UNIT 10: J. M. SYNGE: *THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe and appreciate the life and works of J. M. Synge
- grasp the idea behind the writing of the play *The Playboy of the Western World*
- discuss the play as a whole with special reference to Irish nationalism
- summarise the play in your own words
- relate the playwright with the Irish National Movement

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with one of the famous Irish playwrights of the nineteenth century, namely, John Millington Synge and his most popular play, *The Playboy of the Western World.* In this unit, we shall gather information regarding the biography and works of this playwright. There will be a discussion on the context of the play, citing its source and development of the theme. You will get an idea regarding the influence of the Irish National

Dramatic Society, which was founded in 1901, in the context of this play. As of now, it is important for you to consider the fact that the Irish National Dramatic Society was formed out of the Irish Revival. At this point, you may be interested to know what is meant by the Irish Revival. The Irish Revival refers to the emergence of a trend in Ireland in which old Irish culture and legends were told and translated.Synge has other plays to his credit which are based on old Irish myths. The present play is an excellent example of Synge's realism. However, through this play Synge attempted to mirror the myriad features of Irish temperament at his best.

10.3 JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE: THE DRAMATIST

John Millington Synge is one of the modern British dramatists whose contribution in the field of folklore and Irish mythology needs no mention.Through his vivid Irish images, he has been able to create universal notions of human beings. As a dramatist, Synge displays typical Irish scenarios, abounding in rich Irish culture and that which depicts the common people. The following sub-sections have been designed to acquaint you with Synge's life and works in a wider perspective.

10.3.1 His Life and Works

In a place called Rathfarnham, near Dublin was born the Irish playwright, Edmund John Millington Synge who is one of the most important figures associated with the Abbey theatre. He joined his four elder siblings in 1871 to be the youngest of them all. His father, John Hatch died in 1872, when Synge was only one year old. As such he was influenced by his mother's Protestant attitude. As of financial support, the Synge family received monetary fund from 'land holdings'. However, Synge was privileged to have found inheritance from one of his uncles. He was very passionate about nature and the common folks. As a kid, he was shy and **introvert** in nature. Owing to bad health, Synge received four years of education

at home. He found interest in solitude and roamed about the countryside all alone whenever he got free time.

Regarding his education, it must be noted that he was initially interested in music. Later, he was sent to Trinity College for pursuing his graduate degree. He did well in his graduation with language and music as his primary subjects. He was also the recipient of a scholarship from the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Due to his inclination towards music, he firstly chose music as his career. This led him to further travel to Germany where he used to play violin for quite sometime before he found literature more challenging and interesting. This choice landed him in France for pursuing higher studies in literature. His encounter with **W. B. Yeats** in 1896 transformed his approach towards language and literature. You must be interested to know that Yeats was a major influence to Synge in encouraging him for taking up literature seriously. By 1897 Synge was determined to explore Irish language. On Yeats' advice, he thereafter spent many years (nearly five years) annually in the Aran Islands which are situated in the Atlantic Ocean in order to grasp the **essence** of Irish culture and the language appropriately. As you will find later in this unit, Synge's stay in this island finds plentiful reflection in his works. His main intention was to depict the lives of the islanders by throwing light on particular Irish issues. However, before writing dramas he also wrote poems and essays



Introvert: one who tends to shrink from social contacts and become preoccupied with his/her own thoughts.

Essence: the central meaning or most essential or most vital part of some idea or experience.



LET US KNOW

W. B. Yeats: You may be familiar with Yeats as a poet. Apart from poetry, Yeats was also a dramatist. His leadership in the Irish literary revival is praiseworthy. In fact, it is because of his advice that Synge went to live among the islanders. His association with the revival is best reflected in his plays like *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), *The Pot of Broth* (1902), etc. He has also written many plays in collaboration with George Moore like

Diarmuid and Grania. All these plays are inspired from either Irish folktales or mythology.

