he is "The Noble Savage", too naive to comprehend the implication of his death. Captain Vere cannot be a grand figure to represent God, as his vacillations/limitations are all too human; he is someone corrupted by too long an association with civilisation. Claggart may represent absolute evil, is actually evil, "a depravity according to nature".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Do you think the narrator showed Biblical parallels for Billy and for Claggart?

Q 4: What do you think about Claggart's reasons behind hating Billy that ultimately leads to Billy's sad demise?

14.3.3 Narrative Style

Billy Budd belongs to the author's favourite genre, namely travel narrative. It is a sea story based on several different events Melville himself experienced at sea. Yet, Billy Budd is not just a sea story; it is like many sea stories, based on an actual event. The book is a jaded satire incorporating a controversial historical incident on board the USS Somers in 1842. It consists of thirty chapters balanced between action and comment. It informs the readers in the beginning that the action of the novel takes place in 1797, which is 22 years before the author's birth. Melville reproduces the story of that event in a narrative form. The foundation of *Billy Budd* can be traced in "Baby Budd, Sailor", a story which the author later revised and expanded to more than twice its original length, rich with allusions, symbols and numerous digressions. Melville's own knowledge of the sea, personal experiences and a faithful, though somewhat imaginative, matured handling of the real events of the Somers' Affair made *Billy Budd* a novel—both believable and realistic. Melville also borrowed from his past work as well as from his past life. The novel can be termed as a Christian allegory as it is full of mythic figures and mythological allusions, then a historical document for containing an actual incident of rebellion with historical background at the same time attracting attention towards much needed reforms concerning ordinary shipmen.

Billy Budd has numerous allusions to imageries and stories from the Holy Bible thereby constantly reminding of Christ throughout the narrative. Billy's death resembles Christ's suffering and His crucifixion. The innocent sailor becomes a victim of a hostile society and sacrifices his life just like Christ. Claggart reminds of the satanic figure that has the evil intention of destroying Billy and throughout the narrative works upon it. Claggart with his evil mind mirrors the serpent of the Genesis. The novel is so full of Christian references that sometimes it makes the critics confused regarding Melville's

objective—to embrace Christianity or a rude critique of religion. The tragedy of innocent Billy flawed by a single fault appears an allegory of a struggle between good and evil.

It is unfortunate that the newspapers of the time provided a 'realistic' account of the incident without voicing what the seamen knew to be true. What the newspapers presented to the people was distorted fact. Through the narrative, Melville presents a ballad composed by Billy's friend, a fellow foretop man in the novel. The novel ends with the crude poem "Billy in the Darbies" (Billy in Irons). Billy waiting for execution and being a corpse dropped down into the sea. It is ironical that Billy is punished but he is immortalised as a saint blessed by the fellow sailor's ironic repetition of Billy's words "God bless Captain Vere". Billy at the time of his death appears Christ-like. Before his death, Billy spends time with the Captain in the stateroom that reminds Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Billy does not defend himself before the jury and dies with a prayer upon his lips. Paradoxically Claggart tries to defeat Billy but in doing so invites his own death. Melville does not conclude with telling Billy's story but he dedicates three chapters at the end of the novel as moral of his tale. He questions society's habit of twisting the truth about a simple, honest seaman, just as seaweed twine around the jettisoned corpse. Billy has become a legend.

Innumerable literary devices–irony, symbolism, metaphor, simile, poetic diction, foreshadowing, allusions, suspense–are used throughout to give a unified meaning and order to the narrative. The novel is a short one with short chapters and sentences, compact with information. There are two major conflicts in the book—the conflict between the natural goodness and honesty of Billy and the duplicity, subtlety and evil of Claggart. The second conflict is relating to the issue whether Captain Vere should absolve Billy for incidentally killing his officer foe. The captain knows Billy is actually innocent, but he is bound by circumstances to exercise his military authority and execute Billy. Significantly when Billy leaves his old ship, he

cries out with unknowing prophecy "...goodbye to you too, old Rights-of-Man", for at Bellipotent Billy sacrifices his liberty which dominates the entire novel. The novel is a commentary on radical change not only concerning seafarers but on the society.



LET US KNOW

The author frequently uses animal imagery while describing the tragic hero and his fellow seamen. At times Billy is compared to "a young horse fresh from the pasture", then to a dog that is of generous breed and while he lashes out at his tormentor, he looks a cornered dog or caged monkey. Billy is simple, innocent and primitive, natural, one who does not realize law or military order.

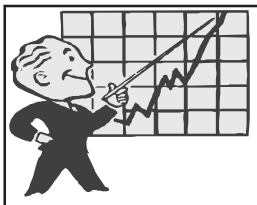
Further and even more subtle methods by which Melville used his own unique style to either emphasize the nature of a character or to produce a particular mood are his use of inverted or unusual word orders and his symbolic use of colour. For instance, Captain Vere's reflective qualities are foreshadowed when Melville describes him as an officer "unlike no few." Melville avoids a direct description like not many of the king's officers, but uses instead an oblique and somewhat ambiguous mode to introduce him. The descriptions of Billy on the other hand always portray him in direct motion, climbing, talking, asking; and Claggart in indirect motion, waiting, watching and scheming. Then, Billy's complexion is rose-red, while Claggart's is pale; Billy's hair is blonde and Claggart's black; Billy's domain is the high mast against the blue sky; Claggart's the gloom of the lower gun deck.

The names of the characters in the novel are very suggestive. The author has used names suggesting true characters of people and things. Billy's last name is Budd, which is suggestive of his innocence and youth and brings to mind an image of flower buds. Captain Vere's name suggests his tendency to veer between

attitudes. On the one hand, he is the authoritative figure who is fully aware of his duty while on the other he understands the fact that Billy has fallen victim to the malevolence of the world. Where Rights-of-Man is a place people enjoy greater individual liberties, the name Bellipotent links itself with war, power and strict military rule. Then when the Athee (or the Atheist) defeats the Bellipotent with its crew—the sailors who stand for Christian figures—it suggests the fall of the Christian world.

The story of Billy Budd is told from the perspective of an unnamed narrator who refers to himself as "I", then briefly talks about himself and his past experiences. The first person narrator has no name and is not on board the Bellipotent, yet he speaks quite authoritatively about the events that take place there. The narrator has a limited omniscient point of view, which means that he is able to observe nearly all of the novel's action, including some of the characters' thoughts/plans except Claggart's character, which he admits. At the end, the tale of Billy and his sad untimely demise assumes the quality of myth. Billy Budd is dedicated to Jack Chase who had served as a foretop man as Billy in the novel with Melville during his hitch aboard the U.S. frigate United States.

Thus, in *Billy Budd* Herman Melville, through the use of a seemingly endless variety of literary devices and allusions, unified and gave order and meaning to innumerable disconnected parts. In what is essentially a novelette, he achieved a profoundness, which makes the reader return again and again to the story, each time to discover a new facet, a new idea, a new insight. The novel's tight suspenseful narration, it symbolic allusions, Biblical, historical, and literary and its haunting power upon the reader's mind cause him to ponder over its weighty and profound philosophic and moral implications, and make it the masterpiece of Melville's final years.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What do you think about the narrator's idea about war?

Q 6: What are the different allusions used by Melville in the novel?

14.3.4 Major Characters

The following are the important characters of the novel.