You must have noted that Synge's background was purely a Protestant one. His mother brought him up in the strictest way possible. But his views were mostly shaped by the reading of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Though brought up to a Protestant faith, Synge was quite opposite to his mother in this case. Darwin's book led to his disbelief in holding any kind of faith in God. In fact, the ideas of evolution which Darwin developed in his book affected Synge drastically. It has to be noted that Synge was very adamant about being involved in any revolutionary movement. This led to his separation from the Irish League one year after he had joined it.

Synge's love for literature, particularly Irish literature, led to his meetings with Yeats and **Lady Gregory** who is known for her contribution in Irish literature. Yeats, Gregory and E. Martyn were the founders of the 'Irish National Theatre'. It was renamed as the **Abbey Theatre** in 1904 and the three of them became its directors. The aim of establishing this theatre was to encourage the performance and production of Irish plays. All of them shared a common factor– to uphold the Irish literary revival. Another commonality among these writers was the love for Irish myths and folklore.

Synge was deeply in love with Cherrie Matheson; she was a friend of one of his cousins. On religious ground, his love remained unfulfilled because of the differences in opinion. Her family was very orthodox. You have already noted that Synge was doubtful about bearing Christian faith; he gradually became an atheist. This atheistic attitude was opposed by Matheson which resulted in Synge's depression and his tendency to stay away from Ireland. Later, he was engaged to Molly Allgood, an actress who is said to have played the role of Pegeen Mike from Synge's play, *The Playboy of the Western World*. But their marriage was disrupted by Synge's deteriorating health. Eventually Synge was diagnosed to be suffering from Hodgkin's disease that was a fatal one. In 1909 at the age of 37, Synge departed from the world leaving behind his unfinished work, namely, *Deidre*

of the Sorrows. His contribution to Irish literature in particular and English literature in general is appreciable.



LET US KNOW

Lady Gregory: Lady Gregory is best known as one of the important figures of the Irish Literary Revival. Her interest in Irish culture, myths and folklore led her to take initiative in founding the National theatre for the cause of Irish nationalism. Some of her works include *Spreading the News*, *The Rising of the Moon*, *The Travelling Man*, etc.

Abbey Theatre: The Abbey Theatre was the first theatre to have got a subsidy from the state government in 1925.Established in 1904 with Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge as directors, the theatre became the centre for the Irish literary revival. It started with the production of one-act plays by Yeats and Gregory. The Abbey theatre has descended from what was formerly known as the Irish National Theatre. Interestingly, the play that we are dealing with in this unit caused riots in 1907 when it was first performed in the Abbey theatre. Luckily for the theatre, it survived the riot but only to be burnt later in 1951; it was however re-established in 1966. A number of plays have been staged there as Yeats' *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, Gregory's *Spreading the News*, O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* to name a few as well as works by many other writers such as G. B. Shaw, Tom Murphy, etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is J.M.Synge?

Q 2: When was the Irish National Dramatic Society founded? Name any two prominent figures associated with this society.

Q 3: What were the two most favorite subjects of Synge during the time of his graduation?

Q 4: Name the person who influenced Synge to a great extent and how?

Q 5: Write short note on the Abbey Theatre.

Q 6: Mention the causes that led to the death of J. M. Synge.

Synge was one of the major exponents of Irish literature. To him, the common people and their lives form his subjects. Apart from being a naturalist, Synge was a lover of literature. This urge to study literature made him go to France, especially Paris. Out of his solitude, he turned to writing after surrendering from his musician profession. His long stay at the Aran Islands **culminated** in his description of his life there in the book called *The Aran Islands* (1907). In this book one could find Synge's impressions of the natural sight that surrounded him in the islands. Also, while his stay there in the island he made notes on the various experiences along with photographs that were preserved to be included in this book. He became familiar with the lives of the peasants and the typical **dialects** of these islanders, that interested him profoundly, found expression in most of his works. You must note that the illustrations in this book were done by W. B. Yeats' brother, Jack Yeats.



Glossary:

Culminated: to bring to an end or result in something.

Dialects: language typical to a specific group of people.

Shackles: a restraint.

Temperament: frame of mind or mood.

However, his reputation as a playwright rests in the six plays that he has written. His first play that was performed in 1903 is *In the Shadow of the Glen*. It is a one-act play and is presented as a comedy. This play by Synge is best known for the use of its language commonly used by the peasants. The play is set in a rural landscape and distinguishes Synge's dramatic skill in his just portrayal of not only the characters but also the Irish language. This play deals with the story of a young woman and her aged husband. The husband is a doubtful character who keeps an eye on the movement of his young wife. Out of pursuing freedom from such **shackles**, the young wife at the end leaves her husband. This play provoked the audience for displaying the Irish **temperament** in such a way.

His next play, *Riders to the Sea* published in 1904 is also a one-act play but one which tragically refers to death. The setting of the play is an island. It depicts the story of a mother who has lost her sons to the sea. In fact, the sea is depicted as a destructive force in this play which has resulted



Poignant: distressing or a state of sorrow.

Riots: a state of disorder involving group violence.

Satire: use of witty language or theme to convey scorn.

Mythology: myths associated with a culture.

in the loss of all the sons of a mother. The play reveals the hardship that the islanders face and their struggle in life in a simple yet **poignant** manner throwing light on the superstitious faith of the islanders. *The Well of the Saints* was published in 1905 marking Synge's career with another comedy. However, it's a dark comedy dealing with miracles. *The Playboy of the Western World* was published and performed in 1907 creating **riots** when it was staged for the first time. This unit is based on this play and shall acquaint you with the play in a detailed manner.His next play is *The Tinker's Wedding* and it was published in 1908. In this play a tinker girl and her wish of being suitably married is highlighted keeping in mind the Irish way of life. Basically this play is a comedy that has as its features **satire** and implausible circumstances.

Poems and Translations, published in 1909 marks the career of Synge as a lover of poetic forms. The preface to this collection was contributed by W. B. Yeats. Another book in which Synge took the help of Jack Yeats' (William Butler Yeats' brother) illustrations is *In Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara* that was published in 1911. This book provides the background to his plays in dealing with the Irish ways of life. The book is written in the form of prose.

It was very unfortunate that his last play, namely, *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910) could not be completed by Synge. This play was one of the most important works for the Irish literary revival because of the inputs that the play has borrowed from Irish **mythology**. During the time of writing of this play, Synge was at the worst of his health. As mentioned earlier, he was suffering from Hodgkin's disease which was a form of cancer, incurable at that time. His early demise, just at the age of 37, put an end to such a productive literary career which has otherwise marked the history of Anglo-Irish plays and performance. His otherworks that have been published posthumously are *Collected Works of John Millington Synge* 4 Vols,1962-68 (*Vol. 1: Poems*, 1962;*Vol. 2: Prose*, 1966;*Vols. 3 & 4: Plays*, 1968).

It has to be noted that Synge's works are popular for the Irish flavour that they reproduce in different forms. Most importantly, Synge displays the popular imagination of the peasants or the common folks whose existence

is marked by different features as their belief in superstition, miracles, etc. amidst their religious faith in Christianity. He devoted his life to the Irish cultural revival and gifted his readers as well as the audiences with such genuine capture of Ireland and its rich cultural heritage that defies any comparison.