Billy Budd

Billy Budd is simple, naive, good hearted and innocent. He is 21 years old and of obscure origin and limited education who is nicknamed "Baby Budd" and "the Handsome Sailor". He is dutiful as a young sailor on the Rights-of-Man, the merchant ship, and his commanding officer, Captain Graveling becomes upset for letting one of his best men go. While boarding Officer Lieutenant Ratcliffe chooses Billy the ship's peacemaker out of his whole crew aboard the Rights-of Man for impressments. By his mere beauty and innocence, Billy generates positive spirits among the sailors. Having no choice the Captain allows Billy to leave. Billy wins the hearts of the fellow sailors on Billipotent. He does his duty as foretop man honestly. Billy is always honest to his position. When the man in disguise approaches him asking him to join the mutiny, Billy reacts violently. Billy wins the attention and admiration of his less gifted friends aboard for his good looks, honesty, sincerity kindness, gentleness, cheerfulness and masculine charm. He becomes popular wherever he goes. He is always surrounded by fellow seamen. With his blue eyes and youthful figure, Billy is a rare combination of beauty and innocence. The author has informed us of Billy's athletic body and his intense eyes and that nude Billy could pose as Adam before the Fall. Not only Adam, Billy is linked with Jesus Christ as well. He is the peacemaker, adored by all the crewmen. He is loved by all. Billy has no knowledge of his parents

or his family, which gives the character universality. He is a sailor, so by profession he is a journeyman/traveller.

The author does not present his hero as an all perfect man. Billy is not perfect—his major blemish being the tendency to stutter when he is under emotional stress. Though bright, he becomes unpredictable at times. At certain crucial moments, he becomes inarticulate. In the narrative, while he could have cleared the air by communicating, he actually fails to defend himself verbally before the accusers and the jury. Billy also lacks the awareness that evil exits. His inability to perceive ill or evil in men is a defect for which he pays dearly. He takes people at face value. Billy is blinded by his own openhearted nature. He fails to judge malice. Billy goes to the Dansker for advice when he seems to be having problems in the ship and receives warning from the old sailor. Despite the warnings, Billy just fails to distrust Claggart.

Billy's illiteracy brings him close to nature. He accepts his punishment with open arms; accepts the execution blessing the Captain. The (natural) primitive man returns to nature after his execution. In the narrative, Captain Vere compares Billy with the angel of God and the Bible says that Lucifer was an angel in heaven who fell from grace.

Claggart

John Claggart, master-at-arms, is the darkest character in the novel. He is evil personified. In his mid-thirties, Claggart masquerades as a devoted officer but is quite dangerous for anyone not getting along with him well. He has a corrupted self. Claggart comes from a shady family background. He joined the ship when it left its homeport to replace the former master-at-arms who was disabled. His position is equivalent to the Chief of Police on board the ship. The crew refers to him with the derogatory nickname "Jemmy Legs" behind him. He is an egocentric man. If Billy is the representative of innocence, Claggart is the epitome of malice.

Melville provides Claggart's physical description while outlining his character. He is lean and tall. His hands are small and sharp. He has a cleanly chiselled chin and cunning violet eyes. He has a real authoritative gaze. He is of pale skin with curly black hair. Because of his paleness, he tries his best to stay away from sunlight.

His hatred towards Billy remains largely unexplained. His jealously causes Billy's execution and his innate wickedness seems to rather emanate from an unknown source. So careful and perfect in hiding his evil, Claggart is kind towards the poor honest sailor only to mask his intentions. Claggart has a tendency to over/mis-interpret others' actions for himself to establish in his mind the fact that they bear evil intentions. When incidentally Billy spills the soup, Claggart assumes that Billy has purposely done this. On the contrary, Billy cannot even perceive the malice in Claggart's sarcastic comments on the act. Claggart hates Billy physical beauty, purity, innocence and popularity that Claggart can never attain. Therefore, he longs to destroy what he cannot have. He plans a plot by employing underhanded ways, falsely accusing Billy of mutiny to punish him heavily under the Mutiny Act. However, to his surprise and shock, Billy strikes him violently and he does not survive the assault. Thus Claggart gets his share of punishment for purposely dragging an innocent man and falsely accusing hm. However, in this process, Billy dies as Claggier desires. If one goes by the novel's Christian allegory, Claggart assumes the role of Satan by loathing nobility, goodness, morality, trust and virtue. He is like a serpent in Billy's Garden of Eden and serves as both tempter and destroyer. Claggart's false allegations provoke Billy to give up his virtues and commit a grievous sin. Billy's sad punishment comes as a double victory to Claggart. Billy is hanged and falls from moral grace. However, the author has referred to Claggart's corpse as a dead snake, quite befitting his character.

The author has effectively depicted the evil inside Claggart and has argued that his hatred towards Billy arises from the latter's "harmlessness". Claggart cannot stand virtues like purity,

truthfulness and has to corrupt innocence. Claggart knows "goodness", but he is "powerless" to embrace it, just like he cannot overcome or give up his own evil nature. He has to live with those.

Captain Edward Fairfax Vere

Known as "Starry Vere", his surname suggests two Latin words–verus (meaning true) and vir (meaning man). The name creates a picture of a very dependable, strong leader, which indeed is true. He is a bachelor of aristocratic lineage. He is a well read, efficient, intelligent, a dedicated naval officer in his fifties. Behind his back, people criticize him for being in love with abstractions and high ideas. He is linked with the most controversial act of the novel – the trail and execution of Billy who has been like a son to him. His sense of justice and duty toward his position, his commitment to his values and to the Crown of England leads to the execution of an innocent man. At the same time, Vere sympathises with Billy and knows that he is innocent, but has to set an example for the world. A frank commander, he represents the truthful blend of an undesigning heart and mind. The Captain who rules his ship by the book ignores his own sentiments and urges the jury to disregard their inner emotions while punishing Billy according to the laws. Captin Vere has a lot of dilemma within him. His character symbolises the clash between law and conscience, an individual's inner self and his role in the society. Vere dislikes Claggart but his position in the ship does not allow him to overlook Claggart's accusations against Billy. Vere feels pity for Billy but he cannot forget that Billy has committed a crime by murdering an officer. As an individual Vere is full of kindness and love for Billy but as the Captain of the ship, he finds himself duty-bound to punish Billy, crashing his emotions. If one goes by the novel's Christian allegory, Captain Vere's character is parallel to Pontius Pilate. The man puts so much trust in reason and rational philosophy; he is so dutiful that he does not hesitate a bit to sacrifice a man close to his heart.

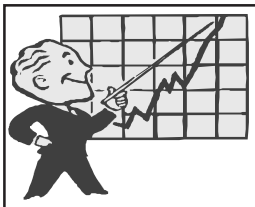
The novel poses several questions for the readers – is Captain Vere responsible for Billy's sad demise? To a certain extent Captin Vere's inflexible nature, his insistence on following the law and placing principles above people are reasons enough for Billy's death. At the same time, no one can ignore the situation Captain Vere works in. The time is tense; there is a war going on and the captain cannot overlook his duty as the leader of the ship. To sentence one to death by hanging is the only punishment for murder, more so, since it is wartime and the murder hints at a conspiratorial plot of mutiny. In choosing to respect the law of the state and naval code and in the process the shouldering the burden of overlooking his conscience and knowledge to be morally right put a huge mental strain on the Captain. Before he dies, he appears to rue his decision – his last words being "Billy Budd". The fact that the Captain repeats Billy's name indicates he fact that he dies haunted by his perceived betrayal of the young sailor whom he loved as a son. He fails to let go of his sense of debt to Billy whom he admired so much. He turns out to be a tragic figure caught between love and duty.

Captain Vere is a distinguished sailor and his nickname Starry Vere befits this intellectual, aloof figure, who is so impaled towards his duty. He equates Billy with an "angel of God", but he also says if a real angel of God had committed a killing in his ship, the angel would have received the same punishment.