10.4 CONTEXT OF THE PLAY

John Millington Synge in the "Preface" of his play, *The Playboy of the Western World* acknowledges the fact that the creative source of his play has directly been taken from the common and ordinary Irish people residing in the countryside. The language that has been used in the play is the spoken dialect of the islanders that Synge heard and even spoke during his vacations in the Aran Islands. To quote Synge: "In writing The *Playboy of the Western World*, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers". (Preface) The play is set in the west of Ireland and represents the notions of the people regarding marriage, violence, parricide, etc. This play is an attempt by Synge to show the reality of the Irish way of life. To Synge, it is the village or the peasants who provide a genuine Irish sense which is rooted in the reality. Ireland was under British control; it was not a free state then. As such the common people were not in favour of the policemen who were employed by the British government. The islanders especially were contended with their lives in its own small way amidst their fantasies. Adventure was not their forte; hence many of them spend their time drinking wine. Also, the idea of attending a wake was typical of Irish culture. People would celebrate rather than express sorrow at someone's death. Lots of food and drinks were provided to attend a wake or a funeral. Though superstitious, the people had faith on the Church. They were religious people and story-telling is common in Irish culture. It is in such a background that the play has to be read.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What is the name of the book that was written from Synge's experiences in the islands of the Atlantic Ocean?

Q 8: Name some of the plays written by John Millington Synge.

Q 9: Which play by Synge created riots on its first performance?

Q 10: What is the most important characteristic of the works by Synge?

Q11: Write a short note on the context of the play, *The Playboy of the Western World.*

10.5 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Set in a village called County Mayo that is situated in the western coast of Ireland, *The Playboy of the Western World* is the most popular play Synge has ever written. The play is divided into three acts and the story moves through a duration of two days. For our convenience, we shall deal with the play act-wise.

Act I

The first act opens in a **shebeen** which can be compared to a club where the villagers gathered every evening to enjoy their drinks. You must note that drinking was not something that was forbidden. People use to drink openly in Ireland as in England. However, as the play opened, we are introduced to Pegeen who was "a wild-looking but fine girl, of about twenty". She was the daughter of Mister Michael James Flaherty, the owner of the shebeen. Pegeen was alone in the shebeen and busy writing a letter including the list of items that will be required for her approaching marriage with Shawn Keogh. At that point, Shawn Keogh who was a "fat and fair young man" arrived at the shebeen. It needs mention that since Mister Flaherty would be out the whole night in order to attend the **wake** of Kate Cassidy, Pegeen would be all alone for the night. As such, she pitied herself for Shawn's refusal to accompany her for the night alone on religious grounds that unless



Shebeen: a country public house where villagers gather in the evening to drink and enjoy.

Wake: it is the custom of staying or guarding a dead body practised chiefly in Ireland.

they were married, it would be a sin to spend the night together. Pegeen's father along with two of his companions, Philly Cullen and Jimmy Farrell, arrived at the shebeen and all of them teased Shawn Keogh.The plot is set by now and the entrance of Christy Mahon adds suspense to it. In the play he was described as "a slight young man" who was "very tired and frightened and dirty". It became clear that this man has been escaping from the police. On being asked, Christy disclosed his secret that led him to escape from the police. To their utter astonishment, he asserted that he had killed his father:

CHRISTY: . . .I killed my poor father, Tuesday was a week, for doing the like of that.

PEGEEN [*with blank amazement*]: Is it killed your father?

Interestingly, this revelation was considered heroic by Pegeen and all others present at the shebeen. Christy related how he had been able to escape since eleven days after the murder and narrated the story of the murder. Pleased with Christy's valour, the owner of the shebeen, Michael offered him the job of a **potboy**. In order to visit Widow Quin, Shawn left their company. Michael Flaherty and his companions also left Christy and Pegeen alone to attend a neighbour's wake. Christy's attitude towards crime was vehemently opposed by the audience when this play was first performed.



Potboy: a worker in an inn or public house who serves customers and does various chores.

CHRISTY[*very confidently***]:** Up to the day I killed my father, there wasn't a person in Ireland knew the kind I was, and I there drinking, waking, eating, sleeping, a quiet, simple poor fellow with no man giving me heed.

You must note that the above dialogue of Christy throws an interesting light on the issue, that is, the glory to be a murderer. Christy was surprised to feel the difference in the attitudes of the people towards him before and after the murder. He, however, was pleased with the reaction of the islanders, especially Pegeen, to whom he seemed to be attracted. Left alone, both Pegeen and Christy exchanged a few intimate conversations when Widow Quin arrived. It was rumoured that Widow Quin had murdered her own husband. Widow Quin persuaded Christy to stay in her "houseen" for the night on the ground that she will make a good company for both of them were murderers. This act ends with Christy reflecting on his fate: "two fine

women fighting for the likes of me— till I'm thinking this night wasn't I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by". This act also throws light on the villagers' belief in the Church; Shawn Keogh throughout the act expresses his fear for the Church or an figure of the Church like Father Reilly.

Act 2

This act begins with Christy's jubilation for his drastic change of fate– from a 'simple poor fellow' to a hero whom every woman desires. He was surprised with his own good fortune and the treatment that he got at the Flaherty shebeen. However, the entry of four girls–Sara, Susan, Honor and Nelly, in the shebeen early morning astounded Christy and as a result he hid himself in the 'inner room'. He took one of the girls to be Pegeen but discovered that they were strangers. The girls did not see him at first and expressed dissatisfaction but Christy finally appeared before them to their surprise. Christy was made to feel glorious for his deed, that is, murder his father. The girls who have come a long way just to see the man who killed his father brought eggs, butter and chicken for Christy as gifts. Widow Quin joined them and announced that she had entered Christy's name for a local sports competition. Asking the girls to prepare breakfast for Christy, Widow Quin asked Christy to narrate the story of his father's murder. You must note that he has already narrated his story in Act I to Pegeen, Flaherty and his companions.This time in Act II, Christy narrated the story of his father's murder again with ever-increasing **relish** to Widow Quin and the four village girls:



Relish: take pleasure in.
Scythe: a tool used for cutting crops or grass which has a long handle that must be held with both hands and a curved blade that moves parallel to the ground.

CHRISTY [*flattered and confident, waving bone*]: He gave a drive with the **scythe**, and I gave a lep to the east. Then I turned around with my back to the north, and I hit a blow on the ridge of his skull, laid him stretched out, and he split to the knob of his gullet.

Interestingly, he framed a story and earned praise from the villagers. You must remember that story telling is an important aspect in this play which shall, however, be dealt with in the subsequent unit. Christy was declared a hero by the women and they raise a toast and drink together 'with their arms linked'. Pegeen arrived there to find Christy and Widow

Quin's arms linked and expressed her anger. Christy tried to persuade her by calling upon his story of his father's murder but of no avail. Pegeen was surprised to learn about the girls who walked 'four miles' just to see him. Her anger diminished with the enchanted talks of Christy. Shawn arrived again along with Widow Quin and he asked Pegeen to look for her sheep that have escaped from the field. In the mean time, during Pegeen's absence both of them tried to convince Christy to leave County Mayo by **alluring** him with certain gifts like 'the half of a ticket to the Western States', Shawn's 'new hat and new coat', etc. because Christy was a threat to the possible marriage of Shawn and Pegeen.



Alluring: attracting

Loy: a long spade

However, Christy and Widow Quin are left alone again when Mahon appeared to inquire about 'a young lad'. Christy had hidden himself behind the door and Mahon showed his head to Widow Quin which was injured 'with the clout of a **loy'**. On being asked, he replied that his son was responsible for the poor condition of his head. Mahon considered his son, Christy as 'a dirty, stuttering lout'as well as a 'liar on walks, a talker of folly' whereas the villagers regarded him as their hero.Widow Quin realises that the young and dirty lad whom Mahon searched for was Christy. She, however, lied to Mahon and sent him off to the hills. Widow Quin attempted to persuade Christy and promised to help him. Later, when Christy showed his interest in Pegeen rather than herself, she made a deal with him. She has to be adorned with various gifts in return for not exposing Christy before Pegeen and others. This Act thus ends with the girls who disrupted Widow Quin and Christy making way for Christy to participate in the sports competition.