The Dansker

An elderly sailor, nicknamed "Board-Her-in-the-Smoke", who befriends Billy, "has a pale, jagged scar across his face, beady eyes and a blue-peppered complexion." A favourite among the crew, he is Billy's only confidant aboard the Bellipotent. The Dansker served under Lord Nelson on the ship the *Agamemnon*, and he has a scar to prove it. He has a "wizened face, time-tinted and weather-stained to the complexion of an antique parchment". The Dansker is the man of unsentimental wisdom. Whenever Billy asks for his opinion, the old man listens and gives oracular responses. He is the first to

warn Billy that Claggart is "down on him". The worldly man takes no time to see Claggart's evil intentions and his jealously towards Billy. However, he is decidedly unhelpful and reluctant to give any real advice to the young sailor in doubt. The first hint that Claggart hates him and he is Billy's enemy comes from the Dansker. The Dansker partly is guilty of Billy's premature death for he fails to guide Billy properly with accurate advice as being the only trusted aid and messenger of the poor sailor. A simple warning was not enough for Billy who cannot even perceive the malice behind Claggart's sarcastic comments about the soup accident. Dansker's eccentric behaviour is difficult for many of the sailors to handle; however, Billy respects him as a "salt hero," and always makes sure to salute him when he walks by.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How do you find the character of Claggart? Is he fundamentally evil?

Q 8: Can one blame Captain Vere for Billy Budd's death?

Q 9: How and why does Melville interrupt the main narrative of *Billy Budd*?

14.4 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *BILLY BUD*

Billy Budd remained unpublished long thirty years after the author's death in 1891. The critics and readers took *Billy Budd* seriously only in the mid 20th century only when the novelist began to gain wider acclaim. Since then Billy Budd has served as the kernel of stage plays, operas, musicals and even films. In 1949, *Billy Budd* was staged with the title 'Uniform of Flesh'. In the opera, *Billy Budd* was performed the same year. Then a four act musical version of the novel was performed. In 1962, the British film version appeared in black and white. The film lacked public support. In addition to these art products, poet W. H. Auden immortalised *Billy Budd* in his poem "Herman Melville", which appeared in 'Collected Shorter Poems

1927-1957'. Likewise, Helen Pinkerlon composed a four-line verse "Billy Budd" for South Review, in the summer of 1968.

Critics are also divided whether to approve or condemn Captain Vere's decision regarding Billy's execution for murdering an evil-minded officer. Due to its multi-faceted nature, like all great literature, each reading may uncover multiple new treasures or valid interpretations. The novel is actually a multi-levelled exploration of good and evil in the universe. The depth of the work has challenged innumerable critics to attempt at least a partial illumination of it. Lewis Mumford, who was the first literary historical proponent, found Billy Budd a testament to Melville's ultimate reconciliation with the injustices in his life. The young innocent sailor's underserved death at its climax portrays Melville's reconciliation with his own rejection and failures. *Billy Budd* is the last long delayed work of art of a long-silent author who had known only rejection. According to him, the book is the story of the world, the "spirit and the devil," with the message that "good and evil exist in the nature of things, each itself, each doomed to war with the other." Evil then has an equal place that it shares with good, which is "the fundamental ambiguity of life." This view of *Billy Budd* is widely accepted and promulgated by critics like F. O. Matthiessen and R. W. B. Lewis. While for Mumford, Billy Budd represents Melville's affirmation of true religious transcendence; for Thompson, Billy Budd is a bitter satire that satisfied Melville's earlier acerbity. These two major sharp, critical, opposite views – *Billy Budd* as a religious paean or *Billy Budd* as a jaded satire have fuelled the legend of Billy Budd and readers all over the world have been hooked to the novel.

Although other critics willingly admit Melville's use of religious symbolism in the working out of his tale, they insist that *Billy Budd* is "more political than theological or mythic." Most notable among these is Richard Chase, who argues that "society cannot be based on the contrary absolutes of evil and good represented by Billy Budd and his traducer Claggart." In addition, this interpretation appears to have some validity. Surely, Claggart and Billy are characters who represent the philosophic extremes of Rousseau and Hobbes. Billy is then the "natural man" free of the corruption caused by too long an association with the decadent institutions of organised

society, and thus ideally represents Rousseau's concept of the "noble savage." Claggart, on the other hand, is Hobbes' man "naturally depraved" and evil, kept in check only by the restraints of custom and law. Of course, then, as a result of this interpretation, Captain Vere becomes the hero of the novel since he is the representative of a social order whose ideal is the middle way, a reconciliation of the apparent contradiction of good and evil. He is someone who is neither good nor evil, but rather a man whose concept of "order, authority, and legality" makes him the "tragic hero", who, though conscious of good and evil, must act in obedience to the codes of an authority higher than himself. This interpretation, too, of course, represents a kind of reconciliation for the always-rebellious Melville. For, in that case, only the Veres of the world would be valid and continue to exist and not the Billys nor Claggarts, who are doomed to destroy each other through eternal conflict.

Still other critics, including Leonard Caspar, disagree that *Billy Budd* represents Melville's "testament of acceptance." Indeed, when Melville describes Claggart as an irrational being who hides behind a reasonable exterior, does not such a description apply equally to Captain Vere? Surely, Captain Vere's sudden change of attitude toward Billy, and his decision at Billy's summary trial are not the products of natural justice. Is not Vere's decision "a perversion as serious as Claggart's?" Nor does Billy's stoic acceptance of the consequences of Captain Vere's decision necessarily imply an acceptance of the injustice of that decision. He says, "I seem fated to die, right or wrong, I am ready." What then seems clear is that he does not accept the justice of the decision, but rather accepts his fate.

Another group of critics interpret *Billy Budd* as a Greek tragedy, and this too appears a valid possibility since most of the elements of tragedy are present. We have a hero, blemished only by a single "fatal flaw" which is to bring about his downfall. The story takes place over a short span of time, in a single place, and presents but a single action. In addition, Claggart appears as the human representative of a malevolent fate whose sole

function is the destruction of the hero. Moreover, Billy, like the tragic hero, is warned by the oracle or seer, the Dansker, of his possible fate, and like the tragic hero he cannot understand the warning until it is too late.



14.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that *Billy Budd* is the final novel by American writer Herman Melville. It was first published posthumously in London in 1924. Melville had begun writing the original work in November 1888, but left it unfinished at his death in 1891. Acclaimed by British critics as a masterpiece when published in London, it quickly took its place as a classic literary work in the United States. It is a symbolic tale built out of Melville's egalitarian meditations on the mutiny at Spithead in 1797 and a family story of how Melville's older brother presided over the court martial and execution of an insubordinate sailor. Billy, 'the handsome sailor', is wrongly accused by Claggart and unable to defend himself verbally because of a stammer, strikes Claggart dead. After being tried by the liberal Captain Vere, Billy is hanged, his last words being 'God bless Captain Vere!' Then, in apparently Christ-like apotheosis, 'the East was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God', and the sailors question whether Billy has actually died.



14.6 FURTHER READING

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Leon Howard. (1967). *Herman Melville: A Biography*. University of California Press.

Robert Milder. (2006). *Exiled Royalties: Melville and the Life We Imagine*. Oxford University Press.

14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Perhaps yes... ... Bellipotent extracts innocent Billy from the Rights-of-Man... …explicitly symbolic... …law is all-powerful that compels men into participation in war with readily dispensing the rights of the citizen ... …suggestive names given by the novelist… …at the end the narrator explores various aspects of contradictions/obligations of serving one's country during war… ...rights and democracy are defended by law and the military hierarchy … ...readers are left to judge and accept an ethical choice.

Ans to Q 2: Billy Budd poses moral and ethical questions... …Captain Vere's dilemma moves around the philosophy of ethics... …the Captain makes the decision between right and wrong and not between good and evil... …Billy's execution is a legally right action though may not be a morally good one... …military law vs moral sensibility.

Ans to Q 3: Melville draws a parallel between Billy and Christ … to the sailors Billy is a kind of Christ … the uncanny songs of the sailors do not imagine Billy waking up in heaven.

Ans to Q 4: Central conflict between Claggart and the innocent Billy… ...the author's roping in the serious issues emanating from the tussle between good and evil… ...John Claggart accuses Billy of mutiny… …actions aftermath lead to his execution... …reasons of Claggart's evil intentions towards Billy are not made clear... …novel delves into the mysteries of human motivation.

Ans to Q 5: At the beginning of the book, the narrator praises the heroics of Nelson and the glories of naval victory... …glorifies war and soldiers… …towards the end, he mentions business profits of war… …defies ugly machinery of war... … suggests ambition as part of the makeup of even the most dutiful and honourable man … shows the biased

and unjust reporting of officially sanctioned wartime papers... …but no anti-war polemic.

Ans to Q 6: Billy compared to Hercules, Apollo, Alexander the Great for strength, good looks, noble nature… …compared to Caspar Hauser, Adam before his fall… …evil that is to befall him is foreshadowed… …Claggart compared to Shawnee, Titus Oates, Ananias, reveal evil and treacherous nature. Claggart and Billy compared to Chang and Eng… …Captain Vere compared to Admiral Nelson, Don John of Austria, and Andrea Doria… …his unusual ability and inflexible nature… …allusions to the Dansker, to the seers and oracles of old… …mysterious nature of character and foretell fulfilment of his veiled warnings.

Ans to Q 7: Claggart is the most complex character ... …Claggart nurses a hatred towards Billy as one who represents all that is good in contrast to his own evil nature ... ... the serpent in Billy's Eden … tempter as well as Billy's destroyer ... … symbolic of the extreme evil.

Ans to Q 8: One can partly blame the Captain… …somehow Vere's early death that cuts off the possibility of his participation in the great battles at Trafalgar and the Nile seem to be an apt punishment… … Vere mumbles Billy's name on his deathbed… …suggests his repentance… …we need to determine a man's guilt not just based on his actions, but also his intentions.

Ans to Q 9: Because, he supplies readers with necessary background material in places closer to sections… …at every instance the interjected material foreshadow impending events … …immediately following Captain Vere's introduction, long descriptive section on his background and so on.



14.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: How is the relation between military law and morality presented in the story?

Q 2: How do you interpret the events surrounding Billy Budd's trial and execution?

Q 3: Critically comment on the use of religious imagery in the novel?

Q 4: Consider Captain Vere's role in Billy's execution.

Q 5: How does Melville use literary, Biblical, historical, and mythological allusions to reinforce his story?

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UNIT 15: MARK TWAIN*: THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN*

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Mark Twain: Life and Works

15.4 Reading of the Novel

- 15.4.1 Story of the Novel
- 15.4.2 Major Themes
- 15.4.3 Mark Twain's Art of Characterisation
- 15.4.4 Mark Twain's Narrative Style

15.5 Critical Reception of Mark Twain

15.6 Let us sum up

15.7 Further reading

15.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

15.9 Possible Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

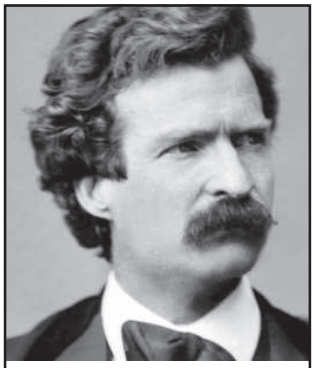
- discuss the life and works of Mark Twain
- read and understand *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in its proper context
- trace the main story line of the novel emphasizing its major themes
- get an idea of Mark Twain's Art of Characterisation and Narrative Style
- situate Mark Twain in the context of American Novels

15.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit of the Course on American literature. This unit introduces us to Mark Twain who occupies a unique position in the history of the American novel. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures Huckleberry Finn* are two famous novels by Mark Twain that have fascinated

readers for over a century now. The publication of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1885 was a great event in the literary history of America. The basic inspiration for the novel lies in the search for identity, and the fulfilment of the great American dream. Mark Twain along with other novelists like Hawthorne, Melville, Henry James, Hemmingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck continues this tradition. Twain began work on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* and his main focus was on the institution of slavery and the realistic portrayal of frontier society in the South. However, harassed by troubles in his personal life and prevalent national conflicts in 1880's, he was forced to abandon this work for a short period. He finally finished the draft of *Huckleberry Finn* in 1883, and it received immense critical acclaim when it was published in 1885. By the time we finish reading this unit, we shall learn that this novel is highly significant due to its deep study and analysis, of issues relating to racism and morality. The novel has been a subject of controversy and debate throughout the years.

15.3 MARK TWAIN: LIFE AND WORKS



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Mark_Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens popularly known as Mark Twain was born in the small river town of Florida, Missouri on November 30, 1835. He was the sixth child of John Marshall Clemens, a legal practitioner and Jane Lampton. When he was four years old, his family shifted to Hannibal, another riverside town with the hope of increasing the family income. Mark Twain grew up amidst the slave- holding community of Hannibal, which provided a mixture of rugged frontier life and the southern tradition, a lifestyle that influenced his later writings. In Hannibal, the black slaves were mostly engaged in household and farm works, but they were still very much under the obligations of slavery. Twain spent a major part of his childhood near the Mississippi River, and the impact of this great river on the imagination of the novelist can be seen in all his novels. His father

died in 1847 when he was only twelve years old, and he had no option but to leave school in order to help with the family finances.

Twain initially joined a printing press as an apprentice, and his job included travelling throughout America. After completing his apprenticeship, he worked for many newspapers in St. Louis, New York and Philadelphia. Twain flourished in his career as a journalist indulging in tales and satirical humour. However, he reali that journalism was not very lucrative and he left his job. He travelled south, and happened to meet a steamboat captain who made him realize his boyhood dream of becoming a river pilot. Twain received rigorous training and became a licen pilot at the age of 24, and the bond that he shared with the river became deeper, when he started navigating the river waters. This profession also provided him with his pen name Mark Twain, derived from the riverboat leadsman's signal, "by the mark, twain" meaning the river was deep enough for safe travel. The humdrum life on the banks of the river, the strange and mysterious movements of the river and the incessant floods that cau havoc, all had a permanent imprint on the mind of the young novelist.

The beginning of the Civil War in 1861 led to the end of Mark Twain's piloting career, and being in favour with the South, he joined the Confederate forces for a short time. The discovery of gold and silver led him to Neveda, to try his luck in mining. However, life in Neveda was too hard and rough for Mark Twain, and he once again moved towards journalism. He became a correspondent in Virginia City and San Francisco, establishing himself as a reporter, speculator, humourist and a full time writer of travelogues, sketches, articles, tales, memoirs, and novels. His expertise in language, and distinctive witty style brought him immense fame as a writer.

All his works were mostly ba on his personal experiences in various parts of United States and travels abroad. *The Jumping Frog of Calaversas County and other Sketches* was published in1867. Mark Twain suddenly shot into fame with this book ba on his experiences in the mining operations in Neveda. The jumping frog is u as a symbol of an adventurer who with a single jump gets popularity. His next work *The Innocents Abroad* was published in the form of letters in 1869. It is a satirical account of a cruise in

the Mediterranean with a company of Americans. The satire lies in observing the scenes, customs, religious rites and attitudes of Europe, through the irreverent and chauvinist lens of an American 'innocent'.

When Mark Twain was 35 years old, he married Olivia in 1870, and settled down in Hartford, where he lived for more than two decades and published the best of his works. In the same year, their son Langdon Clemens was born prematurely. They also had three daughters Susan, Clara and Jean. Mark Twain was a child of the frontier and his dream for wealth made him invest in business adventures in which he suffered heavy losses. Twain did not lose hope but arranged a series of lectures within the country as well as abroad. These lectures brought the funds with which he managed to pay off all his debts.

His third book *Roughing It* published in 1872, is an account of his Westward journey in the early 1860's, from St Louis through Neveda to San Francisco, and to the Sandwich Islands. Twain became successful as a writer and with growing finances; the family seemed to have overcome the struggle in life. However, his son Langdon suddenly pas away after a sudden attack of diphtheria, this loss left a deep scar on the fertile mind of Mark Twain. *The Gilded Age* published in 1874 deals with the adventures of a beautiful girl Laura who after being uced by the colonel is taken to Washington under the patronage of another Senator where she has to act as an agent in his dirty deals. Laura later kills him and is acquitted of the murder charge but dies out of shock due to cruel public reception. The centre of interest in the novel are the characters particularly the colonel drawn after his mother's cousin who is destroyed but not ready to accept defeat.