Act 3

As the act opens, Jimmy and Philly (Michael Flaherty's friends) discuss Christy's story of his father's murder. They came to the shebeen to meet Pegeen. Flaherty did not return from the wake with his friends since he was heavily drunk. As a result, Shawn went to look for a cart to help Flaherty return home. Jimmy and Philly expressed their doubts as to whether Christy's story was true or otherwise. At that point of time, Mahon entered the shebeen and loudly declared the purpose of his arrival. He said that he had been looking for his only son who tried to kill him with a spade. Jimmy



Lunatic: made, one who is mentally ill.
Pandied: to be beaten like a schoolboy.

and Philly were surprised with Mahon's announcement. They were, however, intervened by Widow Quin's arrival who was upset with the fact that Christy's secret was about to be disclosed because it would lead her to a big loss. Hence, she tried to divert them by declaring Mahon to be **lunatic**. But they believed him as Mahon discussed Christy's youthful days with them. Outside the shebeen, voices and cheering were heard. Mahon was amazed to discover that all this cheering was for his son, Christy who won the mule race. Widow Quin persuaded Mahon that it might be his imagination and made him believe that it was not his son, thus, Mahon left them followed by Jimmy and Philly. After emerging out triumphantly in the race, Christy proposed Pegeen for marriage and the two of them began to plan their future together. During that time, Michael Flaherty arrived and granted Pegeen's marriage to Shawn. Unhappy with her father's decision, she urged him to change his mind because it was Christy whom she wanted as her husband. Though displeased at first, Mister Flaherty soon realised Christy's worth and blessed them a happy future. The climax of the play is interesting in the sense that it deconstructed Christy's story. Mahon appeared before the crowd of Mayo and attacked Christy. Thus, the whole village witnessed Christy's insult by his father. They were disappointed with the way they were fooled by Christy.Pegeen was disgusted by Christy's deeds:

PEGEEN [*half-laughing, through her tears*]**:** That's it, now the world will see him **pandied**, and he an ugly liar was playing off the hero, and the fright of men.

Desperate with the situation, Christy picked up a loy and chased his father. Everybody refused to help him except Widow Quin and the girls who tried to help him escape.This time it was apparent that he had killed his father. Expressing her anguish at Christy's deed by exclaiming, "there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed", Pegeen with the help of Shawn tied him up to be hanged for his father's murder. Mahon's appearance once again took everyone's breath away. Christy was untied by Mahon and the two of them left the village:

MAHON [*grimly, loosening Christy*]**:** . . . but my son and myself will be going our own way, and we'll have great times from this out telling stories

of the villainy of Mayo, and the fools in here. [***To* CHRISTY**, *who is freed*] Come on now.

Christy joined his father on the condition that from then onwards his father had to obey his orders and they left the village. Christy thanked his fate because he would "go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day". On Christy's departure, Shawn felt relieved whereas Pegeen was disheartened to have lost Christy, 'the only Playboy of the Western World'.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: How many acts are there in the play?

Q 13: Describe the causes that led to Christy's popularity in Mayo?

Q 14: How does *The Playboy of the Western World* end?



10.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have gained an idea regarding the Irish literary revival and the importance of Synge as one of the outstanding members of the same. By now, you must have been acquainted with the life and works of J. M. Synge who is one of the renowned Anglo-Irish dramatists of the nineteenth century. You are to note the role played by William Butler Yeats in the formative years of this playwright. You have now become familiar with the Abbey theatre which provided the platform for the production and performance of the plays for the Irish dramatic revival. About Synge, you have learnt his inclination towards Irish myths, folklores and most particularly the Irish language that he borrowed from the common country people. It must be noted that the Irish way of life that this play represents have been influenced by Synge's attachment with the islanders residing in the Aran islands of the Atlantic Ocean. This unit has helped you to list the works of Synge as well as identify the context in which this play was written. By

reading the summary of the play which has been dealt act-wise, you have gained an understanding of the play in a comprehensive way. As a whole, this unit will encourage you to have an urge for a deeper interpretation of the famous play by Synge, namely, *The Playboy of the Western World*.