His next book *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is full of native humour and a shrewd observation of human character. Published in 1876 it tells the story of a lively and adventurous boy Tom who lives with his brother Sid and his good-hearted Aunt Polly in the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri. He and his companion Huckleberry Finn embark on a journey of exploits during which they undergo many adventures. The study of Tom's character is the prime concern in the novel. *A Tramp Abroad* is a travelogue ba on the account of Twain's trip to Europe with his family in 1869. Published in 1880, the

book presents scenic locales and interesting characters. In 1882, he published *The Prince and the Pauper,* a historical satire evaluating the past in terms of modern sense of morality. The plot is set in Henry VIII's reign, and there is an attack on social injustice, monarchical system and class distinctions. After a lapse of many years, he returns to his favourite subject the 'river' in his book *Life on the Mississippi*, which was published in 1883. This is an autobiographical account of Twain's life on the Mississippi River, highlighting features of on-shore life, anecdotes and descriptions of the river in a vivid manner.

Written as a sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* the next work of Twain is his masterpiece *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* published in 1885. It narrates the adventures of Huckleberry Finn through the picaresque device of a journey that introduces a variety of characters and events. By this time, he had written the best of his works and his fame touched the four corners of the world, earning him the title of the most cosmopolitan novelist of America. The satire *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) is about a mechanic who wakes up in the court of King Arthur. Mark Twain here uses humour to satirize the romantici Arthurian legends that were full of superstition and privileges of the Church. *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* published in 1894 is an attack on slavery; highlighting the treatment meted out to the black slaves by the whites. Twain's next work *The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg* contains bitter comments on the human race. Published in 1900, it is a bitter satire on human greed, which has no limits, and its consequent effects on man.

Mark Twain died in1910 and was buried in Elmira*. The Mysterious Stranger* (1916) and *Mark Twain's Autobiography* (1924) were published after the death of the novelist. The first deals with a mysterious stranger pitted against young boys who have a great moral sense. The second book is a collection of speculations, anecdotes, recollections, diatribes and character all interwoven together by a play of humour and rapid change in mood. As the nation moved forward economically in the post Civil War period towards the Gilded Age, a term coined by him in 1873 so did Mark Twain. He became a famous writer and a wealthy businessman and his fame

touched the highest point of glory. Apart from being honoured by various American Universities, Mark Twain was also honoured with a D.Litt (Hon) by the University of Oxford in recognition of his contribution to the world of English literature.



LET US KNOW

Slavery or trade in human beings dates from prehistoric times and all ancient civilisations u slaves. The history of slavery in the United States can be divided into two phases—1660 to1790 and 1790 to 1865. Slaves worked in unknown, often dangerous territory, beset by disease and hostile inhabitants. They were made to perform hard, laborious work as well as cultivate and harvest crops for the market. The life span of a slave from initial purchase to death was usually seven years. In the United States, slavery was the sectional deadlock between North America and South America in 1860, and it was also one of the causes of Civil War that began in 1861.

The Picaresque novel presents a realistic portrayal of society. It had its origin in Spain, and the protagonist is a rogue, who passes comments on men, manners and morality of the society. They lack a proper plot structure, and through various episodes highlight the ugly and absurd in society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: When and where was Mark Twain born?

Q 2: Where did he spend his childhood?

Q 3: What is a picaresque novel?

15.4 READING THE NOVEL

15.4.1 Story of The Novel

The story of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* opens with the protagonist Huck Finn narrating his story. He begins by referring to an earlier novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* where he and

his companion find a treasure house and a sum of twelve thousand dollars. The sum is divided equally between them.

Huck is considered an outcast as he is always clothed in rags and sleeps in hogsheads. He has a father who indulges in drinking and is not seen in his village for long spells of time. Huck therefore is virtually an orphan, as he is totally undervalued by the villagers. However, this changes when Huck becomes the owner of six thousand dollars. Many families come forward to look after him, but it is the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson who finally adopt him, and take the responsibility to civilize him. Huck has already invested his money with Judge Thatcher, and this brings him one dollar every day. The Widow sends him to school and starts teaching him manners, which includes many restrictions. Huck becomes tired of his new life, and thinks about the freedom and enjoyment of his past life. He finally runs away and decides to join the band of Tom, to once again enjoy a life of thrill and adventure. He is overjoyed to know that Tom is planning to rob the caravan of Arabs, and to keep them imprisoned until the ransom is paid. Most of the band members have no idea what is the meaning of the word 'ransom', and Tom's naïve answer is "it means we keep them till they are dead". However, to Huck the whole plan of robbing the caravan appeared to be a boring Sunday school picnic, and being disgusted he quits from the band.

Soon thereafter Huck notices footprints in the snow and recognises them as his aggressive, cruel and brutal Pap's. He realises that his father has come to claim his money, and he runs to Judge Thatcher, to sign off all his money for a 'consideration' of a dollar. When he reaches home, he finds his Pap waiting for him. He catches him by the collar and compels him to hand over the money. Huck gives him the money knowing that if he refu his Pap would reward him with a beating. Pap's next plan is to get custody of Huck and the new judge in town helps him in this plan. Pap criticises Huck for going to school and drags him off to a cabin in the wilderness

where he is imprisoned. Initially Huck begins to love the cabin life but frequent beatings from Pap compel him to run away. When Pap goes to town, Huck saws himself out of the cabin, kills a pig and spreads its blood on the floor to prove it was his own. He then takes a canoe and floats downstream to Jackson Island, in the middle of the wide Mississippi River. Once there, he hides the canoe in the bushes of the Island and sets camp. For a day or two, he sustains himself on fish and tries to find a better hiding place. During his exploration, he stumbles upon a campfire and though a little frightened decides to look for his fellow inhabitant.

The next day he discovers that his fellow inhabitant is none other than Jim, Miss Watson's slave. Jim had run away after overhearing the plan of the Widow to sell him to a slave trader. Along with the rest of the villagers, Jim also believes that Huck is dead, and he is frightened to see him. Huck is full of sympathy for Jim and they both share their escape stories, happy to have the company of each other. They both manage to find a cavern near the top of the Island, which they believe, is safer for hiding. While they live on the Island, the river rises significantly and there is a sudden flood. The gushing waters engulf and wreck many boats and houses. They happen to see one such house and climb aboard to see what they can retrieve, and see a dead man in the corner of the house. Jim climbs over and discovers that it is the body of Pap, Huck's father but he decides not to reveal this fact to Huck.

Soon Huck returns to the town dres as a girl in order to gather news. He comes to know from a woman named Judith Loftus that both Pap and Jim are suspects for the murder of Huck. She also tells him that she believes that Jim is hiding in Jackson Island and people are getting ready to search the Island. Hearing this Huck rushes back and they both immediately leave the Island. They use a large raft to float during nights and hide during the day near the shore. When they reach St. Louis, they face a violent storm and heavy fog overpowers them. They see the wreck of a ship called

Walter Scott, and when they board it they find themselves face to face with three thieves, two of them discussing whether to kill the third. When they come out, they are dismayed to find their raft broken, so they decide to steal the canoe belonging to the robbers, which is already filled with the valuables, and quickly float down the river. As they float downstream they become closer to one another, and they plan to reach Cairo, from where they plan to take a steamship by selling their canoe for the journey to reach free states via the Ohio River.

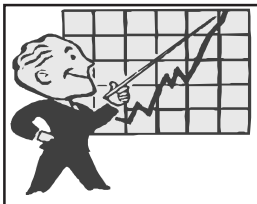
However, they are once again enveloped by a dense fog, and they both are separated. When the fog finally clears, they find each other and realise that in the mist they pas Cairo. After travelling for a few more nights, a steamboat coming northwards once again hits the canoe, and as they jump into the water for safety, they are once again separated from each other. Huck is not able to trace Jim and he presumes that Jim is drowned. He walks to a log house and introduces himself as George Jackson. After searching him thoroughly the Grangerford family invite him to live with them. They treat him warmly and also provide him with a slave who helps him to find Jim. Days pass in a peaceful manner until an old family conflict is rekindled, and the entire Grangerford family is killed.

Amidst this chaos, Huck somehow manages to escape, and once again, Jim and Huck start a journey downwards. After travelling for a mile, they are accosted by two frauds who pose as the King and the Duke. They take full control of the raft and force Huck and Jim to follow their commands. They then enter a horse town leaving Jim behind on the raft. When they reach the village, they find that the village is empty because the people have gone to listen to a sermon. The preacher informs the crowd that he had once been a pirate but was now a reformed man and his mission was to reform other pirates but he had no money to cover his expenses. The crowd applauds him for his mission and readily helps him with money. The King and the Duke plan to stage a dramatic show titled *Royal*

Nonesuch in the next village Bricksville. They become busy printing bills, preparing the stage and selling tickets, but on the first day, the show gets over quickly, and the villagers feel cheated. They want everyone to feel the same so the second day is a grand success with a houseful audience. On the third day, the villagers come prepared to take revenge, but the King and the Duke manage to flee with their profits. They start travelling again and in order to remain free from any risk they paint Jim blue and hang a placard on his neck with the words "A Sick Arab-harmless except when out of mind etc". A few miles down, they once again try to repeat the show in the next village and wait for a boat after hiding their raft. They meet a stranger who informs them about the death of Peter Wilks, and the expected arrival of his brothers from England. The King engages in a long conversation with the stranger and comes to know about a huge inheritance meant for three recently orphaned girls. He then decides to pose as travellers who have come from abroad.

On reaching the village, they search for the house of Peter Wilks and inform the villagers that they had come to pay their last respects to their brother Peter Wilks. They pretended to be in intense grief and promi to look after the three daughters after disposing off their land and other properties. The girls are happy to see their uncles and do not realize that they are being duped. Their loving treatment towards Huck makes him reveal the real intention of the rogues. The eldest daughter in angry but she agrees to leave the house for a few days so that Huck can escape. Meanwhile, the real brothers arrive but they are unable to prove their identity because they have lost their baggage. The town lawyer tries to determine who is lying but the King and the Duke play their roles so well that it becomes difficult to find out the truth. One of the uncles challenges the King to identify the tattoo on the chest of Peter Wilks, and the villagers decide to exhume the body. In the ensuing chaos, Huck manages to run and join Jim in the raft and they once again push off into the river, where they are joined by the King and the Duke.

Further, down the river the King and the Duke sell Jim into slavery claiming that he is a runaway slave from New Orleans. Huck decides to help Jim and he goes to the house where Jim is kept and is lucky to find that the owner is Tom Sawyer's Aunt Sally. Huck pretends to be Tom and when the real Tom arrives, he pretends to be his brother Sid Sawyer. They both chalk out a plan to free Jim from his prison, and they convince the town that a group of thieves are planning to steal Jim. That night they free Jim and try to run away, but local farmers follow them with guns. Jim, Tom and Huck manage to escape, but Tom is shot in his leg. Huck then returns and sends a doctor, but he returns with Tom on a stretcher and Jim in chains. Jim is treated badly but when Tom awakens, he demands that they let Jim go free. At that point, Aunt Sally arrives after a long travel down the river and realises that something is wrong when she receives the news that both Tom and Sid had arrived. She then informs them that Jim is free as the Widow had pas away, and had left him free in her will. After getting to know about his freedom, Jim informs Huck about the death of his Pap. Aunt Sally offers to adopt Huck, but he refuses with the excuse that her lifestyle did not suit him. The story concludes with Huck stating that he would never have under taken the work of writing a story, had he known that it would take this long to complete it.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Who is Pap?

Q 5: Why is Huck tired of his new life?

Q 6: Who accompanies Huck in his journey down the Mississippi River?

Q 7: How does Huck escape from the log cabin?

Q 8: What is the name of the dramatic show staged at Bricksville?

15.4.2 Major Themes

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is not a simple tale, narrating the escapades of the protagonist Huck. It is a novel that unravels a variety of themes through the course of Huck's journey on the Mississippi River. The novel is an excellent example of human inventiveness and creativity, displaying a magnificent blossoming of the human mind.

Freedom

The primary theme of the novel is the search for freedom. Huck and Jim are running away from a restricted life seeking independence and freedom. Huck is unable to adjust to a disciplined life with Widow Douglas and Jim fears the life of a slave. Jim search is personal freedom, but Huck's rebellion is against the Southern culture. Being independent in nature, he cannot establish a rapport with the people around him. Huck tries to find his freedom by joining Tom's gang but he is disillusioned. When his father imprisons him in a log cabin, he is happy for a short time. The mock self-murder that he arranges to escape from his father symbolises his final break from society. Jackson Island too does not satisfy his thirst for freedom and he prepares to face the worst when he starts travelling with Jim. Jim is a loyal slave but when he overhears his owner's plan to sell him he escapes. At the end of the novel, Jim is free, but Huck's freedom is still far away.

Innocence versus Experience

Another important theme of the novel is the rift between 'innocence' and 'experience'. Huck symbolises 'innocence 'and his world comprises of love, compassion and sympathy. Untouched by the artificial distinctions between man and man, Huck represents these values through his uncivili and wild ways. As a child of Nature, he has been brought up without any restrictions and discipline. In addition, his freedom of spirit demands an intense desire to escape from civilisation. Thus, he has a strong aversion towards anything

that might “sivilize” him. This resistance is introduced in the first chapter of the novel through the efforts of Widow Douglas, who tries to educate and teach him good manners. She compels him to wear clean clothes, give up smoking and cultivate the habit of reading the Bible. Huck suddenly comes face to face with ‘experience’ and this comes into conflict with his freedom and innocence. Throughout the novel, Twain seems to put forward the idea that the innocent uncivili path of life is attractive, alluring and morally superior than the world of experience.

Slavery and Racism

Mark Twain wrote this novel after the abolition of slavery but set it several decades earlier when slavery was still an important aspect of society. Twain’s attitude towards slavery and racism is revealed through the character of Jim. The story is an allegory that represents the condition of the black slaves in the United States. Representing Jim as one of the most reliable, honest and caring characters in the novel, the writer makes a statement about the hypocrisy of the institution of slavery. Twain uses the character of Jim as a mouthpiece to convey his message regarding this institution. The novel also traces the oppression of the slaves on the grounds of racism. Jim symbolises the human traits inherent in a slave, representing the trials, tribulations and oppression that a slave faces in the hands of the whites. He runs away, horrified with the fear of being sold by his owner Miss Watson. Twain calls out to the readers to be sympathetic towards Jim, and to question society for enslaving him. It is only in the end that the topic of slavery is addres when Jim and Huck debate on the issue of slavery. In the final section of the novel Huck chooses the morality of innocence over that of experience, when he decides to free Jim from slavery.

Mississippi River

The Mississippi River plays an important role in the novel. For Huck and Jim, it symbolises freedom and independence, to

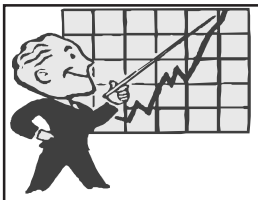
take their own decisions and determine their future course of action. Jim is looking forward to reach the free states, and Huck is happy to escape from the world of 'experience' in Miss Watson's home. They are influenced by the life of the towns along the river, and eventually meet the word of experience comprising of criminals, shipwrecks, dishonesty and danger. Initially the river stands for safety and absolute freedom, but as they move forward, the consequences of their runaway lives create obstacles in their journey towards freedom. The river thereafter becomes a route for short-term escape and their journey ends on land, where finally both find the freedom they are hankering for.