10.7 FURTHER READING

1) Stapleton, Michael. (1983). *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

2) Bloom, Harold. (2005). *Dramatists and Dramas.* Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.

3) Gassner, John. (1960). *The Theatre of Our Times.* New York: Crown Publishers.

4) Mathews P. J. (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Synge.* Cambridge University Press.

5) Synge, J. M. (1995). *The The Playboy of the Western World and Other Plays.* New York: Oxford University Press.

6) Synge, J. M. (1986). *Two Irish Plays: Riders to the Sea & The Playboy of the Western World.* Introduction and Notes by H. H. Anniah Gowda. Delhi: Macmillan.

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: John Millington Synge (1871-1909) is one of the modern British dramatists who is popular for his contribution in the field of folklore and Irish mythology.

Ans to Q No 2: The Irish National Dramatic Society was founded in 1901. The two prominent figures associated with this society are William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory.

Ans to Q No 3: Language and music.

Ans to Q No 4: The person who influenced Synge to a great extent was W. B. Yeats who transformed Synge's approach towards language and

literature. Yeats influenced Synge to take up literature seriously. It was on Yeats' advice that Synge spent many years (nearly five years) annually in the Aran Islands which are situated in the Atlantic Ocean in order to grasp the essence of Irish culture and language appropriately so that he could incorporate it in his plays.

Ans to Q No 5: See the "LET US KNOW" section of 10.3.1 above.

Ans to Q No 6: Synge was diagnosed to be suffering from Hodgkin's disease that was a fatal one. In 1909 at the age of 37, Synge departed from the world.

Ans to Q No 7: The book that was written from Synge's experiences in the islands of the Atlantic Ocean is *The Aran Islands* (1907). This book captures the writer's impression of the natural sight that surrounded him in the islands.

Ans to Q No 8: *In the Shadow of the Glen (1903), Riders to the Sea (1904),The Well of the Saints (1905),The Playboy of the Western World (1907),The Tinker's Wedding (1908)* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows (1910).*

Ans to Q No 9: *The Playboy of the Western World* created riots on its first performance in 1907.

Ans to Q No 10: Synge's works are popular for the Irish flavour that they reproduce. In his plays, he displays the popular imagination of the peasants or the common folks whose existence is marked by different features as their belief in superstition, miracles, etc. amidst their religious faith in Christianity. His contribution to the Irish cultural revival is commendable.

Ans to Q No 11: The creative source of his play has directly been taken from the common and ordinary Irish people residing in the countryside, especially Aran islands.This play is an attempt by Synge to show the reality of the Irish way of life. To Synge, it is the village or the peasants who provide a genuine Irish sense which is rooted in the reality. They were religious people and story-telling is common in Irish culture. It is in such a background that the play has to be read.

Ans to Q No 12: Three Acts.

Ans to Q No 13: Christy was considered heroic by Pegeen and all others present at the shebeen in Mayo after he disclosed that he was the murderer of his own father. Christy related how he has been able to escape since eleven days after the murder and narrated the story of the murder. Pleased with Christy's valour, the owner of the shebeen, Michael offered him the job of a potboy.

Ans to Q No 14: Pegeen with the help of Shawn tied up Christy to be hanged for his father's murder. Mahon's appearance once again took everyone's breath away. Christy was untied by Mahon and the two of them left the village.Christy joined his father on the condition that from then onwards his father had to obey his orders and they left the village. Christy thanked his fate because he would "go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day".



10.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Give an account of the life and works of the Irish playwright, John Edmund Millington Synge.

Q2. Explain the context of the play,*The Playboy of the Western World* by J. M Synge.

Q3. Discuss the various factors leading to the popularity of the play, *The Playboy of the Western World*by J.M. Synge.

Q4. How many Acts constitute the play, *The Playboy of the Western World*? Discuss in your own words the summary of the play.

Q5. Analyse J. M Synge as a dramatist of the Irish Literary Dramatic Society with special reference to his play, *The Playboy of the Western World*.

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