Money and Food

The theme of money is present throughout the novel bringing into focus the distinction between the rich and the poor. Money plays a crucial part behind different shifts in the action of the novel. The story begins with the announcement that Huck has over six thousand dollars in his name. He becomes a pri figure in the civili world and sophisticated members of this society adopt him. Pap also comes back suddenly to fulfil the responsibilities of a father when he hears about the money. However in the eyes of Huck, money is a luxury rather than a necessity, and the fact that he is the owner of so much wealth makes no difference to him. On the other hand, for Jim, money is the means to freedom and position in society. This is the reason why Jim is on a constant search for wealth whereas Huck's attitude is completely lackadaisical. The theme of food is also another important theme of the novel. When Huck is a child, he had to "eat out of a barrel of odds and ends" and food symbolises the love, care and protection that are given to him by the people who feed him. Widow Douglas is the first to provide him with food and later Jim becomes his symbolic caretaker looking after his basic needs on Jackson Island.

Religion and Superstition

Mark Twain represents his personal views on religion through the sardonic character of Huck. In the first chapter, Huck ridicules religion when he remarks that Hell seems to be more fun than Heaven. Miss Watson's prayers make Huck uneasy because she often does not practice what she preaches. Later in a very important scene the King who is a liar and a cheat, is able to convince members of a religious community to give him money so that he would be able to convert his wayward pirate friends. Through King's ability to dupe religious people, Mark Twain is mocking at their belief and devotion to God. The mockery of religion can also be seen in the Grangerford- Shepherdson episode, where the two families go to the church loaded with guns. Both families fight with each other over an old family dispute leading to the death of all the members. Twain here is showcasing the false code of honour observed by the genteel society in the name of religion. When the preacher is delivering a sermon in the camp meeting, old women are busy knitting and young couples are courting on the sly. The people do not pay attention, as they hardly understand what the sermon is about. The theme of superstition is seen throughout the novel. Huck and Jim appear to be sagacious characters, yet the powers of superstition overpower them. In certain encounters and incidents, they appear to be childlike despite their apparent maturity. Their belief is further strengthened, when superstition foreshadows certain incidents in the plot. When Huck accidently spills salt, Pap returns and when Huck touches a snakeskin, Jim is bitten by a rattlesnake. Superstition thus plays an important role in moving the story forward.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: Mention some of the important themes in the novel.

Q 10: What role does the Mississippi River play in the novel?

15.4.3 Mark Twain's Art of Characterisation

In the novel, Mark Twain uses a very innovative way of building up the character of the protagonist Huck. Twain chooses him as the narrator, because he believed this would be the best way to expose the hypocrisy of Southwestern American society in which he grew up. A multidimensional view of frontier life would not have been possible, if Twain or any other adult had been the narrator. The comments given by Huck are the comments given by the novelist in the guise of a young boy. The protagonist is untouched by outside forces, and his innocence prevents him from distorting facts. This enhances the authenticity of the experience, which is an added feature of a good narrative. Huck is a boy of fourteen years, and Twain feels he is a safe reporter, as his illiteracy and lack of decorum, shields him from the onslaught of criticism that would have targeted any other narrator. Thus, Huck is u as a mask, to expose the real facts about the frontier society. The positive aspects of this kind of a narrator are his native shrewdness, a sharp eye and a clear heart, which are untouched by the inherent hypocrisy of the society. He cannot distort the truth, nor can he invent anything on his own, and his simplicity and disjointed narration, gives an authentic touch, as there is no philosophizing of thoughts.

The journey of Huck is a mirror reflecting the frontier world of scoundrels, dupes, frauds and imposters. The 'boy narrator' is a masterstroke of the novelist, as his narration is not just the voice of the character Huck, but also the voice of the novel. An innocent orphan like Huck has potentialities of growing into a symbolic figure, and this enriches and enhances the appeal of the novel. His other character Jim plays a passive role, but is significant for the action of the novel to move forward. Twain uses his escape as a satire on the institution of slavery that flourished in the frontier society of the Southwestern America. Mark Twain's art of characterisation interweaves action and description. It is through their narration,

that the characters in Twain's novel gradually take shape and grow into individuals. This is a unique technique evolved by Mark Twain in the delineation of his characters. It is through their actions that the characters reveal themselves in the course of the novel. These characters are also u to analyze the major themes and issues of the novel. This method of revealing real facts through these young innocent characters seemed the best technique of spreading Twain's moral vision across the masses. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has three major characters.

Huckleberry Finn

The novel introduces Huck as a boy belonging to the lowest level of society. The son of a vagabond drunkard and ruffian, Huck is always dirty and unkempt, and all attempts of Widow Douglas to reform him ends in vain, when refuses to give up his independence. Education and religion have no meaning for him, and he loves to roam free without any restrictions. Huck is honest and sensitive to other people's feelings, but the incessant troubles that hound him in the course of his journey, make him question certain things in society. As a child of Nature, he symbolises innocence and purity of the mind, and cannot stand any kind of cruelty or violence. The world is new to him and everything he encounters gives him food for thought, as every phase or event is an integral part of his life. His natural intelligence makes him create his own rules, and this leads him to free Jim from slavery in the end. Huck possesses traits that are necessary for a life in the frontier. He is practical and natural and has the ability to adapt to any situation. This enables him to adjust with the disciplined life of Widow Douglas and the Grangerfords, even though he loves his wild ways. He is intelligent and clever enough to survive all kinds of pressure tactics. He has grown up in the Mississippi Valley, but his heart is free from the commercialism ingrained in that society. The negative feelings that arise in him stem from the belief that certain qualities make people good. He fails to

realize that goodness is an inner quality and that is why he runs from changes in society and considers himself to be an outsider.

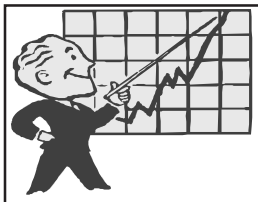
Jim

Jim is an interesting and important character, through which Twain portrays the institution of slavery. He is the catalyst that carries the story forward and controls the movement of the plot. Jim is the illiterate, domesticated, superstitious and docile slave owned by Miss Watson, the sister of Widow Douglas who has adopted Huck. Jim has a family and the thought of being separated from them, makes him run away from his owner when he overhears her plan to sell him. He is sensitive, loyal and capable of deep caring and love. He becomes a surrogate father to Huck on Jackson's Island, looking after his needs, protecting him from the worst horrors that they encounter. Initially Jim appears to be superstitious but this represents his deep knowledge about the natural world. His willingness to sacrifice himself for others, allows Huck to understand the inherent qualities of Jim. In spite of his physical capacity, Jim believes that white men are superior to him, and this betrays a slavish mentality, which affects his conviction and confidence. He depends on an outside agency to guide and govern him, but this does not mean that Jim is not intelligent. He has intense knowledge in practical matters and does not wait for Huck when situation demands it. Many critics have remarked that Jim is a passive character but this is because he is always at the mercy of others. Despite restrictions and constant fear, he finds ways of accomplishing his goals without hurting the sentiments of his benefactors. His emotions and desires enable us to see him in the human context.

Tom Sawyer

Tom is Huck's best friend but has been brought up in comfort. He loves reading romance and adventure novels and his beliefs are ba on them. Tom's strict adherence to rules sets him apart from Huck. His belief in fantasy often leads him to commit acts of stupidity,

and he fails to adjust to the real world. Tom represents those values of society that Huck is running away from. His plans are extravagant, absurd and often ridiculous. Tom symbolises the self-cantered dominant white man of the society of that time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: Give a brief character sketch of Huck.

Q 12: What is the significance of Jim in the novel?

15.4.4 Mark Twain's Narrative Style

The novel marks a departure from the traditional narrative technique of American novelists, as Mark Twain uses the first person narrative in telling the story of Huck Finn. He writes in a conversational and colloquial style, which exemplifies his talent for storytelling. For the first time echoes of the vernacular tongue touched the hearts of millions of readers. Twain's wide and multifaceted canvass of experience, lends an aura of enchantment to his narration. His narratives have a deep connection with the native soil, and are representations of the American panorama. His narration is vivid, concrete and realistic, and his use of the dialect or the vernacular is without any trace of conventionalism. Twain wrote for the masses, and believed that addressing them in the native tongue would create a bond of affection and intimacy. This illustrates Twain's capacity of entering the mindset of a vast majority of readers. His narrative art intermingled adventure, satire, irony and paradox to highlight his moral vision. In the novel, he uses all these elements to comment on the myth of frontier life, and the institution of slavery. His narrative voice endeared him to the pioneers whose emotions, grief and joys found expression through this representative. Twain has often been regarded as the greatest humorist of America, and this quality enables him to convey essential truths that expose the hypocrisy of conventional values cherished by the society. He is fascinated by

the varied and disjointed world around him, and he portrays it in the form of independent episodes, building parallels and contrasts, that are thematically integral to the emotional pattern of his novels. Twain usually does not describe his characters, but introduces the reader to their activities and actions, which help in evaluating the character. The abundant use of symbolism, imagery and the supernatural lends a special touch to the narrative style of Mark Twain as a writer.



LET US KNOW

A first person narrative is a technique of telling stories in which the narrator relates events from his own point of view using the first person. It may be narrated by the first person protagonist, first person witness, and first person re- teller. The technique allows the reader to see the mind of the narrator but the experience is limited to the narrator's awareness of the true state of affairs.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Comment briefly on the narrative style of Mark Twain.

15.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION OF MARK TWAIN

Very few writers in the world have been able to endear themselves to readers of all age groups. Literary criticism has placed Mark Twain on a pedestal that is both national and international, and his greatness as a writer is now an accepted fact. His reputation has survived the onslaught of bitter criticisms, and his hold on the common people has left professional critics baffled. Criticism after the' fifties' recognises his merits and broadly illustrates his moral concerns. His books *Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) made him immensely popular among the Americans. His friends also spoke about the qualities of his writings in literary circles. The publication of *The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn (1885) was a great event in the history of American literature. It shocked the sensibilities of the intellectuals, and landed him into controversies that were to hound him for a long time. There was a rebellion against the writer and a reviewer writing in the *Century* could not stop himself from remarking that Huck was an incarnation of the better side of ruffianism that was the result of the independence of Americans. By the 19th century, Twain was able to emerge out of the censure, and in 1899, the *London Times* described Twain as the 'Ambassador of America'. William Dean Howell's spoke about the endearing qualities of Twain as a humourist. Van Wyck Brooks established Twain as a frontier humourist, but charged him with the sins and vices of the pioneers. The year 1935 saw the appearance of tributes in various magazines and books. Ernest Hemmingway's statement that 'all American books come from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn'* gave a new direction to critical trends. Lionel Trilling and T.S Eliot's introduction to this novel marks a radical shift in criticism. F. R. Leavis emphasises the ethical and moral concern of Twain and Kenneth Lynn analy the originality of his humour. The ending of the novel has been subject of immense criticism. Phillip Young considered the ending as 'chilling descent' and 'flimsy contrivance'. Hemmingway remarked that the ending is nothing but 'mere cheating'. Perhaps the greatness of the novel is accepted by all, but the ending is a subject matter of constant criticism. The reputation of Mark Twain has seen a continuous growth and he is regarded as the image of the American dream.



15.6 LET US SUM UP

By this time, we have come to know that Mark Twain in one the most famous writers of American literature. He has set new trends in narration by using the local dialect for the first time. He engages the boy-narrator to express his views regarding the society, and this is a unique technique of his art of characterisation. Twain has a moral vision, and he writes to fulfil this aim despite the criticisms that came his way. He shared

a deep bond with the Mississippi River, and most of his stories are set along the river, portraying glimpses of frontier life in Southern American society. He was against the institution of slavery, and he extensively criticises the hypocrisy of slavery. Issues regarding the portrayal of racism and morality in his novels continue to provide scope for debate thereby giving the stamp of continued interest in his works.



15.7 FURTHER READING

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15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q 1: Mark Twain… …in Missouri… in 1835.

Ans to Q 2: Twain Grew up… …in Hannibal… …Slave holding society… …Mississippi River.

Ans to Q 3: Picaresque novel… …origin Spain… …protagonist rogue… …lacks proper plot structure.

Ans to Q 4: Pap is… …father of Huck… …cruel, greedy and violent ruffian… …remains absent from home… …indulges in drinking… …not ready to take responsibility of his son.

Ans to Q 5: Huck is a child of Nature… …likes to live independently… …adopted by Widow Douglas… ...teaches him manners and discipline… …Huck not u to restrictions… …tired of his new life.

Ans to Q 6: Jim… …slave of Miss Watson... …scared of being sold… …runs away… …accompanies Huck… …in search of freedom.

Ans to Q 7: Huck saws himself… …kills a pig… …spills blood… …takes a canoe… …escapes to Jackson Island.

Ans to Q 8: Name of show… …staged by King and Duke*… … Royal Nonesuch*.

Ans to Q 9: Major themes… …innocence and Experience... …deals with the innocence of Huck… …the child of Nature… …hypocrisy of civili society… …slavery and Racism… ….highlights the life of Jim… …attitude of the whites… ...Mississippi River… ...stands for freedom… …Money and Food… …symbolises care and protection… …Religion and Superstition… …mocks the beliefs of the society.

Ans to Q 10: The Mississippi River stands for freedom… …it carries Jim and Huck towards free states… …they are influenced by the life along the river… …they meet the world of experience… …transition from innocence to experience takes place… …a place of shelter turns to a place of trouble… …portrays the tough life of the South… …river turns to short term escape.

Ans to Q 11: Huck is the protagonist and narrator….son of a violent and abusive ruffian… …is an outcast neglected by society… …forced to survive by himself… …uneducated but intelligent… …takes his own decisions… …contradicts the norms of society… …practical and natural with a good common sense… …is adaptable to any situation… …possesses an inventive capacity… …sympathetic towards other human beings.

Ans to Q 12: Jim is a slave of Miss Watson… …illiterate and deeply superstitious… …runs away because he is afraid of being sold… …is sentimental about his family… …father figure and friend to Huck… …acts as a catalyst for Huck's development… …practical about the ways of life… …has a knowledge of natural surroundings… …without him Huck would have no reason to travel.

Ans to Q 13: Twain uses first person narrative technique… …conversational and colloquial style… …language has traces of local dialect… …appealed to the masses… …experience lends an enchanting flavour… …is realistic and concrete with no trace of misrepresentation… …combines romance, irony and satire… …uses irony and paradox to highlight a situation… …builds up contrasts and parallels.



15.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a panorama of American life.

Q 2: Analyse the thematic patterns in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Q 3: Consider and evaluate *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a social satire.

Q 4: Critically assess the relationship between Huck and Jim.

Q 5: What is the significance of the Mississippi River in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn?*

Q 6: In what sense and to what extent does Huck grow in the novel?

Q 7: Discuss the role of Jim in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Q 8: Comment on the ending of the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Q 9: Write a note on Mark Twain's art of characterization with reference to the major characters in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

*** ***** ***



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Beach, Joseph Warren. (1941). *American Fiction*, 1920-1940. New York: The Macmillan Company,

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City Office, Housefed Complex, Guwahati- 06

Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KKHandiqui State Open University
Housefed Complex, Dispur, Guwahati- 781006
(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? | | | |
2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

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